Murrawarri Verbs – Part 1 – Tense & Aspect

Verbs are probably the most complex part of the Muruwari language. Verbs contain a STEM (the action) and then have a great deal of information built into the suffixes that follow the STEM. To keep the learning as simple and incremental as possible we have decided to break verbs into 4 sections of increasing difficulty.

PART 1 will explain how suffixes are added to mark **TENSE**

PLACEMENT OF VERBS WITHIN A SENTENCE

Muruwari is NOT like English where the verb is positioned in between the Subject and the Object:

Mum drank a coffee

Sub verb object

In Muruwari the **verb is often towards the end** of the sentence, after the object:

Mum a coffee drank

Sub object verb

THE ORDER OF THE SUFFIX INFORMATION

The 4 types of suffixes are <u>not</u> randomly attached to the **VERB STEM**, they have a preferred **ORDER. Transitive verbs** must have at least **one** suffix.

VERB STEM   +   (realis)*   (voice)*   (tense/aspect)   (pronoun)*

TENSE & ASPECT

Tense tells us about when something happens. It is one of the main pieces of information that goes on a verb. Think about the difference between *I jumped*, *I jump* and *I will jump* in English. The difference between each phrase is the tense. In Muruwari tense is marked on verbs with an ending or suffix. Muruwari marks three main tenses on verbs. **Past tense** marks actions that have already happened (I jumped), **present tense** marks actions that are happening now (I jump) and **future tense** marks actions that will happen in the future. In addition to these tenses verbs can be used as a **command** (you jump!).

Tense is always marked on verbs in Muruwari.[1] Although it is not always clear what sounds are marking tense due to the complexity of the language the following general rules *mostly* apply:

Tense	Ending
Past	*a*
Present	*i*
Future	*-gu*[2]
Command	*ø / Ra* (NOTE: ø means NO suffix)

The following table shows the past, present, future and command forms for a number of verbs.[3]

	Past	Present	Future	Command
to sit	*niyaa*	*niyi*	*niyagu*	*niya*
to swim	*baanggiya*	*baanggi*	*baanggigu*	*baanggi(y) muga*
to run	*dhanggiya*	*dhanggi*	*dhanggigu*	*dhanggi*
to go	*yanda*	*yanti*	*yanggu*	*yana*

The marking of tense in Muruwari is made more complex by the marking of **aspect**. The marking of tense and aspect in Muruwari are very closely linked and can be thought of as being marked together. In linguistics, aspect tells us about how an action happens over time. For example, we can say that an action happened just once as in *I jumped*, or that it happened over and over again as in *I was jumping*. Notice that both of these actions happened in the past and would have past tense, the difference is the aspect or how the act of jumping happens over time. In addition to the marking of tense and aspect, verbs in Muruwari often require a bound pronoun. The bound pronoun tells us who is doing the action, that is who is the subject of the sentence. Bound pronouns are explained in part 2.

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[1] The grammatical situation may have been more complicated than this, but based on the information available we believe it is best to treat tense as always being marked.
[2] *NOTE: remember that the suffix '-gu' in Muruwari has multiple uses and meanings*.
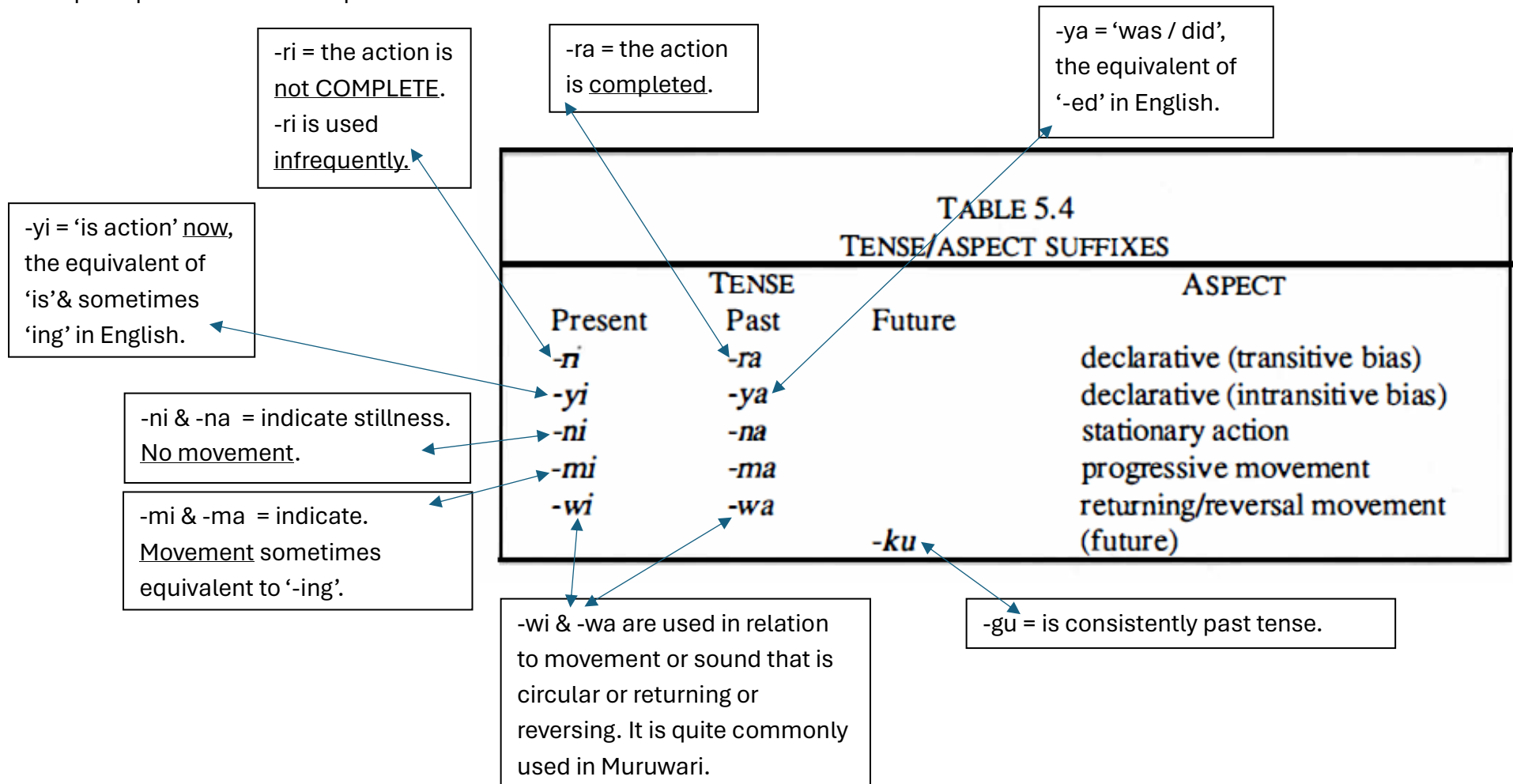[3] Many of these verb forms aren't complete and require additional endings to be grammatical.

TENSE & ASPECT are inextricably linked in Muruwari language

Aspect

In linguistics, ASPECT is a grammatical category that expresses how an action, event, or state, as denoted by a verb, extends over time.

Table 5.4 (L Oates) shows the range of Muruwari aspects and how they change from present and past with future tense remaining constant (-gu). Arrows indicate a simple explanation of each aspect.

-ri = the action is not COMPLETE.
-ri is used infrequently.

-ra = the action is completed.

-ya = 'was / did', the equivalent of '-ed' in English.

-yi = 'is action' now, the equivalent of 'is'& sometimes 'ing' in English.

-ni & -na = indicate stillness. No movement.

-mi & -ma = indicate. Movement sometimes equivalent to '-ing'.

TABLE 5.4
TENSE/ASPECT SUFFIXES

TENSE			ASPECT
Present	Past	Future	
-ri	-ra		declarative (transitive bias)
-yi	-ya		declarative (intransitive bias)
-ni	-na		stationary action
-mi	-ma		progressive movement
-wi	-wa		returning/reversal movement
		-ku	(future)

-wi & -wa are used in relation to movement or sound that is circular or returning or reversing. It is quite commonly used in Muruwari.

-gu = is consistently past tense.

Here are some simple examples showing the change from present tense 'i' to past tense 'a'.

NOTE: About half of Muruwari verbs already end in 'i" – and therefore do not necessarily need extra suffixes to represent present tense.

3rd person singular (he/she/it) alone seems to have its own specific past tense, denoted by "a".

Root	Present tense		Past tense	
Swim Baanggi-	I am swimming	Baanggi-yu swim I	I swam	Baanggi-ya-yu swam did I
Run Dhanggi-	I am running	Dhanggi-yu Run I	I ran	Dhanggi-ya-yu ran did I
Dance Girri-	They are dancing	Girri-(la)-yiRa dancing they	They danced	Girri-ya-yiRa danced did they
Grow Turri-	The grasses are growing	durri-l-mi-yida yawi grow-movt' fwd(prog)-they-grass	He was growing	durri-mi-pi-ya-a grow did-he/past tense
			There are a lot of yams grown	thuu gimay durra-li-da Many yams grow did ** notice that the 'i' in durri has been changed to an 'a' to indicate past tense
Slip Mara- **Slip/slide Bala-**			I slipped Bala-rri-ya-yu Slip (self) did I	Mara-da-yu slipped did I Bala-rri-ya-yu Slip (self) did I

FUTURE TENSE

Future tense is the most consistent suffix, and it is marked with the suffix -gu.

Future tense in Muruwari can indicate: intention, possibility, persuasion, doubt and ability as well as 'let us'.

Here are some simple examples showing the change from present 'a' and past tense 'i' to future tense '-gu'.

Root	Present tense	Past tense *3rd singular -a* seems to be the only bound pronoun which has its **own** tense	Future tense
Swim **Baanggi-**	I swim baangg**i**-yu swim I	I swam baanggi-**ya**-yu (swam did I)	will swim baanggi-**gu**-yu swim will I
Chop **Buu-** **Burri-**	He is chopping burr**i**-bu chop he is	I chopped *burru*-**ya**-yu Chop did I *NOTE: Chop is spelled differently throughout the text*	I will chop buu-l-**gu**-yu chop will I
Talk **Yaa-**	Talking yaa-n-m**i - bula** talk (mvt') those 2	He talked yaa-n-th**a**-a-pu talk did **he/he**	You will talk yaa-n-**gu**-ntu talk will you
Throw **Garra-**	Throwing garra-y**i**-pu throw(ing) is he	He threw the water out garra-wi - y**a**-a threw (RET) **did he/past**	I will throw garra-y-**gu**-yu throw will I
Fall **Warra-**	(rain) falling warra-n-da-y**i**-bu fall now it	He fell Warr**a** – **a** – bu - na fell **he/past he at**	It (the sun) will fall warra-**gu** -bu fall will it
Stand **Dhina-**	He is standing dhinaa-n**i**-bu stand still he	He stood up gand**a** dhina-**a**-bu up stood **he(did)**-he	Will stand dhina-y-**gu** stand will
Float **Gaanggi-**	It is floating gaangg**i**-bu floating it	He floated gaanggi-y**a**-a-pu float did **he(did)** -he	Could float gaambi-**gu**-na-**a** float will LCL – **he (did)** *NOTE: There are multiple words and spellings for float*
Dive/enter **Gayi-**	The snake is going into its hole gay**i**-n dhira diindja gaan into go hole snake	It went through here nhuu-ngka gayi-mpa-**a** ngaRa this-at through it**(did)** over there	I will dive into the waters of the Birrie Creek ngathu gayi-n-**gu**-yu ngaba-ngga birri-ngga I dive-will I water at Birrie-at