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PAPERS  
ON  
DISCOURSE

JOSEPH E. GRIMES, EDITOR

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# Dan Tense-Aspect and Discourse

Eva Flik

## Abstract

Dan narratives divide naturally into three parts: introduction, body, and coda. The body is made up of two or more paragraphs on the one hand, and of incidents on the other. Paragraphing is fundamentally based on time, with new paragraphs beginning whenever the event line of the story is interrupted by a space where time elapses without taking the main event line forward. Incidents, however, are set up according to lexical content, not time setting.

Three positive tense-aspects are distinguished: independent, aorist, and bound. There are also two negative tense-aspects, punctiliar and continuative. When the negative is chosen, the distinctions which are relevant for positive tense-aspect are lost. The choice of which tense-aspect to use is related to its contextual environment, with regard to the entire discourse.

In order to explain the tense-aspect system of Dan<sup>1</sup>, the context in which an utterance occurs is of great importance. The first section of this paper gives a short outline of the discourse structure, which will be referred to in the second section. In the second section three positive and two negative tense-aspects as well as the future are presented.

## DISCOURSE

This section presents the characteristic structure of Dan discourse, mainly as found in folk narratives. Most examples are taken from a single text. A literal translation of each example is given in parentheses followed by a free translation in quotation marks.

Dan narratives divide naturally into three parts, introduction, body, and coda.

---

<sup>1</sup>Dan is spoken by the Dan people in the extreme west of the Ivory Coast and in the adjacent regions of Liberia and probably Guinea. In the Ivory Coast, the Dan, who there are also called Yacouba, number approximately 245,000. In Liberia, where the Dan are also called Gio, they number about 80,000. Dan has been classified as Mande-fu by Delafosse, as a member of the Mana-Busa group of the southern Mande languages by Prost, and as a member of the southern group of the southeastern division of Mande by Welmers. Several descriptive studies are listed among the references.

Among dialects of Dan, there exist considerable differences in vocabulary, the use of segments (though the inventory of segments is the same), and tone. Nevertheless, intelligibility is generally high. The dialect studied for this paper is that of Blossé, spoken south of the town of Danané in the Ivory Coast. The analysis presented here is the result of field work begun in November 1970. The work has been facilitated by participation in a workshop held in Abidjan in 1973 by Joseph E. Grimes.

**Introduction.** In order to gain the attention of his listeners, a Dan story teller may start with *-kwa kwa 'to 'to*.<sup>2</sup> (we-imperative possessive ear stay) 'Let us listen!'

Whether it begins with an attention-getting sentence or not, every narrative starts off with an introduction, which may give in its first sentence the topic of the story: *.kwèinzu' 'eu bhe .bhao waa- .zloo -wo -a -peu wo -dheu -bla su*. (story which there tortoise and gazelle they it said they will race take) 'This story is about the tortoise and the gazelle, who said they would race.' Instead of mentioning the topic of the story, however, the narrator may prefer to describe the time setting during which the story takes place: *.kwèinzu' 'eu bhe -yeu -ke din 'gbéé- yi 'ka*. (story which there it happened famine big day with) 'This story happened during the days of a big famine.'

Next comes a sentence following the topic or time setting, if any, which presents the main participant and gives some description of his character: *.dhè -ke .nè -té 'ne -yeu -ke 'ne 'kpaakpa- 'eu .zoueu' -yeu bô 'woun 'gu -a 'ka bhe -yeu eubha -bheu=pe- .mèè' -su 'sle -yeu*. (as happened here orphan child he was child wise and-

<sup>2</sup>The transcription is based on a phonemic analysis (Bolli and Flik ms.). The consonantal phonemes /p t k kp b d g gb f v s z w/ are symbolized as such in the orthography. The phoneme /j/ is written as *y*. Lateral /l/ is written as *r* after alveolar stops and *l* everywhere else. Lenis bilabial and alveolar stops are written as *m* and *n* in words that have the feature of nasalization, and as *bh* and *dh* elsewhere.

The vowels, listed in order from the more close to the more open, are: front vowels *i, é, è, èa*; back unrounded *u, eu, e, a*; and back rounded *ou, o, ô, ao*. When *u* follows either *e* or *eu*, it is distinguished by a diaeresis.

The symbol *ng* following a vowel indicates that the vowel is nasal; *n* at the end of a word indicates that all vowels in the word are nasal. Nasal vowels are found in only three degrees of opening, in contrast to four for oral vowels. The contrast between mid-close and mid-open is neutralized, and the vowel is realized intermediately between the two.

There are three level tones: high (written *'*), mid (not written), low (*.*), and two glides: assimilating falling tone (*-*) and nonassimilating falling tone (see below). The assimilating falling tone is a glide which starts at the height of the preceding tone and then glides down over the intervals of two phonetic tone levels. According to tones occurring on nouns, five phonetic tone levels have been established for Dan (Flik ms.). The nonassimilating falling tone is a glide which is bound for its starting point to the height of the mid tone and glides down to the next lower phonetic level. The tone of the first syllable of a word is written in front of the word. The tone of the second syllable of a word is written at the end of the word, but only in those cases where the second tone is different from the tone found on the first syllable. The assimilating falling tone, when the only tone on a word, is written in front of it. The nonassimilating falling tone, when the only tone on a word (only the case on monosyllables) is equivalent to a mid tone followed by an assimilating falling tone. It is written with no symbol in front of the word for the mid component and a hyphen at the end of the word for the assimilating falling component. The combination low-mid is marked with a full stop in front of the word for the low component and an apostrophe at the end of the word for the mid tone, since there is no low-high combination and since the lack of a symbol for mid at the end would imply low-low. Low-nonassimilating falling, the remaining combination, is written with a full stop for low tone in front of the word, an apostrophe for mid tone at the end of the word, and a hyphen for assimilating falling tone after the apostrophe at the end of the word. Morphemes that go together rhythmically are joined by *=* to show the extent of phonological words. Intonational breaks are shown by word-final (*.*) for a final fade and (*,*) for a break with no fade. There are other possibilities that have not been fully analyzed.

he<sup>3</sup> heart it pass matter in he with there he possessive eat=thing search nominalizer plan see) 'As the orphan was a wise child, and as he was able to think, he had his plans how to find food.' Another story presents the main character more briefly: *goon- de do 'eu bhe -yeu -ke 'blu ke -mè 'ka*. (man father one which there he was jungle hunt man with) 'A certain man was a hunter.'

The character of the main participant of the story may be established not only by using adjectives but by immediately describing some action of his which typifies his character: *.dhè -ke .nè -kleueu .ya -dhô -ke kpèè 'ka bhe -dhè .ya 'po zéan 'kpèè -gbloo 'dheu -a 'ka 'eu eu -gô dô -u 'ku*. (as happened here monkey he desire make *kpèè* with there place it open way *kpèè* string exist it with and-he possessive head placed it with) 'As the monkey likes the fruit of the *kpèè* plant, if the day dawns on the place where they are, he goes there.'

**Coda.** Every narrative ends with an indication that it is finished: *kwabha- .kwèinzú' bhe -a 'dhieu 'to -dhè 'eu bhe*. (possessive story there possessive end stay place which there) 'This is the end of our story.' or *'ma -a peu 'dheu keu 'ma yen*. (I it said like-this therefore I finished) 'I have said it like this, therefore I have finished.'

After he states the end of the story the speaker can still add the question *ka -a -ma -a*. (you-plural it hear question-particle) 'Did you understand it?' Even without asking for it, the story teller will get a reaction from his listeners, who are in any case the ones who say the last word. Each gives his response individually, chosen from several possible response words, *.awo*, *.èè*, *.nn*, *hée*, or *ii-*. All these answers are positive and express that the listeners understand the content of the story and agree. No standard response has been found which would express discontentment or disagreement on the part of the listeners.

This ending of a narrative can be preceded by the statement of the moral which the story is intended to give: *'eu tôô .nè pe yaa ke -su 'eu bhe, mè -nou ka 'plè 'ka din -bheu -na, keu bhi 'peu 'uen- pe =.bheuü yeu, 'uen- 'koun -a -blèè -an -dhe -su 'ka bhe, -yeu 'gououze-*. (it is here thing bad do nominalizer which there, people plural you-plural all you-plural hunger eat participle, and you-singular intensifier if-you-singular thing=food see, if-you-singular without it say them to nominalizer with there, it bad) 'This is the kind of action which is bad: You people all, when you are hungry and you find something to eat and don't tell the others about it, this is bad.'

**Body.** The body of the Dan narrative is made up of two or more paragraphs on the one hand, and of incidents on the other.

A **paragraph** unfolds actions that follow each other closely enough in time that there is no interruption in the cohesion of the incident or scene. As soon as the event line of the story is interrupted by a space where time elapses without taking the main event line forward, a new paragraph is started. The fact that time has elapsed between two paragraphs may be stated explicitly in the form of a new time setting mentioned at the beginning of the new paragraph: *yi do 'ka*, (day one with) 'one

<sup>3</sup>The conjunction *'eu* 'and' links actions in a sequence. In the cases where this conjunction is followed directly by the homophonous third person subject pronoun *'eu*, there is fusion of the two, and only one of them appears.



day', 'yi.néu' .kôou' -dhè .ya dô, (evening house-in place it came) 'when the evening came'.

But this explicit mention of a change in time setting is not really necessary. A native speaker of Dan knows when to start a new paragraph according to cultural assumptions which he makes automatically. For example, between two paragraphs of one story, time goes by. In the earlier paragraph, people come to the house of the spider, and he welcomes them. But Dan culture does not allow a person to go directly to the main matter which is the reason for his coming. Some time has to go by first while the parties entertain each other about unimportant matters. Only then is the main topic brought up. In our example, the spider starts with his prayer only several hours after the arrival of his guests. This conforms to the expected pattern, and the culturally required lapse of time furnishes a paragraph boundary signal by implication rather than by statement.

A new paragraph may be started with a new location, but location change seems to be significant only in the sense that time elapses while the participants of the story are changing their place of action. Paragraphing is fundamentally based on time.

With regard to both time and location setting, the boundary between one paragraph and another may be additionally marked by linkage. This is done by recapitulating the immediately preceding action. One paragraph ends 'eu 'wo .yoon. (and they went-down) 'and they went down'. Then a new paragraph starts: .dhè 'eu 'wo .yoon 'eu diông -yeu -u peu pe 'eu bhe wu kwi -mu. (when and they went-down and fox he it said thing which there animal skin exist) 'When they had gone down, the fox said, "This thing here is an animal skin."'

There may be linkage by implication even without repetition. A paragraph ends .zloo -yeu -da -na zéun -ta 'peu -bla 'ka. (gazelle she enter participle way on also speed with) 'The gazelle started on her way, too, with speed.' The new paragraph starts: .dhè 'eu .zloo -yeu nou 'eu yeu 'sôô- .géin' dheu. (when and gazelle she came and-she arrived hill foot at) 'And when the gazelle came, she arrived in the village named At-the-foot-of-the-hill.' The two verbs 'start' and 'arrive' are a lexically related pair. As stated by Longacre (1972), the linkage between these two paragraphs is based on a chain of expectancy. The hearer, having heard the first action, expects the other to follow automatically.

Incidents, like paragraphs, are segments into which the introduction, the body, and the coda of a narrative are divided. The existence of a paragraph unit, on the one hand, and of an incident on the other seems independent. Paragraphs are set up according to time setting, incidents according to lexical content. Both paragraphs and incidents may use linkage, but their boundaries do not necessarily coincide.

The linkage which is found at the beginning of an incident is different from paragraph linkage. It may be done by a short anaphoric clause. While the anaphoric clause which links paragraphs recapitulates only the immediately preceding action, the anaphoric clause linking incidents recapitulates in a general way all that has happened in the whole preceding incident: .dhè 'eu -ke 'dheu bhe, (when which happened like-this there,) 'after this had happened', .ya ke 'dheu, (it happened like-

this,) 'when this had happened' or -a 'ké 'eu bhe .ya yen, (possessive ? which there it finished,) 'when this was finished'.

Another episode linkage uses one action to recapitulate a whole series, as in *daon .ya nou, .ya 'sè 'pon eugô- 'kô 'dhi -zéan mè 'plè tii 'ka, .ya -a 'dhieu 'koun, .ya 'pée 'lu 'su .ya -a -gban -dhè 'eu bhe -a -bha. .ya 'sè 'pon .ya -a -gban -a 'gu mu.* (spider he came, he earth dug possessive house door way people all blackness with, he possessive brim caught, he plant stalk took he it planted place which there it on. he earth dug he it planted it in there.) 'The spider came. He dug the earth in front of his house in the absence of all the people. He caught its brim [tied leaves around its top]. He took the stalk of a plant and planted it into it. He dug the earth and planted it [the pot of honey] into it there.'

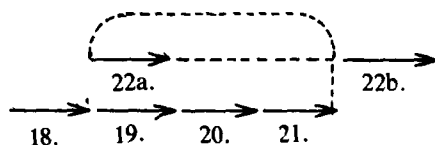


Figure 1. Predications in paragraph 3 of a story. The dotted line shows the sequence of telling main events.

The first part of the last sentence of the example recapitulates partially what has happened in the preceding incident. Out of the five actions mentioned, only the digging of the earth is repeated. It is in a shorter form than before. The digging of the earth is thus highlighted in retrospect as the most important action from the point of view of continuing the story.

Recapitulating certain predications, as Figure 1 suggests, may be like holding the event line of the story for a moment in a cycle rather than progressing. A cycle of this kind always appears before an event of special importance to get that event to stand out more sharply from its background. The interest of the hearer is held up for a moment so as to be fully concentrated on the important event which is to come.

A second kind of incident linkage recapitulates the last action of the preceding incident but does it in a different way than paragraph linkage would. Whereas with paragraphs, after the recapitulation of the preceding actions, the story goes on to events which are not connected with the event just repeated, incident linkage presents a general-specific relationship between the recapitulating clause and the actions that follow.

For example: *'eu yi do 'ka bhe, 'eu -té 'ne -yeu to pleueu. 'to -té 'ne -yeu -a wo pleueu 'wa è, 'eu nou daon -gô 'kô 'dhi -zéan -gla 'gu mu.* (and day one with there, and orphan child he stayed village-in. stay orphan child he it did village-in nicely particle-of-linkage, and-he came spider possessive house door way palisade in there.) 'One day the orphan stayed in the village. Concerning the staying which the orphan did nicely in the village, he came to the place in front of the spider's house in the

palisade there.' The third sentence recapitulates the orphan's staying in the village, which was mentioned in the sentence before. It uses a special grammatical form of the anaphoric clause in which the verb is front-shifted and its place in the body of the clause is taken by the less specific verb *wo* 'do'. The last sentence gives more details concerning the actions which took place while the orphan stayed in the village.

It may be noted that the actions in a general-specific pattern are all old information except for their details. The general-specific linkage with verb fronting is not used, like the linkage of Figure 1, to suspend progress just ahead of an important action.

A **predication** represents one action or one description. It is expressed by a clause. This may be an independent or a dependent clause. A sentence consisting of more than one clause corresponds to an expanded predication. Predications make up the paragraph as well as the incident. The cut where a new predication starts may be marked by an intonation break and a lowering of the intensity of the voice on the last one to three words.

With regard to time sequence within the paragraph, predications follow one another in one uninterrupted flow. Predications carrying background information are put between those carrying the event line of the story forward without any special characteristics. The lapse of time between two predications is the reason for starting a new paragraph.

In Dan, no two things are told as though they had been done at the same time. The Dan proverb *pe 'eu -dheu waa- eu yi -mu*. (thing which exists and possessive day exist) 'There is a time for everything,' reflects the attitude with which a Dan story teller goes about constructing a story. The following examples show how a paragraph has been cut into a series of predications: *'eu yi do 'ka bhe, 'eu -té 'ne -yeu to pleueu. 'to -té 'ne -yeu -a wo pleueu 'wa è, 'eu nou daon -gô 'kô 'dhi -zéan -gla 'gu mu. bhii daon .ya 'sle ke. -dhè .ya ke 'zéazéa- dheu 'wawa*. (and day one with there, and orphan child he stayed village-in. stay orphan child he it did village-in nicely particle-of-linkage, and-he came spider possessive house door way palisade in there. for spider he plan made. place it became even nicely.) 'And one day the orphan stayed in the village. Concerning the orphan's staying in the village, he came in front of the spider's house within the palisade. Because of the fact that the spider had made a plan, the place had become nicely even.'

There are sequences of actions which are lexically knit together more closely than others. They are seen as taking place in one motion: *'eu .louou 'eu dho*. (and-he arose and-he went-away.) 'and he arose and went away'. The action of arising is the beginning, and the action of going away is the end of one and the same motion, which describes the departure of the man. Another case is *'wo nou 'yi.néa' 'wo -a peu*. (they came evening they it said) 'And they came in the evening and they said,'. The teller of the story told these two actions in one breath, making no intonational break between them, and lowering the intensity of his voice only after having told the second action. The two actions of coming and then talking are considered to have taken place very shortly one after the other, as the villagers as soon as they had

arrived started to call the spider. A predication consisting of more than one action or description joined intonationally is called an **expanded predication**.

The choice of using normal or expanded predications when telling a story is governed by style. If the speaker wants to give a detailed description of part of an incident, he cuts up the scene into many simple predications that denote actions following one another. He may even take apart actions which customarily are considered as being lexically knit together and expressed by one expanded predication.

Two such closely knit actions may be separated by inserting other actions between them. The additional actions often are of the kind in which the actor changes his location. The following two versions of the first part of a paragraph show how the text may be divided differently into predications each time to give a different impression of how the actions are related.

Here is the form which the story teller used: *'yi.néa' .kôou' -dhè .ya dô, 'wo nou 'yi.néa' 'wo -a peu, 'yie nou bhaô-. 'yie nou bhaô-*. (evening house-in place it came, they came evening they it said, we come interjection. we come interjection.) 'When the evening had come, they came in the evening and said, "We have come! We have come!"' As far as the second predication is concerned, the two actions of coming and then calling are one single expanded predication. In combining them the story teller underlines the fact that immediately after arriving, the villagers call for the spider to tell him that they are there.

The same scene may also be told in the following form: *'yi.néa' .kôou' -dhè .ya dô, 'wo nou daon -gô 'kô 'dhi zéan- 'wo dô mu. 'wo daon -dhè 'wo -a peu. 'yie nou bhaô-. 'yie nou bhaô-*. (evening house-in place it came, they came spider possessive house door way they placed-themselves there. they spider called they it said. we come interjection. we come interjection.) 'When the evening had come, they came to the place in front of the door of the spider's house and placed themselves there. They called the spider and said, "We have come! We have come!"' In this version, the actions of coming to the spider's house and calling him are not given in one expanded predication as in the original version. Whereas combining them underlined their immediate sequence, this manner of telling drops the nuance of an immediate sequence and gives a detailed description of the incident instead. More phases of the scene have been captured by the story teller. The place to which the people come is put in, and where they stand, then their calling him.

As the following example shows, it is culturally impossible for some pairs of actions to be combined in an expanded predication: *ke .nè ke 'eu -a wo -na 'dheu bhe, .ya 'me -té 'ne 'ka. 'eu -té 'ne -yeu -a peu*, (happened here do and-he it did participle like-this there, it upset orphan child with. and orphan child he it said,) 'And it happened that his doing it like this upset the orphan. And the orphan said,' The second and third predication cannot be united into an expanded predication. Culturally it is inconceivable that the reaction of talking would follow getting upset so very closely that the two could be seen as one complex action.

With the exception of culturally impossible combinations of the kind as just

mentioned, it is possible to put two or more actions together into one expanded predication, or it is possible to make several predications out of what could be one expanded predication. In one story, an orphan goes and takes a honey pot. The unfolding of the actions can be told in at least three different ways. The story teller said: *'eu -té 'ne -yeu dho. 'eu -a su 'eu dho.* (and orphan child he went-away, and-he it took and-he went-away.) 'And the orphan went away. And he took it and left.' The precipitate action of the orphan is underlined at the moment where he takes the honey pot and goes away; these two actions, by being put into one expanded predication, are shown to have taken place in the same motion.

Another possible telling is: *'eu -té 'ne -yeu dho 'eu -a su. 'eu dho.* (and orphan child he went-away and-he it took, and-he went-away.) 'And the orphan went away and took it. And he left.' In this version the precipitate action of the orphan is underlined at the moment of his going to the place and taking the honey pot.

A third possible version would be: *'eu -té 'ne -yeu dho 'eu -a su 'eu dho.* (and orphan child he went-away and-he it took and-he went-away.) 'And the orphan went away, took it, and left.' Here all three actions are put into one single predication. This makes all three of them precipitate, told as having taken place one following the other very closely.

#### TENSE-ASPECT

This section presents the tense-aspect system of Dan. The predication is the smallest surface unit that carries a distinctive tense-aspect. A simple predication gives one action or one description, and an expanded predication gives more than one action or description.

When an action clause, intransitive or transitive, is involved, tense and aspect are manifested on one **subject pronoun** and on the verb that goes with it. *-yeu -a -su* (**he-aorist it take-aorist**) 'he took it', *nka' 'kou dhô* (**I-not-punctiliar yam buy-independent**) 'I have not bought any yams'.

Descriptive clauses have no verb. The subject pronoun alone carries the tense-aspect information. *.yeu .va* (**he-aorist big**) 'he is big'. The subject pronoun is obligatory in all clause types.

Several sets of subject pronouns as well as of verb tones have been established. The occurrence of the sets in some environments is partly limited by the grammatical structure and by the contextual environment of the whole discourse, as will be mentioned later.

For the subject pronouns, the person classification suggested by M. Houis (1971) fits. He sets up a four-way distinction of first person (speaker), inclusive (speaker and hearer), second person (hearer), and third person (other).

Each of the four categories has a singular form and its plural counterpart. The plural associates at least one other person with the category named by the singular.

		aorist		bound		inde-
						pendent
S	1st person	a	(M)	a	(H)	ma (H)
I						
N	inclusive	ko	(M)	ko	(H)	koe (HH)
G						
U	2nd person	u	(M)	u	(H)	bha (H)
L						
A	3rd person	yeu	(AF/L)	yeu ~		ya (L)
R				eu (H/AF)		
				in free		
				fluctuation		
P	1st person	yi	(M)	yi	(H)	yie (HH)
L						
U	inclusive	kwa	(M)	kwa	(H)	kwa (H)
R						
A	2nd person	ka	(M)	ka	(H)	ka (H)
L						
	3rd person	wo	(AF/L)	wo	(H/AF)	wa (L)

Figure 2a. Dan Pronouns, positive

		punctiliar		continuative	
S	1st person	nka	(MH)	maa	(HH)
I					
N	inclusive	koe	(MM)	koe	(HH)
G					
U	2nd person	uka	(MH)	bhaa	(HH)
L					
A	3rd person	yaa	(MM)	yaa	(HH)
R					
P	1st person	yie	(MM)	yiee	(HH)
L					
U	inclusive	kwaa	(MM)	kwaa	(HH)
R					
A	2nd person	kaa	(MM)	kaa	(HH)
L					
	3rd person	waa	(MM)	waa	(HH)

Figure 2b. Dan Pronouns, negative

Subject pronouns are divided first into positive and negative categories. The positive-negative distinction is made only on the subject pronoun. There are four subdivisions of the positive block which correspond to only two for the negative, as explained later.

Dan verbs divide into short verbs with one tone-bearing syllable and long verbs with two. Out of each group of verbs which behave the same in all environments, one verb has been chosen as representative to show the tonal behaviour of the group.

		aorist	bound	future	independent
kan	to cut	AF	AF	M	H
to	to stay	AF	M	M	H
sa	to spread out	AF	M	M	M
ke	to make	AF	AF	M	M
pèn	to scatter	AF	AF	AF	AF
pueu	to fall	AF	AF	AF	AF
slôô	to own	AF	LL	LL	LL
daan	to learn	AF	LL	LNF	LNF
zlôa	to inject	AF	MM	MM	MM
zieu	to pass	AF	AF	MM	MM
gueu	to burn	AF	AF	MM	HH
soueu	to fear	AF	AF	MM	HH

Figure 3. Verb tone groups

As far as the short verbs are concerned, there are only three possible tone distinction, high (H), mid (M), and assimilating falling tone (AF): '*ma -a 'kan* (I-independent it cut-independent (H)) 'I have cut it.' '*ma -a sa* (I-independent it spread-out-independent (M)) 'I have spread it out.' '*ma -a -pèn* (I-independent it scatter-independent (AF)) 'I have scattered it.'

On the long verbs, five distinctions of tone are possible: high-high, mid-mid, low-low, assimilating falling (which on a long verb is stretched out over the two syllables), and low-nonassimilating falling. On verbs, the nonassimilating falling tone occurs only in this combination with low tone.

According to the behaviour of the verb tone in different grammatical environments, four tense-aspect categories have been set up. Any one verb makes use of at most three and gives at least two categories the same tone; but over all classes the four

have to be distinguished, as Figure 3 shows. The rules governing the division into these categories will be discussed in the sections on each tense-aspect category.

The independent category gives us the verbs in their most diversified range of forms. Its tone is taken to be inherent in the stem. In the aorist, on the other hand, all tone distinctions are neutralized, and all verbs carry assimilating falling tone. In the bound and future categories, the distinction of tone is partially restricted.

Mid tone short and long verbs, when in the bound tense-aspect, divide into two classes. Some keep their inherent mid tone, and the rest change from mid tone to assimilating falling tone.

High tone on short or long verbs occurs only in the independent tense-aspect. In the future, the distinction between high and mid is lost in that the high verbs carry mid tone. In the bound tense-aspect, high tone verbs divide into two classes, one taking mid tone and the other taking assimilating falling tone. The same verb may fall into either of the two classes depending on the speaker; that is, some use mid tone as in *'eu -e gueu* (he-bound it burn-bound (M)) 'and he burned it', while others use assimilating falling tone as in *'eu -a -gueu* (he-bound it burn-bound (AF)) 'and he burned it'. High tone is thus the least stable inherent tone on verbs, as it appears only in one of the four tense-aspect categories.

In the bound tense-aspect, the distinction between low-nonassimilating falling tone and low-low tone on long verbs is lost, and they all carry low-low tone.

The assimilating falling tone of the independent tense-aspect stays assimilating falling tone in all other categories: *'ma -a -pèn* (I-independent it scatter (AF)) 'I have scattered it.' *-bheu -a -pèn* (you-singular-imperative it scatter (AF)) 'Scatter it!' *uka' -a -pèn* (you-singular-not-punctiliar it scatter (AF)) 'You have not scattered it.' The assimilating falling tone is the only inherent verb tone which is stable in all environments. This also means that assimilating falling tone verbs contribute no tense-aspect information; it all has to come from the subject pronoun.

In the subject pronouns, each differs from all the others, with the exception of *'kwa* 'inclusive plural-bound-positive' and 'inclusive plural-independent-positive' and *'ka* '2nd person plural-bound-positive' and '2nd person plural-independent-positive', as well as *-yeu* '3rd person singular-aorist action-positive' and '3rd person singular-preceded by unmarked topic-bound-positive' and *-wo* '3rd person plural-aorist action-positive' and '3rd person plural-preceded by unmarked topic-bound-positive'.

Because tone distinctions are so sharply restricted on verbs of some classes, the tone of a verb in a certain environment may be the surface representation of several different tense-aspects. In order to find out the underlying class of a verb from its surface tone in each place where it occurs, one representative of each verb class is substituted in that context. By comparing all the verb tones that are possible in each position, it can be found which class a verb belongs to.

For the positive predications, there are three major tense-aspect distinctions.

The aorist is used for two things: to express an action or description which is



entirely independent of reference to a moment in time, and to express past actions whose results do not affect the present. It is the means for expressing general truth.

The aorist subject pronoun makes a further distinction of tone in the third person, depending on whether the general truth is expressed in a descriptive clause or an action clause. For a description, the third person subject pronoun carries low tone: *.yeu .va* (**he-aorist-descriptive big**) 'He is big.'

When the aorist gives a general truth expressed by an action clause, the subject pronoun carries assimilating falling tone: *'yóó 'pouou -yeu 'kaa -bo* (**kaolin white it-aorist-action scabies heal**) 'white kaolin heals scabies', *-yeu zeu* (**he-aorist-action here**) 'he is here'. (Being-in a place is treated grammatically as an action clause as far as pronoun tone is concerned; the third person subject pronoun carries assimilating falling tone.)

The aorist tense-aspect may also express an action which happened once in the past and which is finished completely, having no relation with any other point of time. What is important is the sheer statement of the fact that something has happened some time in the past: *n .dhoo -yeu -nou* (**possessive elder-brother he-aorist come-aorist**) 'My elder brother arrived.'

At the beginning of the sample story, the bound tense is used. Using the aorist tense in the same place would give the impression that the spider's action of making a palisade in front of his house had no relation to the other actions in the story. Since there is a relation, and it is important, the aorist is not appropriate.

Cutting off an incident from the flow of the story, however, may be done on purpose. Near the end of the story, the spider arises with a murmur. This begins the climax of the whole story, as it is here that he receives his punishment for his bad behaviour. By using the aorist tense, the author breaks its connection with what precedes and follows and makes it stand out in relief against the sequence of which semantically it is a part.

Whereas the aorist tense is in no relation with any other point of time, the other two tense-aspects are connected with other time referents. Each relates an action which happened in the past and whose influence in narratives is still present at the time of the next event, or at the present moment for conversations.

The **bound** tense asserts that an action or description has a relation to what precedes or follows it. The principal factor for a bound action is that it be part of a sequence of actions in the flow of a narrative where all including the first action have bound tense and carry forward the main event line of the story: *'eu -té 'ne -yeu dho. 'eu -a su 'eu dho. 'eu bèan-zon.* (**and orphan child he-bound went-bound. he-bound it take-bound he-bound went-bound. he-bound pepper pound-bound**) 'And the orphan went and took it and went away, and he pounded pepper.'

A description expressed by the bound tense is treated grammatically as well as lexically as though it were an action clause. The verb *ke* 'make' which follows the pronoun in all these cases carries the developmental meaning 'become': *'eu ke .va* (**he-bound become-bound big**) 'And he became big.'

When not in a narrative, the context in which a bound tense may occur may be another action mentioned directly preceding or following it; a predication carrying bound tense is never uttered in isolation: *dha 'yi -yeu 'bó 'kó bhó -dhè -bha 'eu yeu kôô* (rain water **it-bound pass-bound** house leak place through **it-bound enter-bound** house-in) 'The rain passes by the place of the house which leaks and enters into the house.' The action of the rain passing by the place where the house leaks precedes the action which is given by the bound tense.

It has been seen that the aorist used for a general truth makes a tone distinction in the third person subject pronoun according to whether the predication expresses an action or a description. In the bound tense, the third person subject pronoun makes a tone distinction of another kind. When this pronoun is directly preceded by a nominal subject that is the unmarked topic of the clause, it carries assimilating falling tone: *'eu -té 'ne -yeu -a peu* (and orphan child **he-bound** (AF) it **say-bound** (M)) 'And the orphan said,' When not preceded by the unmarked topic of the clause the third person subject pronoun carries high tone: *'eu -a peu* (**he-bound** (H) it **say-bound**) 'And he said,'.

A marked topic that begins the predication appears to force the use of the bound tense. This marked topic may be a frontshifted object as in *'kou 'a -a su* (yam **I-bound** (H) it **take-bound**) 'it was yam that I took,' or a frontshifted adjunct: *-gô -mè 'eu .nè 'yi ke -a 'pieu* (head man which here **we-bound** (H) **stay-bound** him with) 'This chief here, we stayed with him.' The bound tense is also obligatory in a clause which begins with the subject in marked topic form: *ma géa- 'a -a su* (me intensifier **I-bound** (H) it **take-bound**) 'it was me who took it'.

All relative clauses carry bound tense-aspect, as by nature they are bound to another element: *-gô -mè 'eu .nè* (head man **which-bound** (H) here) 'this chief'.

The bound tense-aspect occurs only in a clause which is found in one of the environments mentioned above. A predication cannot bear this tense-aspect without another sentence, a marked topic, a relative, or other predication that carries the bound tense-aspect preceding the subject pronoun.

The second kind of tense-aspect which is connected with another time referent is the **independent** tense-aspect. It is not bound to another sentence or a marked topic as with the bound tense-aspect. It is used to state an action which is finished but has still some implications for the present moment. This moment may be the actual time of speaking or a moment in a story. In conversation, it appears in *n .dhoo .ya nou* (possessive elder-brother **he-independent come-independent**) 'my elder brother has come', in which the independent tense-aspect expresses that the arrival of the speaker's brother has implications for him as well as for those he is talking to.

The independent tense-aspect in a narrative is used in the introduction, the body, and the coda to give background. There it represents the prerequisites that must be met in order for the main event line to progress. This may include building a picture of the surroundings: *-dhè .ya ke 'zéazéa- dheu 'wawa* (place **it-independent become-independent** even adverbializer nicely) 'The place had become nicely even.'

As was mentioned earlier for the bound tense-aspect, a description can be treated

only as an action clause. This is true for the independent tense-aspect, too. The verb *ke* 'make' again carries the sense of 'become' in the example above, but has a resultative meaning. The place's becoming even is the result of the spider's actions mentioned earlier in the story.

Another case where the independent tense-aspect is used to give a supposition: *'kwa -a ke 'dheu .séa*, (**we-independent** it **do-independent** like-this in-the-case) 'if we do it like this'. It is not possible to use the aorist for giving a general supposition.

The independent tense-aspect is found everywhere in the paragraph as well as in the incident, initially, medially, and finally.

In the three positive tense-aspects, the aorist, bound, and independent, the subject pronoun is normally followed by the verb tone of the same tense-aspect, except for the future, which will be mentioned later.

Combinations of subject pronouns with different verb tense-aspect also occur. For example, bound tense-aspect on the subject pronoun combines with independent tense-aspect on the verb in *-mlu 'eu bhe 'u -a !kan* (rice which there **you-bound** it **cut-independent**) 'This rice there, you do well in cutting it.' A more extensive study of these combinations of different tense-aspects is needed.

To the three positive tense-aspects there correspond only two negative ones. When the negative is chosen, the distinctions which are relevant for the positive tense-aspect are lost, and the two negative tense-aspects are set up with regard to other distinctions. There seems to be no relation whatsoever between the distinctions of the positive tense-aspects on the one hand and the negative tense-aspects on the other.

positive	negative	
aorist	punc- til- iar	con- ti- nua- tive
bound		
independent		

**Figure 4.** Two negative tense-aspects match three positive ones.

The two negative tense-aspects can be called punctiliar and continuative. The distinction of the two is made on the subject pronoun alone. Each has a set of subject pronouns which are different from all the others. The verb that goes with the subject pronoun in the negative carries its inherent tone in all cases. (This tone goes with the independent tense-aspect of the positive subject pronouns.)

The **punctiliar** tense-aspect negates an action which is seen as taking place at a short moment of time. Since one use of the aorist has this character, too, there might be a point of contact between the two tenses here. Figure 5 shows how the punctiliar tense-aspect for the negative matches each of the three positive tenses.

The **continuative** tense-aspect gives an action or a description which is seen as taking place over a longer period of time, including categorical denials.

As Figure 5 shows, the continuative tense-aspect in the negative matches all three tense-aspects in the positive. By using the continuative aspect, the speaker may express an action which never in his life has taken place nor will take place. Not eating the fruit of a certain tree may result, for example, from keeping of a totem restriction which is valid for always.

The period negated by the continuative tense-aspect may finish suddenly: *'maa glôô -bheu -bé yèèn bhe !a -a bhè do -bheu 'sa-bla.* (I-continuative-negative banana eat before yesterday there I-bound-positive possessive one eat-bound-positive now) 'I have never eaten a banana before, but yesterday I ate one.' In this example, the long period of never eating a banana is suddenly cut by the particle *-bé* 'before' which contrasts what has been said with what follows.

**aorist positive:**

*a glôô do -bheu*  
(I-aorist-positive  
banana one eat-aorist)  
'I ate a banana.'

*glôô -yeu -ke .va*  
(banana it-aorist-  
positive become-aorist  
big)  
'The banana became big.'

**punctiliar negative:**

*nka' glôô do -bheu*  
(I-punctiliar-negative  
banana one eat)  
'I did not eat a banana.'

*glôô yaa ke .va*  
(banana it-punctiliar-  
negative become big)  
'The banana did not  
become big.'

**continuative negative:**

*'maa glôô do -bheu*  
(I-continuative-  
negative banana eat)  
'I have never eaten a banana  
(it is taboo for my clan).'

*glôô 'yaa ke .va*  
(banana it-conti-  
nuative-negative  
become big)  
'The banana never  
became big.'

**independent positive:**

*'ma glôô do -bheu*  
(I-independent-po-  
sitive banana one  
eat-independent)  
'I ate a banana.'

*glôô .ya ke .va*  
(banana it-indepen-

**dent-positive become-  
independent big)**  
'The banana had become big.'

punctiliar negative:

*nka' glôô do -bheu*  
(I-punctiliar-negative  
banana one eat)  
'I did not eat a  
banana.'

*glôô yaa ke .va*  
(banana it-punctiliar-  
negative become big)  
'The banana did not  
become big.'

continuative negative:

*'maa glôô do -bheu*  
(I-continuative-ne-  
gative banana eat)  
'I have never eaten a  
banana (it is taboo  
for my clan).'

*glôô 'yaa ke .va*  
(banana it-continuative-  
negative become big)  
'The banana never became  
big.'

bound positive:

*'eu 'a glôô do -bheu*  
(and I-bound-positive  
banana one eat-bound)  
'And I ate a banana.'

*'eu glôô yeu -ke .va*  
(and banana it-bound-  
positive become-bound big)  
'And the banana became big.'

punctiliar negative:

*nka' glôô do -bheu*  
(I-punctiliar-negative  
banana one eat)  
'I did not eat a banana.'

*glôô yaa ke .va*  
(banana it-punctiliar-  
negative become big)  
'The banana did not  
become big.'

continuative negative:

*'maa glôô do -bheu*  
(I-continuative-ne-  
gative banana eat)  
'I have never eaten  
a banana (it is taboo  
for my clan).'

*glôô 'yaa ke .va*  
(banana it-continua-  
tive-negative become  
big) 'The banana never  
became big.'

Figure 5. The punctiliar and continuative negatives.

The **future** tense-aspect occurs in the positive as well as in the negative. It is expressed by a subject pronoun followed by two verbs. The first is the **auxiliary** verb *-dheu* 'exist'. The second verb is the main verb of the predication, which takes the future tone (Figure 3).

In an intransitive clause, the auxiliary precedes the main verb directly: *-yeu -dheu nou* (he-aorist auxiliary-aorist come-future) 'He will come.' In a transitive clause, the object comes between the auxiliary verb and the main verb: *-yeu -dheu 'kou su*. (he-aorist auxiliary-aorist **yam** take-future) 'He will take yams.'

As for the bound and independent tense-aspects generally, a description cannot occur in the future, but only the corresponding developmental action clause: *-yeu -dheu ke .va*. (he-aorist auxiliary-aorist become-future **big**) 'He will be big.'

The subject pronoun and the auxiliary verb carry the main tense-aspect information: aorist or bound in the positive, but only punctiliar in the negative. To this is added the future tone on the main verb. As the main load of the tense distinction is carried by the auxiliary, the future aspect on the main verb is redundant.

For the positive, the future combines with the aorist in both general and punctiliar meanings: *-yeu -dheu -a su* (he-aorist auxiliary-aorist **it** take-future) 'He will take it.' It may also occur together with the bound tense-aspect: *'eu dheu -a su* (he-bound auxiliary-bound **it** take-future) 'And he will take it.' No examples have been found of the future with the independent tense-aspect.

In the negative, the future is found only in combination with the punctiliar form of the pronoun and with the independent form of the auxiliary. The result is that the punctiliar-continuative distinction is lost in the negative. *uka' 'dheu -a su* (you auxiliary **it** take-future) 'you will not take it'. It may refer to a specific action or to a long term avoidance.