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-mara in Mara: On the ongoing grammaticalization(s) of a Bantu ‘finish’ verb
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Abstract

This study accounts for the grammaticalization of the verb *-mara* ‘finish’ in the language varieties of the Western Serengeti branch of the Mara subgroup of Eastern Bantu. In these varieties, *-mara* is found in two different auxiliary verb constructions marking the two interrelated Phasal Polarity concepts of ALREADY and NOT YET. Whereas ‘finish’ in general and *-mara* cognates in particular are commonly grammaticalized into ALREADY in Bantu, the parallel development of a NOT YET -marker from the same source constitutes a much rarer development. Nonetheless, we propose that both constructions developed out of the same need to reinforce a reading of (non-)completion (and counter-factuality) and that they instantiate recurrent cyclic patterns of change significant for Eastern Bantu more broadly.

Keywords: Bantu, Mara, grammaticalization, Phasal Polarity, auxiliary

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to offer a comprehensive account of two auxiliary verb constructions (AVCs) and the (ongoing) and interrelated processes of grammaticalization of which they are a part. These AVCs both involve the verb *-mara* ‘finish’ and occur in four Bantu language varieties spoken in the Mara region of northern Tanzania. In all of these language varieties – grouped together and referred to as Western Serengeti (WS) – the auxiliary verb *-mara* marks two versatile yet conceptually interrelated notions of phasal polarity (PhP), namely ALREADY and NOT YET.¹ Example (1) from Nata illustrates the use of the former and example (2) from Ishenyi the latter.²

(1) Nata

aβá-áná	βá-nó	m-bá-mare	yu-sárek-a
2-children	2-DEM	FOC-SM2-ALREADY.PFV	INF-ruin-NEUT-FV

‘These children are already ruined.’

(2) Ishenyi

ya-tá-ámara	ya-tɛrek-u
SM6-NEG-NOT.YET	SM6-bake-PASS

‘They aren’t baked yet.’

The linguistic concept of phasal polarity (PhP) refers to “structured means of expressing polarity in a sequential perspective” (Van Baar 1997: 40; Kramer 2017). It encompasses a linguistic system consisting of four interrelated expressions denoting opposing phasal values

¹ These expressions have been assigned a plethora of different labels over the years. Most recent in this regard are the terms *iamitive* for ALREADY (cf. Dahl & Wälchli 2016, Dahl 2021) and *nondum* for NOT YET (Veselinova & Devos 2021). To avoid getting lost in terminology and partly overlapping and conflicting definitions, in this paper we will refer to these linguistic concepts merely with their English translations, including in the glossing of the examples.

² The characteristics of the verb forms of which auxiliary *-mara* is a part and – in connection to this – the choice of interlinear segmentation of the examples, will be explained in later parts of this paper.

and polarity, which in addition to ALREADY and NOT YET also include the expressions for STILL and NO LONGER. In this systematization, ALREADY and NOT YET are interrelated in that the latter equals the externally negated variant of the former. In other words, “not yet P = (NOT (already P))”. In addition to the neutral notions of temporal-sequentially related phases, PhP expressions are often also associated with pragmatic and (inter-)subjective notions of counter-factuality or counter-expectation.³ This means that in the case of ALREADY, the event commenced earlier than expected, while its commencement is later than expected in the case of NOT YET. For example, in the utterance with ALREADY in (3), the speaker articulates his/her surprise over the fact that the time has elapsed faster than expected, while in the utterance with NOT YET in (4), s/he intends to counter the addressee’s apprehension of having arrived late at church.

(3) Ikoma
 mbe wárjoβa e-eká-mar-a ko-hík-a tʃa-sáá i-kómi
 oh God SM9-NUCL-ALREADY-FV INF-reach-FV 10-time 10-ten
 ‘My God, it is already ten o’clock!’

(4) Nata
 u-tá-tiin-a tu-tá-ámara tu-seem-a yu-sénger-a
 SM2SG-NEG-fear-FV SM1PL-NEG-NOT.YET SM1PL-say-FV INF-praise-FV
 ‘Don’t worry, we have not said praises (i.e. started mass) yet.’

While the development of a ‘finish’ verb like *-mara* into a PhP marker ALREADY – and thence into interrelated concepts such as perfect, perfective aspect and past tense – is a well-known grammaticalization process along the verb-to-auxiliary-to-affix chain in Bantu (cf. Nurse 2008: 305; Nicolle 2012), as well as cross-linguistically (Bybee et al. 1994: 55–61, 70–73, 81–87; Kuteva et al. 2019: 173–180), there are far fewer accounts (if any?) of a parallel grammaticalization process where a ‘finish’ verb develops into marking NOT YET.⁴ In addition, although ALREADY and NOT YET are conceptually and paradigmatically related and are expressed with the same lexical verb as an auxiliary, they occur in very different constructional frames, which raises the question of the extent to which these constructions are historically related.

In this paper, we argue that both auxiliary constructions with *-mara* were recruited to fill a functional gap brought about by the concomitant functional shifts / losses of the forms originally covering ALREADY and NOT YET. PhP markers are inherently focused, and the study suggests that the motivation for the recruitment of *-mara* into a PhP auxiliary was driven by the need to reinforce readings of (non-)completion (and counter-factuality). More specifically, we argue that the developments of both AVCs in WS are indicative of broader and recurrent patterns of diachronic cycles.

³ See, *inter alia*, Van der Auwera (1993: 620–622), Van Baar (1997: 27–35) and Kramer (2017) for elaborate discussions and illustrations of the contrast between pragmatically neutral and counter-factual uses of PhP markers; see also Schadeberg (1990) and Heine et al. (1991) for early accounts of this fact with specific reference to Bantu/African languages.

⁴ Here, it also suffices to mention that the verb *-mara* is not only employed as PhP marker in WS. It has also been recruited, in different constructional contexts, to express other functions too. Thus, it also occurs as an adversative coordinator ‘but’ and as a tail-head linkage marker. The NOT YET construction with *-mara* also has a dedicated function in subordinate contexts, marking successional ‘before’ clauses. To investigate these additional functionalities of *-mara* and their relationship to their usages as PhP markers is beyond the scope of this paper, but it would serve as an interesting topic for further research.

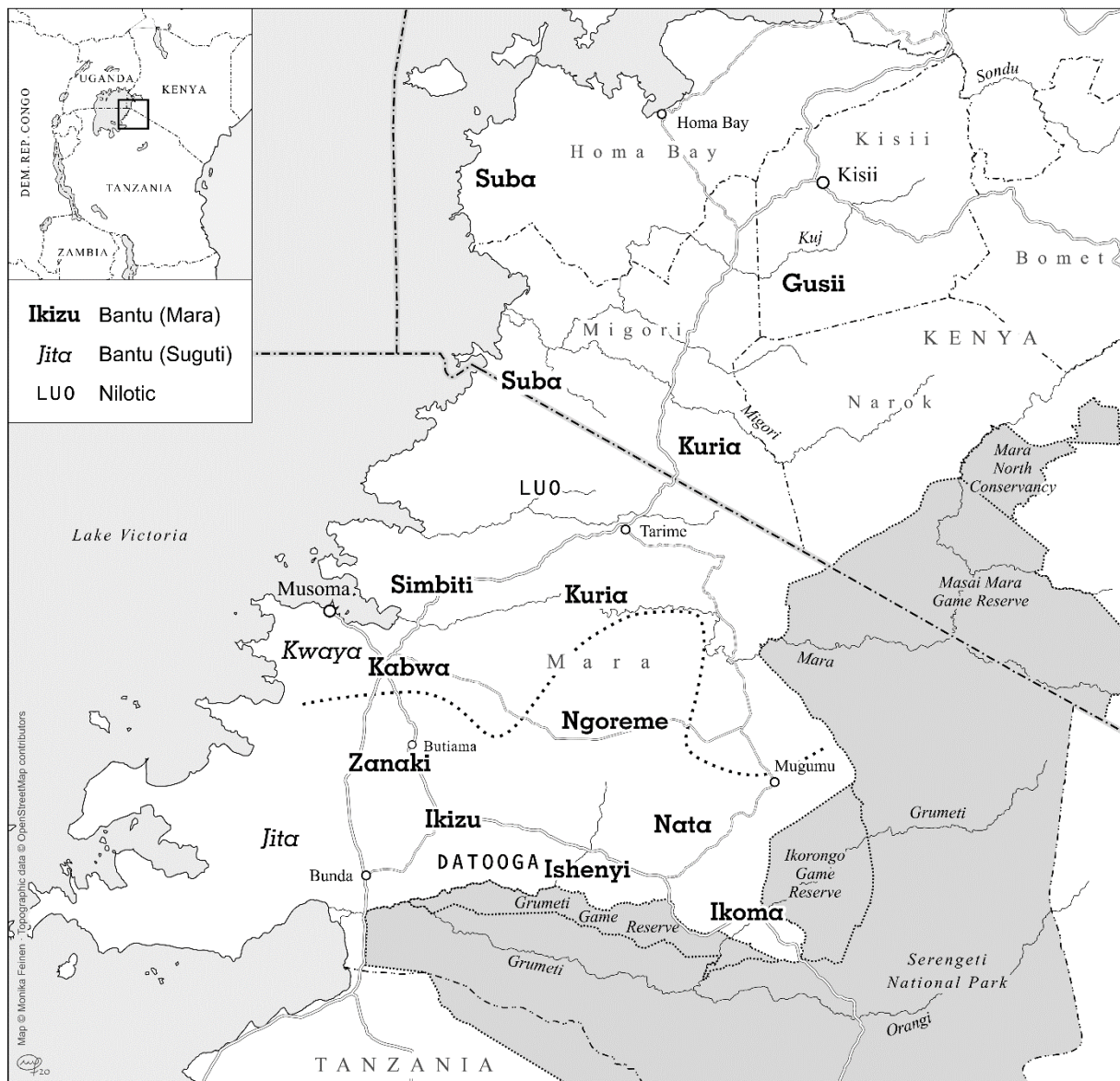
From a methodological perspective, the paper aims, on the one hand, to showcase how reconstructional work established from grammaticalization studies may be employed on un(der)documented language varieties such as the WS ones. On the other hand, it sets out to demonstrate how a grammaticalization framework may form a practical tool for the analysis and description of un(der)-documented varieties, where synchronic alternations and idiosyncrasies become more easily interpretable once they are seen in the light of the diachronic forces which have shaped them.

In reaching these goals, the remainder of the paper will be organized in the following manner. In §2, we address the Mara language ecology and genealogy with a particular focus on WS, including a brief structural overview of these language varieties. In §3, we zoom in to the verb *-mara* and its semasiological background and in §4 we describe the two PhP constructions of which it forms a part. In §5, we account for semantic and formal indications of the grammaticalization of the two constructions, showing that they instantiate very different processes of change. In §6, we discuss the motivation and mechanism behind these grammaticalization processes and relate these to recurrent cycles of change significant in (Eastern) Bantu. A short summary and some final concluding remarks in §7 close this chapter.

2 On Mara: Geography, genealogy and typology

As seen in Figure 1, among its many referential functions, the noun *Mara* may refer both to a geographically confined political region in northern Tanzania and a genealogical grouping of (Eastern) Bantu language varieties spoken both in Tanzania and across the border in Kenya.

Figure 1. Map of the Mara languages and their neighbors



The Mara (formerly Musoma) region is situated in the northern parts of Tanzania, east of Lake Victoria and west of the Serengeti National Park, bordering Kenya to the north. The region is linguistically dense. Besides WS and several other Bantu language varieties, it also contains the Western Nilotic Luo and the Southern Nilotic Datooga languages. The impact of the national and socially dominant language Swahili (also a Bantu language) was noted for the area already by Heine (1976) and has since then had an increasing influence on the linguistic practices of the Mara communities. The younger generations, in particular, are all bilingual with Swahili and it would appear that Swahili is rapidly increasing in use in relation to the local minority language varieties.

Bantu family as a whole is a huge yet tightly knit language family – often compared to a large dialect continuum or spread zone (Güldemann 2018) – consisting of roughly 500 varieties spoken throughout a large part of Sub-Saharan Africa. Genealogically, Mara refers to a grouping within the East Nyanza branch of Great Lakes Bantu (Schoenbrun 1990; Nurse 1999; Nurse & Philippson 2003; Aunio et al. 2019), in turn a subpart of Eastern Bantu (Grollemund et al. 2015). In the traditional alpha-numeric referential system of Bantu languages, consisting of zones labelled through letters, further divided into groups marked by

decimals (and with individual languages indicated with basic numbers), the Mara group roughly corresponds to the JE40 languages of zone J (cf. Guthrie 1948, 1967–1971; Maho 2003, 2009).⁵

The Mara branch itself is split into North and South Mara. The Western Serengeti (WS) group – i.e. the focus of this study – forms a sub-branch of South Mara. The group consists of Ngoreme together with Ikoma, Ishenyi and Nata.⁶ The WS varieties are closely related, with an estimated lexical overlap of up to 85% between Ikoma, Nata, and Ishenyi and 77% between Ngoreme and Ikoma (Roth 2018: 12; Hill et al. 2007). However, plenty of structural (micro-)variation between the varieties has been attested (see, e.g., Roth & Gibson 2019, Bernander & Laine 2020, Aunio 2017). Moreover, some features found in WS are quite striking from a Bantu comparative perspective, including ATR vowel harmony, final vowel deletion, a reduced tense system and the presence of uncanonical constituent orderings in certain pragmatic contexts. These exceptions aside, however, WS languages behave much like typical (Eastern) Bantu languages. They are agglutinative, with an elaborate noun class system and with morphologically intricate verb morphology. The noun class systems consist of up to 20 noun classes (with some minor variation in the inventory and productivity of certain classes), in control of an agreement system affecting the inflectional patterns of both nominal constituents and verbs. Apart from nominal indexation, the verbal word may contain a versatile set of both inflectional and derivational morphology. The verbal “morphotaxis” of WS, consisting of morphological slots dedicated to various functions, can be sketched as in Figure 2.⁷

Figure 2. The Bantu verbal template as it applies to WS

FOC⁸-(/ NEG-) + SM- + TAM-/NEG- + TAM- + OM- + B(ase) + -TAM + =LOC

Notice that vowel coalescence may occur across these morpheme borders in WS. All the WS varieties are also tonal, with lexical tones in the nominal system and grammatical tones for verbal inflection. Their tone systems are restricted and privative in character, with an opposition between H (high tones) – marked with an acute accent in this chapter – and Ø

⁵ These codes are primarily geographically based. Yet, the languages spoken around Lake Victoria, originally treated as belonging to the D and E-zones, has been re-classified on genealogical grounds into a new zone “J” (cf. Philippson & Grollemund 2019). As a consequence, these varieties are typically referred to with J as their first letter followed by their original classificatory letter, hence the doubled-lettered code “JE40” referring to the Mara group.

⁶ Ngoreme is coded with the ISO 639-3 code ngq / glottocode ngur1263, whereas the other varieties are all jointly coded with the ISO 639-3 code ntk and with the glottocode ikom1245 for Ikoma and Nata and isse1238 for Ishenyi. Within the traditional alpha-numeric coding system of Bantu languages Ngoreme is coded as JE401 whereas Ikoma, Ishenyi and Nata are all coded as JE45.

⁷ Abbreviations used in this article generally follows those outlined in the Leipzig Glossing Rules. The exceptions include the following: 1, 2, 3 etc. for noun classes; FV = Final Vowel; NEUT = Neuter; OM = Object marker; SM = Subject Marker. ^o = Tentative reconstruction * = Reconstruction ** = Ungrammatical construction.

⁸ All WS varieties make use of what historically was most probably more of a *bona fide* focus prefix, formally realized as a homorganic nasal /N-/. Today, its function is more opaque. In short, it can be characterized as carrying the inverse function of a focus marker. That is, rather than marking predicate focus, its absence marks that the predicate verb is extra-focal. Nonetheless, it will be glossed as FOC in this chapter.

(toneless), left unmarked (see Aunio 2017 and further references therein for more on the prosodic characteristics of the WS varieties).

3 On *-mara*: A lexical verb commonly involved in Bantu grammaticalization

The verb in focus in this paper, i.e. *-mara*, carries the lexical meaning ‘finish’ in all of WS, and is typically used as a transitive verb. When acting as a transitive verb, and in collocation with a second complement verb, *-mara*, still with the lexical meaning of ‘finish’, can be said to function as an “aspectualizer” (Freed 1979; Binnick 1991). This means that it highlights a distinct terminative phase of the event expressed by a dynamic complement verb, like ‘eat’ in (5).⁹

- (5) Ishenyi
 n-a-mare ku-rááyir-a oβu-kíma
 FOC-SM1-finish.PFV INF-eat-FV 14-ugali
 ‘He has finished eating *ugali* (= stiff porridge).’

As shown by Roth (2018: 42, 69, 70, 104), *-mara* as an aspectualizer in WS may in fact be used with some punctive lexical verbs (i.e., verbs with a punctual “nucleus” or main phase), although they lack a terminative phase in their internal semantic structure. In these cases, *-mara* may contribute the “missing” terminative phase to the event described in the construction. A case in point is the inceptive punctive verb ‘arrive’, as seen in (6).

- (6) Ngoreme
 n-a-máre ko-hík-a
 FOC-SM1-finish.PFV INF-arrive-FV
 ‘S/he has finished arriving.’ (Roth 2018: 69)

Otherwise – as expected from a ‘finish’ verb more generally (see Freed 1979: 135) and as also described for other Tanzanian Bantu languages such as Nyakyusa (Persohn 2017) and Nyamwezi (Kanijo 2019) – lexical *-mara* is banned from selecting punctive verbs, in particular those expressed with a non-volitional, non-agentive subject marker, such as ‘shoot’ and ‘see’ in (7) and (8) below.

- (7) Ishenyi
 ni-mare ku-rór-a kilimantǎ́áro
 SM1SG-finish.PFV INF-see-FV Kilimanjaro
 **‘I have finished seeing Mt. Kilimanjaro.’

- (8) Ishenyi
 na-a-mare ku-rás-u ri-sáási
 FOC-SM1-finish.PFV INF-shoot-PASS 5-bullet
 **‘She has finished being shot.’

⁹ In all the examples of this section, the lexical use of *-mara* is illustrated with the verb inflected in a perfect(ive) verb form whose formal and semantic peculiarities will be further addressed in §4.1.

The verb *-mara* is a reflex of the verb root *-màd- ‘finish’, reconstructible for Proto-Bantu with cognates attested in most Bantu zones (see Bastin et al. 2002). As mentioned in §1, the recruitment of reflexes of *-màd- (along with other ‘finish’ verbs) into an auxiliary, and at a later stage into a prefix, marking ALREADY and interrelated concepts such as perfect, perfective aspect and past tense, constitutes a widespread, recurrent and thus well-known grammaticalization trajectory in Bantu. Ultimately, this situation can be seen to be tied in with the fact that while means of verbal inflection in Bantu languages have changed rapidly and frequently since Proto-Bantu, the patterns themselves and the functional categories expressed have remained relatively stable (Güldemann 1996, 1999; Nurse 2008). Similarly, patterns often re-occur across the vast Bantu family.

Thus, it may not come as a surprise that verbs cognate with *-mara* are shown to have been recruited as auxiliaries in identical constructional frames to express similar functions in many sister languages to WS. Indeed, just through a quick glance at Tanzanian-Kenyan Bantu alone, we find a dispersed set of language varieties outside of the Mara group exhibiting grammaticalized variants of *-màd- at different levels of functional and formal maturation. This is illustrated in Table 1 below (see also Nurse 2008: 305).¹⁰

Table 1. Examples of grammaticalized markers originating from reflexes of *-màd- in Tanzanian and Kenyan Bantu

Variety	Construction	Function	Reference
Ha	mar + PFV # INF	ALREADY	Harjula (2004: 109)
Manda	mal + PFV # INF	ALREADY	Bernander (2017: 207–217; 2021)
Nyamwezi	mal + PFV # INF	ALREADY	Jonsson (1954: 71)
Dawida-Kasigau	meri + PFV # INF	ALREADY	Nurse (1979: 254)
Luhya	mal + PFV # INF	ALREADY / PERFECT	Appleby (1961: 114)
Chaga (Vunjo)	maa-	PERFECTIVE	Moshi (1994)
Chaga (Rombo)	me-	PERFECT	Nurse (1979: 254–255)
Swahili	me-	PERFECT(IVE)	Ashton (1947)

Following Robbeets & Cuyckens (2013), we may refer to these parallel grammaticalization processes as “parallel drift” or “Sapirian drift”, as they (have) occur(red) independently in several Bantu languages, although under the influence of their common origins and even with the same source material.

For WS in particular, however, it cannot be ruled out that the grammaticalization of the AVC with *-mara* into ALREADY constitutes a shared innovation, a process that had at least partially started before proto-WS – or even some earlier ancestor group such as proto-South Mara – came to split up. This is because the use of *-mara* in a similar constructional frame expressing ALREADY is found in all of South Mara and also in some of the closer North Mara varieties, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. AVC with *-mara* as a marker of ALREADY in the Mara subgroup

¹⁰ In §6.3, Swahili will be discussed more extensively, as the language has not only developed an already-gone-perfect(ive) marker from *-màd-, but it has also developed yet another already marker from another ‘finish’ verb.

Subgroup		Variety	Reflex of [*màd + PFV # INF] as ALREADY	Reference
S. Mara	WS	Ikoma, Nata, Ishenyi, Ngoreme	yes	[This chapter]
		Ikizu	yes	Walker (2013: 179)
	S.W. Mara	Zanaki	yes	Walker (2013: 177)
N. Mara		Kabwa	yes	Walker (2013: 170)
		Simbiti	yes	Walker (2013: 173)
		Kuria	no	Charwi (p.c.), Sillery (1928), Cammenga (2004)
		Gusii	no	Cammenga (2002), Whiteley (1960)

The AVC with *-mara* expressing NOT YET, on the other hand, seems to be a unique trait of WS. As this construction occurs in all four varieties while at the same time containing archaic morphology (see §5.2), it arguably forms a shared innovation unique to WS, which makes it a defining feature of WS as a genealogical grouping.

In sum, given the characterization above, it is perhaps not surprising that *-mara* in WS has also grammaticalized into marking ALREADY. At the same time, the corresponding development with **-màd-*, or any other Bantu ‘finish’ verb for that matter, into a NOT YET marker as witnessed in WS is, as far as we know, previously unattested in Bantu (see Veselinova & Devos 2021).

4 The two auxiliary verb constructions with *-mara*

This section offers a further description of the constructional and functional characteristics of the two AVCs with *-mara* in WS, starting with ALREADY (§4.1) and continuing with NOT YET (§4.2).

Anderson (2006, 2011: 2), largely influenced by Heine (1993), defines an auxiliary (verb) as “a verbal element on a diachronic form-function continuum standing between a fully lexical verb and a bound grammatical affix”. He goes on to define an auxiliary verb construction (AVC) as a mono-clausal complex construction consisting (minimally) of an auxiliary verb operating on a lexical predicate verb. Following these definitions, *-mara* in WS arguably acts as an auxiliary verb in two different AVCs, expressing two different functions. As further explained in this section, the two PhP constructions also relate to two different subtypes of AVCs, based on Anderson’s formal subdivision of auxiliary formations in terms of inflectional “headedness”. This formal difference further implies the instantiation of two different channels of formal grammaticalization along the verb-to-affix route.

4.1 Expressing ALREADY

ALREADY is a positive PhP expression, conveying a retrospective focus on an earlier realization of an event that still holds. With regard to counter-exceptionality, ALREADY may also be used to convey that this realization commenced earlier than expected.

When functioning as an ALREADY marker, *-mara* can be inflected in any finite perfect(ive) verb form, while it selects and operates on a second, infinitive verb which conveys the main

event of the event.

In examples (9) and (10), *-mara* acts as an ALREADY marker which occurs in the perfect(ive) verb form consisting of the suffix *-irE*.

(9) Ngoreme

a-mare	ko-hík-a	wa-ító	hano
SM1-already.PFV	INF-arrive-FV	23-POSS 1PL	here

‘She has already arrived here at our place.’

(10) Nata

nááβa	ní-mar-irε	ku-β-á	tayitáári
no,	SM1SG-ALREADY-PFV	INF-be(come)-FV	9.doctor

‘No, I am already a doctor ~ I have already become a doctor.’

Notice that while *-mara* retains its full form in (10), in (9) it has coalesced with the perfective suffix *-irE*. The curious result is that the two flaps of the verb root and the suffix have turned into an articulatorily more complex trill /r/.

From a semantic point of view, it may furthermore be noticed that the temporal reading in these constructions may range from ‘have already’ to ‘be already’. Ultimately, this fact goes back to a common Bantu feature where change-of-state verbs like ‘be(come) a doctor’ in (10) above often gain a (present) resultative reading when inflected with perfect(ive) verb forms in Bantu. However, the reading may very well be rendered as ‘have become’, depending on clause-external issues of viewpoint or the general context in which the propositions are uttered.¹¹

Except for perfective SM-B-*irE*, the meaning of ALREADY may also be expressed with *-mara* in a different “perfectoid” verb form, namely SM-Vká-B-a¹², as illustrated in (11).

(11) Ikoma

ne-eká-mar-a	ko-hííji	amá-nt̥je
SM1SG-NUCL-ALREADY-FV	INF-boil.CAUS	6-water

‘I have already boiled the water.’

Following Roth (2018), we will refer to this verb form as the “nucleative” (glossed as NUCL). This verb form may convey a perfect meaning; this is arguably what it contributes to the proposition in (11), often with an immediate past (‘just’) flavor. However, it also conveys several other functions, including (present) progressive-like readings in addition to (firsthand/eyewitness) evidentiality, as further discussed in §6.1.

In terms of the structural typology of auxiliaries, the AVC expressing ALREADY in WS thus belongs to the AUX[iliary]-headed type, i.e. with the auxiliary verb as both the syntactic and inflectional head and with the full verb carrying non-finite morphology (Anderson 2006,

¹¹ See Botne (2022) for more on perfect(ive) marking in Bantu in general and Roth (2018: 54–70) for WS specifically.

¹² The /V/ in this formula refers to an unspecified vowel, that is, a vowel which adapts its quality depending on the preceding vowel. The comparative data indicate that this vowel was originally an *a, as further discussed in §6.1. See Roth & Botne (forthcoming) on an element-based analysis of the discourse functions associated with the formative *-a-* in these and other verb constructions in Ishenyi.

2011). In this manner, the ALREADY AVC in WS arguably instantiates what Heine & Reh (1984: 114–116) refer to as the “nominal periphrasis” channel of formal grammaticalization along the verb-to-affix route.

4.2 Expressing NOT YET

NOT YET is a negative PhP expression that conveys the (continuing) non-realization of an event with a prospective focus on its future realization. In relation to pragmatic overtones of counter-expectation, NOT YET marks that the assumed beginning and duration of an event is delayed.

As evident in examples (12) and (13), when expressing the notion of NOT YET, *-mara* is inflected very differently compared to when it expresses ALREADY.

- (12) Ngoreme
 tu-tá-ámar-a tu-γór-a e-ηómbε je-ere
 SM1PL-NEG-NOT.YET SM1PL-buy-FV AUG-9.cow 9-DEM
 ‘We haven’t bought this cow yet.’

- (13) Nata
 n-tjá-ámar-a meη-a hánɔ to-ku-γí
 SM1SG-NEG-NOT.YET SM1SG.know-FV where SM1PL-IPFV-go
 ‘I don’t know yet where we are going.’

To start with, NOT YET is a negative expression. Consequently, the construction consists in part of negative morphology. The component of negation is expressed by the standard means in WS. Typically, that is through a negative prefix *ta-*, occurring in a position directly after the subject marker, as in the Ngoreme example in (12) above. However, there are many morpho-phonological quirks associated with the negative marker in WS. Thus, as illustrated in the Nata example in (13) above, the negative prefix and the 1SG subject prefix *ni-* have merged. Moreover, as seen in the Ikoma example in (14), when the SM is only a vowel the negative prefix may retract to a position before the SM to act as a coda on the initial syllable of the verbal word.

- (14) Ikoma
 nanɣasi a-aɲí mu-máŋgi tá-ámar-a a-kwír-u
 CONC SM1-PRES.COP I-beautiful SM1.NEG-NOT.YET SM1-marry-PASS
 ‘Even though she is beautiful, she has not yet married.’

Finally, rather than the post-final prefix as in example (12) above, Ngoreme may instead optionally resort to a different pre-subject marker negative prefix *ti-* as in (15).¹³

- (15) Ngoreme
 ti-ná-ámar-a m-máŋ-a ku-γámb-a ekí-íŋgeresa
 NEG-SM1SG-NOT.YET SM1SG-(come_to)know-FV INF-speak-FV 7-English
 ‘I don’t know (lit. haven’t come to know) (how) to speak English yet.’

The negative marking aside, *-mara* furthermore does not occur in any of the affirmative perfect(ive) verb forms found in WS (illustrated in §4.1). Instead, it is inflected in what must be commensurate with a verb form ⁰SM-a-B-a, an otherwise obsolete construction in WS (see

¹³See Laine et al. (forthcoming) for more information on the negation system of Ngoreme.

§5.2 and §6.1 for further elaboration on this verb form).

Finally, the second predicate verb is not coded as an infinitive. Instead it occurs in a type of finite yet dependent verb form (occasionally referred to as the “conjunctive” within Bantuistics; see Meeussen 1967: 113; Nurse 2008: 309), only used in complement clauses and other subordinate constructions in WS. Hence, in contrast to the auxiliary-headed nominal periphrasis of the AVC expressing ALREADY, the construction with *-mara* expressing NOT YET belongs to Anderson’s (2006, 2011) double-headed type and thus serves as an instantiation of Heine & Reh’s (1984: 116–120) serial periphrasis.

Taking these facts together clearly shows that although the expression of ALREADY and NOT YET are closely interrelated on a semantic level, and in spite of the fact that they both contain the verb *-mara*, the two constructions are highly asymmetrical from a structural perspective and, as we shall see, also in terms of historical and ongoing developmental patterns.

5 The grammaticalization of the *-mara* AVCs: Semantic and formal diagnostics

This and the next section focus on reconstructing the grammaticalization trajectories leading up to the two AVCs involving *-mara* in WS. In this endeavor, the methodology established within grammaticalization studies for the historical reconstruction of un(der-)documented languages is followed. As noted by Heine (2018) – and as demonstrated already in the semasiological account of *-mara* in §3 – this methodology mainly relies on diachronic reconstruction by means of the comparative method paired with internal reconstruction and typological generalizations. It may be argued that this approach works particularly well in the context of such a dense yet tightly-knit language family as Bantu, which can add a robust comparative backdrop to the reconstructive work on a linguistic expression’s history, development and spread through space and time, even when zooming in to a small selection of varieties.

Following Norde & Beijering (2014), grammaticalization is here treated essentially as consisting of the composite changes of semantic reinterpretation and formal reanalysis. Indeed, there are both functional and formal traits which tease the two *-mara* constructions apart from their lexical sources. In this section, we will briefly zoom in to some of these traits as they are witnessed in the development first of ALREADY (§5.1) and then of NOT YET (§5.2). As will be seen, the formal differences noted in §4 above are reflected in the highly diversified historical backgrounds and developmental patterns of the two PhP constructions under consideration.

5.1 ALREADY

The AVC expressing ALREADY in WS constitutes in many ways the more straightforward case of grammaticalization, as it adheres to a common grammaticalization route (see §2). It also exhibits typical diagnostics of (Bantu) AVC grammaticalization, indicative of the polysemic split from the source construction presented in §3. Below follow a few illustrations of various such functional and formal diagnostics of the grammaticalized status of the ALREADY AVC in WS.

5.1.1 *Relaxation of selectional restrictions and expansion in collocational range*

In its grammatical(ized) role as an auxiliary expressing ALREADY, *-mara* shows a relaxation of its selectional restrictions indicative of host-class expansion (Himmelman 2004), also known as an increase in type frequency (Traugott 2010). In practice, this means that *-mara* can be shown to be able to occur in a broader set of contexts and to collocate with an expanded set of

complement verbs, as compared to its lexical etymon ‘finish’. Recall from §3 that *-mara* as a lexical aspectualizer is not totally banned from co-occurring with punctive complement verbs, as it may supply a “missing” coda phase on inceptive punctives like ‘arrive’. However, a combination of lexical ‘finish’ and punctive verbs with a non-volitional agent like ‘see’ and ‘be shot’ do render a collocational clash. Yet, when *-mara* instead functions as a grammatical marker expressing ALREADY, this collocational restriction does not hold anymore, as illustrated in (16) and (17), being the re-iterated examples (7) and (8).

(16) Ishenyi

ni-mare	ku-rór-a	kilimant̃jaro
SM1SG-ALREADY.PFV	INF-see-FV	Kilimanjaro

**‘I have finished seeing Mt. Kilimanjaro.’
BUT: ‘I have already seen Mt. Kilimanjaro.’

(17) Ishenyi

na-a-mare	ku-rás-u	ri-sáási
FOC-SM1-ALREADY.PFV	INF-shoot-PASS	5-bullet

**‘She has finished being shot.’
BUT: ‘She has already been shot.’

5.1.2 Loss of verbal properties and syntactic variability: The case of the locative enclitic

An indication of stronger syntagmatic cohesion between the auxiliary *-mara* and the second verb and thus a loss of syntactic variability relative to the source construction comes from the position of the phoric locative enclitics. These may surface on lexical *-mara* when the verb takes a nominal argument (18) or an infinitival complement (19).

(18) Ishenyi

aβá-ána	m-ba-maré=mu	ya-ase
2-child	FOC-SM2-finish.PFV=LOC18	6-all

‘The children have finished everything (there).’

(19) Ikoma

ni-mar-iri=hó	yo-t̃j̃β-a
SM1-finish-PFV=LOC16	INF-weed-FV

‘I have finished weeding there.’

However, as indicated in (20), when functioning as an auxiliary verb, a locative enclitic on *-mara* is unacceptable. It may only be attached to the second verb.

(20) Ishenyi

- a. mo-mu-yóka ó-no amá-nt̃je ŋ-ga-mare ku-héter-a=mu
 LOC18-3-canal 3-DEM 6-water FOC-SM6-finish.PFV INF-pass-FV=LOC18
 ‘At this canal, the water has already passed through (there).’
- b. ** mo-mu-yók-a o-no amá-nt̃je ŋ-ga-mare=mu ku-héter-a
 LOC18-3-canal 3-DEM 6-water FOC-SM6-finish.PFV=LOC18 INF-pass-FV
 **‘At this canal, the water has finished passing through (there).’

This loss of ability to carry a locative enclitic arguably shows a decrease in the verbal properties of the auxiliary *-mara*.

5.1.3 Shift in anaphoric referencing

To be sure, the grammaticalization of the AVC *-mara* + infinitive and the accompanying categorical reinterpretation affects not only *-mara* but also the second verb, as it is reinterpreted from a nominal-like verbal complement to being the (semantic) main verb. As a consequence, it may no longer be replaced with a *pro-noun*, as in the answer to (21) in (22)a, but needs to be replaced with a *pro-verb* like ‘do’, as in (22)b (or with a construction where the full verb is explicitly expressed).¹⁴

(21) Nata
 n-á-mare ku-rááyεr-a
 FOC-SM1-finish.PFV INF-eat-FV
 ‘She has finished eating.’ OR ‘She has already eaten.’

(22) Nata
 a. ne-ke á-mare
 FOC-Q SM1-finish.PFV
 ‘What has she finished?’
 ** ‘what has she already (done)’

b. ne-ke á-mare yu-kór-a
 FOC-Q SM1-already.PFV INF-do-FV
 ‘What has s/he already done?’

5.1.4 Loss of phonological substance: The case of “detrillification”

There are also several minor ongoing cases of segmental and suprasegmental shifts which are indicative of erosion and an increased fixation and bondedness between the auxiliary *-mara* and the second full verb. Here it suffices to mention one of the more striking ones, namely the case of “detrillification” in Ishenyi. Recall from §4.1 that the flap in *-mara* may coalesce with the flap of the perfective suffix *-irE*, the phonetic result being an articulatory more complex trill /r/. However, in Ishenyi, the ALREADY auxiliary may often be expressed with just a flap, whereas the lexical construction expressing ‘finish’ requires a trill (or the full formal realization /mar-irE/). As evidenced in (23), when realized as just SM-*mare*, the lexical ‘finish’-reading of *-mara* is unacceptable.

(23) Ishenyi
 n-tu-mare yu-yámb-a na=ywe
 FOC-SM1PL-finish.PFV INF-talk-FV COM=3SG
 ‘We have already spoken with her/him.’
 **‘We have finished speaking with him.’

¹⁴ See Bostoen et al. (2012) for a similar AVC diagnostic in the Bantu language Rundi; see also Divjak (2018) and Heine & Miyashita (2008) for (Indo-European) Polish and German, respectively.

This fact is indicative of a loss of phonological substance and thus of a further structural simplification of the AVC. As there are no attestations of this feature in the other WS varieties, with the exception of Ishenyi, this would also constitute one of the few instances of (micro-)variation in the constructional realization of this AVC witnessed within WS.

5.2 NOT YET

Although the grammaticalization process of the ALREADY construction forms a more canonical instance of auxiliation, the grammaticalized status of the NOT YET construction is actually more directly obtainable. This is based on the crucial factor (already hinted at in different parts of this paper) that the verb form ⁰SM-a-B-a in which *-mara* occurs is obsolete in contemporary WS. This means that this verb form, with or without negation, cannot be used with verb roots other than *-mara*. Hence, an intended construction like (24) is considered unacceptable.

(24) Ngoreme

***atááwansa arema*

‘(intended:) S/he has not started cultivating.’

Not even the verb *-mara* can occur by itself in this verb form (whether with its lexical or grammatical reading), as shown in (25)a. Instead, it is dependent on a second verb on which it may only act as a grammatical operator conveying NOT YET, not the lexical ‘finish’, as illustrated in (25)b.

(25) Ngoreme

a. ***atáámara* ‘(intended:) S/he has not finished (yet).’

b. *atáámara amára* ‘S/he has not finished (yet).’ ***‘S/he has not finished finishing.’

There are also indications of further formal grammaticalization of the NOT YET AVC. In particular, there are instances of incremental attrition of the second verb subject prefix. This is most advanced in Ikoma, where there are attestations of the whole subject prefix of the second verb having been omitted altogether (although this still appears to be quite a rare phenomenon, not accepted by all speakers). This may be seen in the absence of the SM1PL morpheme on the second verb ‘see’ in example (26).

(26) Ikoma

to-ta-amára	mo-riyi
SM1PL-NEG-NOT.YET	SM1SG-OM1-see
‘We have not seen her (yet).’	

This formal development is in line with what one might expect from a double-headed serial periphrasis type of AVC such as the NOT YET-construction in WS, given the simple fact that double indexation of the subject is uneconomical once the construction has been grammaticalized (see Güldemann 2003).

6 Old forms and cycles of change

This section sets out to reconstruct the grammaticalization pathway of the two AVCS with *-mara* in WS. Ultimately, we believe that the development of these constructions was

driven by the need in these language varieties to reinforce the specific readings encapsulated in the linguistic expressions of ALREADY and NOT YET. More specifically, we believe, based on the lexical semantics of the source verb ‘finish’, that both AVCs were formed to highlight a reading of (non-)completion of a given event, i.e. the completion (ALREADY) or not (NOT YET) of the phase leading up to its realization (see Van Baar 1997: 86–87; see also Hopper’s 1991 notion of “persistence”). This development simultaneously strengthened the pragmatic readings of counter-factuality.

Both ALREADY and NOT YET have been described as inherently focused expressions (König 1991: Ch. 7; Nicolle 2012; Güldemann 2008: 489–90; Veselinova & Devos 2021; Devos & Veselinova 2021), which at the same time entails that they are intrinsically prone to being neutralized and consequently in need of further reinforcement. Such a trait furthermore suggests the triggering of diachronic cycles, i.e. series of diachronic re-instantiations of the same patterns of development and loss within a single functional category.

Indeed, as will be argued in the following, the development of both *-mara* AVCs can be analyzed as instantiating developmental patterns reminiscent of a diachronic cycle. In §6.2, we discuss the premises of such PhP cycles both for ALREADY and NOT YET from a general Bantu context. In §6.3, we zoom in to the particularities of the developments in WS and how they adhere to these sketched scenarios. First and foremost, however, the development of both AVCs with *-mara* in WS takes place in an environment where other formal means traditionally employed for expressing these concepts have come to drift away semantically, as is the case for ALREADY, or have become obsolete, as is the case for NOT YET. In relation to this fact, the grammaticalization of the *-mara* AVCs can be argued to fill a functional void in these language varieties. We start, in §6.1, by looking at two simplex verb forms found in this area that may have served as the original markers of ALREADY and NOT YET and which concurrently form part of the morphological building blocks of the auxiliaries with *-mara*.

6.1 *The original formal means for expressing ALREADY/NOT YET*

We may note, to begin with, that a formula *SM-a-B-a is generally assumed as a near past/perfect construction for either Proto-Bantu or at least early Bantu (Meeussen 1967: 109, 113; Nurse & Philippson 2006; Botne 2010, 2014; Dom et al. 2018), that is, a construction identical in shape to the negated verb form which *-mara* occurs in when expressing NOT YET. Next, Meeussen (1967: 109) posits a Proto-Bantu prefix *ka- for the “limitative” slot (referring to a secondary prefix position occurring directly after the slot devoted to other TA prefixes) conveying both ALREADY and NOT YET. The combination of the aforementioned verb formula and the limitative prefix *ka-* would render the verb form ⁰SM-a-ka-B-a. Reflexes of this particular form with the meaning ALREADY/NOT YET, as well as more “neutral” perfect readings, often as a recent past perfect (‘just’), occur in many Great Lakes Bantu sister languages to WS, in particular in the Eastern Nyanza and Greater Luhya languages spoken on the eastern side of Lake Victoria; see e.g. Mould (1981: 206–207), Nurse & Muzale (1999), Botne (2010).

In WS, however, the cognate verb form SM-Vká-B-a has developed other peculiar functions. It may not convey the meaning of ALREADY alone and although it may at times acquire the function of a perfect (as was demonstrated in (11) in §4.1), it may also be found with a present progressive reading, not only with change-of-state but also with durative verbs, as evident in (27). What is more, as further seen in (28), SM-áka-B-a in WS has developed into a marker of (firsthand) evidentiality (cf. Roth 2018: 85–109; Crane et al. forthcoming).

(27) Ikoma
 Waka a-ká-ách-a!
 lion SM1-NUCL-come-FV
 ‘Lion is coming!’

(28) Ikoma
 a-ayá-ku
 SM1-NUCL-die-FV
 ‘S/he has (just) died.’

{Context: An elderly person is very sick and near death; s/he is at home. Speaker is in the same room and can see the person OR in an adjacent room but can hear the person.}

Similarly, the “bare” perfectoid verb form *SM-a-B-a is identical to the verb form with which *-mara* is conjugated when expressing NOT YET in WS. As was mentioned in §4.2, however, this verb form itself is obsolete and does not occur in any other contexts in WS, including with any verb other than *-mara*. Still, it appears in the comparative data. For example, the direct neighbor and close relative Kuria (North Mara) appears to freely make use of a negated variant of this verb form, as evident in (29).

(29) Kuria (JE43; Cammenga 2004: 288)
 bhá-tá-á-sóm-a
 SM2-NEG-a-read-FV
 ‘They have not (yet) read (up to now).’

Of particular interest here is the parentheses in the translation of the example, which suggest that the ‘yet’ reading is non-obligatory and thus that this construction may also convey a neutral plain negative perfect. That is exactly the kind of co-expression of NOT YET and plain negation which would trigger the emergence of an auxiliary construction specifying and reinforcing the reading of NOT YET, a fact to which we will turn to in the following section.

6.2 Diachronic cycle(s) of phasal polarity

It has recently been suggested by Veselinova & Devos (2021) and Devos & Veselinova (2021) that the development of NOT YET markers in (Eastern) Bantu may be conveyed as instantiating a cyclical pattern of change. They sketch three developmental stages of such a scenario. In Stage 1, both NOT YET and plain (perfect/resultative) negation is expressed with the same simplex (morphological) verb form. To reinforce the specific NOT YET reading, the simplex verb form inflects on an auxiliary in a (foregrounding) auxiliary construction, in Stage 2. In Stage 3, this auxiliary construction, in turn, may fuse and undergo morphologization back into a synthetic simplex verb form, which may begin to neutralize into a regular negative (perfect/resultative) in need of further reinforcement, in which case the cycle may occur again.

In their analysis of this type of developmental scheme, these authors focus on the comparatively more common use of “dummy” (lexically empty) verbs, e.g. copula verbs, as auxiliaries. With the use of *-mara* as a NOT YET auxiliary, WS has instead employed a source verb with lexical content which also contributes a semantic component to the construction. Still, we believe that the same type of motivation in terms of the need to reinforce the NOT YET reading was at play in WS too. Additionally, we believe that the semantically weighty origin

of *-mara* brought with it an additional emphasis on the *non*-completion of the event.

Interestingly, it would appear to be just as possible to analyze the development of the positive ALREADY through the same analytical model of a recurrent diachronic cycle. A clear example comes from Swahili, where diachronic data also exist in support of this scenario; see Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993: 376), Nurse (2008: 60), Nicolle (2012), Furumoto (2019) and further references therein for reconstructional work on these constructions. Here, *-mala*, a cognate verb to *-mara* in WS, inflected in the cognate reflex of the perfect(ive) verb form *-irE* (obsolete in present-day Swahili) and also operating on an infinitive full verb, underwent grammaticalization instantiating the different stages of the cycle. As sketched in (30)a–c, *-mala* was recruited to reinforce the specific completive ALREADY reading (Stage 2), subsequently undergoing morphologization (Stage 3) into a prefix and neutralization into a perfect(ive) marker of its own, thus closing the cycle (back to Stage 1).

(30) Swahili (G42)

a. *tu-mal-ile ku-lima
SM1PL-finish-PFV INF-cultivate-FV
‘We have finished cultivating / we have already cultivated.’

b. *tu-mele-ku-lim-a
SM1PL-ALREADY.PFV-INF-cultivate-FV
‘We have (already) cultivated.’

c. tu-me-lim-a
SM1PL-PFV-cultivate-FV
‘We have cultivated.’

At this stage, a new cycle kicked in. That is, in order to reinforce the reading of earliness and completion (and counter-factuality) once again, a new auxiliary verb emerged (Stage 2), namely *-(kw)isha*, another common Bantu verb meaning ‘finish’ (cf. Proto-Bantu *-jic-). Inflected in the (now perfect(ive)) SM-me-B-a verb form, this ALREADY construction, in turn, exhibits various degrees of univertation and formal condensation indicative of an inceptive Stage 3, as illustrated in (31).

(31) Swahili (G42)

a. ni-me-kwish-a ku-imb-a
SM1SG -PFV-finish~ALREADY-FV INF-sing-FV
‘I have finished singing / I have already sung.’

b. ni-me-kwisha-imba ~ ni-me-sha-imba
SM1SG-PFV-ALREADY-sing-FV
‘I have already sung.’

In sum, what is witnessed here is clearly a recurrent cycle where Auxiliary₁ turns into Affix₁, merely to be replaced by Auxiliary₂ which, however, is inflected with Affix₁ (i.e. the erstwhile Auxiliary₁). Auxiliary₂ subsequently also turns into an affix (Affix₂). All stages involve material with the same source meanings that develop grammatical functions within the same “perfectoid pool”.

In the following section, we will try to integrate these PhP cycles – i.e. the adapted ALREADY-cycle and the original NOT YET-cycle proposed by Veselinova & Devos (2021) and

Devos & Veselinova (2021) – to see how they have played out for the two *-mara* AVCs in WS.

6.3 The PhP cycle for *-mara* in Mara

Based on the discussion above we may hypothesize that at some putative historical Stage 1, ALREADY and NOT YET were expressed through some simplex morphological means, such as the forms presented in §6.1 above. It is also possible that ALREADY was expressed as an implicational reading of the perfect(ive) verb form with the suffix *-irE* (which is common in Bantu; see Botne 2022).

Next, *-mara* was recruited and embedded in these simplex verb forms forming two auxiliary constructions to accentuate the reading of (non-)completiveness and counter-expectation. At some point in time, concurrent or sequential to this process, the verb form ^oSM-a-B-a disappeared as a productive means of verbal conjugation, whereas the verb form SM-Vká-B-a became extensively associated with other functions.

Both ALREADY and NOT YET would thus serve as *prima facie* instantiations of Stage 2 of the diachronic PhP cycles, as sketched in §6.2 above.

At the same time, the signs of erosion witnessed for both constructions are arguably indicative of movements towards Stage 3. Similarly, there are functional indications that at least the NOT YET AVC with *-mara* is increasingly being neutralized into a broader and thus more neutral negative perfect. At least, it recurrently occurs as a marker of the perfect types associated with a speaker-oriented vantage point (see Botne 2022; see also Comrie 1976; Dahl & Wälchli 2016). A case in point is the negative experiential perfect construction in (32), which marks the situation referred as not having occurred even once (at some specific time in the past). Importantly, the second coordinated clause in this sentence cancels out any reading of the prospect of a future realization of the event depicted in the first clause, and thus a significant component of the meaning of NOT YET is lost.

(32) Ngoreme

ti-n-ámara	né-yi	képa	té-ni-ku-yi	he
NEG-SM1SG-PFR?	SM1SG-go	Kenya	NEG-SM1-IPFV-go	EMP

‘I have never (i.e. not once) been to Kenya and I will never go.’

Moreover, both AVCs may themselves be further reinforced, especially for expressions with a high pragmatic load of counter-factuality.

Thus, as (33) shows, in Ngoreme ALREADY may be reinforced with the adverb *kare* (< *kàdé ‘olden times’; Guthrie 1967: 260). The cognate is also used for ALREADY in Kuria as well as outside of Mara, e.g. in other Kenyan-Tanzanian Bantu languages such as Digo (Nicolle 2013: 154), Lubukusu (Wasike & Diercks 2016), and perhaps also in Ndamba (Edelsten & Lijongwa 2010).

(33) Ngoreme

róobi	a-máre	ko-híka	kare	βúnda
Rhobi	SM1-ALREADY.PFV	INF-arrive	ALREADY	Bunda

‘Rhobi is already in Bunda.’

Similarly, there are instances in WS where the NOT YET reading of the construction with *-mara* itself is being reinforced. This reinforcement is executed through the use of

another auxiliary *-keere* marking STILL, thus being another PhP marker of WS.¹⁵ Example (34) is a case in point.

- (34) Ngoreme
 róobi a-kéére t-á-ámara a-hík-a búnda
 Rhobi SM1-STILL NEG-SM1-PRF? SM1-arrive-FV Bunda
 ‘Rhobi has not yet arrived in Bunda.’

Often, this doubled construction would seem to be used for marking counter-expectation. It also carries a more emphatic reading of disbelief and irritation similar to that of *still not* in English (see Van Baar 1997: 2), as evident in examples (35) and (36).

- (35) Ngoreme
 róobi kána o-kéére u-tá-ámara o-swár-a
 Rhobi oh SM2SG-STILL SM2SG-NEG-PRF? SM2SG-wear_clothes-FV
 ‘Oh Rhobi, are you STILL NOT dressed?!’ {I have told you three times already}

- (36) Nata
 a-keeré ta-amára a-yotoori kw-éyi
 SM1-PERS SM1.NEG-PRF? SM1-help INF-wash_up
 ‘Has he STILL NOT helped cleaning?’

7 Summary and Conclusions

This study has accounted for the grammaticalization of two auxiliary verb constructions involving the verb *-mara* ‘finish’ into markers of ALREADY and NOT YET in the Western Serengeti language varieties of Mara Bantu. As has been shown, there are both functional and formal indications of the grammatical(ized) status of both these AVCs, albeit in very different manners. Indeed, although the expressions of ALREADY and NOT YET form conceptually related markers of phasal polarity, and although they make use of the same lexical verb as auxiliary, they occur in very different constructional frames with different historical backgrounds. NOT YET is not merely the negated version of ALREADY but stands in a construction of its own. Thus, although they share a joint paradigm or semantic space, it is most reasonable to assume that the functions were developed separately, rather than from the same grammaticalization chain. With specific reference to the development of expressions of PhP, Van Baar (1997: 342) refers to this type of polygrammaticalization as the “plane model”, comparing it to an airplane that unloads its passengers at different stops where they continue

¹⁵ *-keere* is either derived from the verb *-ikara* ‘sit, stay’ or a combination of the so called “persistent” (i.e. a STILL-marking) prefixal morpheme *kí (reconstructible for Proto-Bantu; Nurse 2008: 246–249) and the copula verb *-re*. Interestingly, *-keere* + an infinitive verb has conventionalized into another NOT YET marker in WS, probably through the conventionalization of an inference invited from the inceptive status and thus non-factual reading of the infinitive verb, viz. ‘still to X’ > ‘not yet X’ (cf. Güldemann 1998; Nurse 2008: 147–148; Veselinova & Devos 2021). Since the auxiliary *-mara* cannot occur without a second predicate verb (see §5.2), *-kéere* alone may convey NOT YET in non-predicative elliptic contexts, such as in negative answers. See Laine et al. (forthcoming) for more information about this construction and its contrasts with the *-mara* construction with specific reference to Ngoreme.

to exist independently of each other, although they all originally flew in the same plane (i.e. they were instances of the same lexical source).

These differences aside, it was argued that both forms can still be analyzed as being part of a type of recurrent linguistic cycle in Eastern Bantu, driven by the need to reinforce these inherently focused and thus expressive concepts. As argued, this occurred in an environment where the verb forms hypothesized to have originally served to mark the concepts of ALREADY and NOT YET had drifted away to develop other functional qualities, or even into oblivion.

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