The Verb Phrase in Mbuko

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2. Generalities

2.1 Name of language
The name of the language of the Mbuko people which shall be used here is Mbuko. Alternative spellings include Mboukou, Mboku, Mbokou, Mbuku. The Mbuko refer to their language simply as “’Am sɔ Mbuko”, meaning “mouth of Mbuko”. The origin of the name “Mbuko” is not known.

2.2 Language classification.
Mbuko is a Chadic language classified as follows (ALCAM p. 357):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Chadic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branch</td>
<td>Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td>Centre-West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Group</td>
<td>Wandalama-Mafa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Mafa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-group</td>
<td>North-East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Mbuko (132)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this classification, Mbuko is most closely related to the non-neighbouring language Pelasla, which is the only other language in the North-East sub-group. The two languages are clearly genetically related, however, in terms of shared phonological features (such as word level prosodies), Mbuko seems closer to the “Mofu” and other neighbouring languages in the Mafa group, such as Zulgo, Meray, Moloko, Dugwor, Mofu-nord and Mofu-sud.

2.3 Number and geographical distribution of speakers
There are around 13,000 speakers of Mbuko. The Mbuko mainly inhabit the canton of Doulek in the arrondissement of Meri, in the department of the Diamaré, Far North province of Cameroon. Other Mbuko villages are found in the arrondissement of Tokombéré. Mbuko speakers are also found in the town of Méri, and also in cities such as Maroua, Garoua and Yaoundé.

2.4 Ethnographic information on the speakers
The Mbuko live mainly by the cultivation of millet and peanuts, with cotton being grown as the principal cash crop. Livestock such as goats and chickens are also kept, with a few cows. The territory lies around a line of hills, and includes the plains around it. Their traditional religion is characterised by the triennial cow festival.

Before about 1800 the Mbuko people lived around Kaliao, near Maroua. However after the Fulani invasion of Maroua, this area was taken over by the Giziga, who formerly lived in Maroua, and a portion of the Mbuko population left to inhabit their present territory. Other groups also joined from neighbouring peoples, and even from Mora, and took on the Mbuko language.

2.5 Dialects and language varieties
There are no major dialect variations in the Mbuko language, though there are a few differences of vocabulary. The main divisions of the region are between the East and West sides of the mountain, and between the northern and southern ends of the chain of hills.

2.6 Language use; multilingualism
Almost all the Mbuko are multilingual to some extent. An increasing number of children are attending primary school, which is taught in French. The main trade language, which is used in communication with neighbouring groups, including at market, is Fulfulde, the language of the Fulani. This is also the language used in the Evangelical church for some parts of their services. It is also common for Mbuko men to marry women from neighbouring language groups, such as Zulgo, Meray, Dugwor or Douvangar (Mofu-nord). Their children may then also speak their mother’s language.

2.7 Language contact
Contact with French and Fulfulde has lead to the incorporation of many load words from these languages into Mbuko. In addition, words from neighbouring languages have been borrowed.
2.8 **Language vitality**
The language is in normal use by the Mbuko and continues to be used for almost all areas of communication by children in the Mbuko area. However there are several factors which are tending to reduce the range of usage of Mbuko.

2.8.1 **Modernisation**
The process of modernisation has introduced many areas of language that are not well served by Mbuko. These include: money and financial matters; time and dates; transport, including bicycles and bicycle parts; measurement of distance, area and weight.

2.8.2 **Education**
Education takes place in French, and children who attend school seem to learn some certain words in French before Mbuko. They also spend less time speaking Mbuko than those who are not educated. This seems to result in some loss of vocabulary.

2.8.3 **Cross-language contact**
The increased ability of people to travel results in more situations where trade languages are used instead of Mbuko. Also, many Mbuko people have moved to towns to find work. It seems that those living outside the Mbuko area have less language ability, are more prone to marry a non-Mbuko, and also have children who do not speak Mbuko as their first language.

2.8.4 **Conclusion**
So long as there is a significant geographical area where Mbuko is the principal language, and the way of life does not change significantly, it is anticipated that Mbuko will remain as a viable mother-tongue. Increased standards of education, and increased mobility of job-seekers will reduce the significance of the language with time, though it may well be a long time before these factors have a significant effect.

2.9 **Transcription**
Data is transcribed according to the rules of mbuko orthography. Morpheme breaks are added as hyphens. Tone is not marked in the orthography, but is included in the transcription where it is relevant.

2.10 **Acknowledgements**
Thanks go to Robert Nelezek, Robert Calalaw and many others who have been working together to understand and develop the mbuko language.
3. The Verb

The verb in Mbuko can be identified by its ability to take subject-aspect markers and inflectional suffixes. E.g.:

(1) ni zla “I go”
    ka zlak “You (s) have gone”
    ki zlen “You (pl) go”

So, for example, the string [αjarα] (“tired”) can be shown to based on a verb “ya” from:

(2) na-y-ak nga
    1s-tire-Ant head
    “I am tired”

3.1 Structure of the verb root

The verb root consists of a single morpheme. However a number of verb roots can be seen to have developed their current form by historical reduplication. It is possible that this reduplication may have served to mark repeated actions, though the correlation is not complete. It may also be the case that palatalisation marks pluractionality, and the palatalisation prosody demands a second syllable which is created by reduplication. Again, the data show a correlation between palatalisation and pluractionality, but not strongly enough to justify treating reduplication as a morpheme in the creation of verb roots. There are no instances of pairs of verbs, one a reduplicated form of the other, which are semantically linked. Reduplication is thus treated as an historic process which is no longer productive.

Table 1 : Reduplicated verb roots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bobasl</td>
<td>to grind, crush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bobazl</td>
<td>to prepare a field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bobet</td>
<td>to peel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bobez</td>
<td>to sharpen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cacce</td>
<td>to ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caced</td>
<td>to whittle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dadasl</td>
<td>to pack down(earth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ffan</td>
<td>to itch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ffel</td>
<td>to make flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ffeť</td>
<td>to whistle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gəgar</td>
<td>to lose leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gugob</td>
<td>to weed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gugwar</td>
<td>to prune (millet leaves)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Morphology

The most important feature of Mbuko verbs is a three way distinction between perfective, imperfective and anterior aspects. Each of these aspects has a corresponding set of subject-aspect markers.

The structure of the verb word (not including other words in the verb phrase) is presented in the following table (compulsory features in bold):

Table 2 : Structure of the verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject/Aspect Root</th>
<th>Verb root</th>
<th>Tone pattern</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Anterior aspect</th>
<th>Subject agreement</th>
<th>IO agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(see below)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>“anterior”, “imperfective”</td>
<td>-ây &quot;ingressive&quot;</td>
<td>-ák &quot;anterior&quot;</td>
<td>-én “2P”</td>
<td>-ö “1S”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>“perfective”</td>
<td>-ây &quot;neutral&quot;</td>
<td>-ūmó &quot;1Pdual imperative”</td>
<td>-ák “2S”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM</td>
<td>HM</td>
<td>“subjunctive”</td>
<td>-ak &quot;egressive&quot;</td>
<td>-ūkō “1Pinc imperative”</td>
<td>-án “3S”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rather than agglutinating, suffixes become deleted, with the suffixes to the right having priority over suffixes to the left, as far as the double line on the chart. Tones of deleted suffixes remain.

(3)  kā-cār  “you (s) harvested”  
     kā-ciñēn 1  “you (pl) harvested” 
     kā-cārāk  “you (s) have harvested” 
     kā-ciñēn  “you (pl) have harvested” (¬āk is deleted)

The subject-aspect marker is a clitic with the anterior and perfective aspects, but a separate particle with the imperfective aspect 2.

The indirect object suffixes have alternate forms which are separate words. These are used when the anterior or subject agreement suffix is required on the verb.

A full presentation of the different verb forms and their meanings will be given in the section on the verb phrase.

3.2.1 Subject-Aspect Marker

There are three sets of subject-aspect markers corresponding to the three aspects, perfective, imperfective and anterior. The anterior and perfective subject-aspect markers differ only in the third person singular. For all persons the two aspects are distinguished by the presence of the anterior suffix -āk on the verb. The imperfective subject-aspect markers are separate words in the verb phrase, whereas the perfective and anterior subject-aspect markers are part of the verb word. In the orthography all subject-aspect markers are written separately.

The sets of verb subject-aspect markers are as follows:

Table 3: Subject-aspect markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perfective</th>
<th>Anterior</th>
<th>Imperfective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>ni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>ka-</td>
<td>ka-</td>
<td>ki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>a-</td>
<td>kā-</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pExcl</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pInc, Dual</td>
<td>dā-</td>
<td>dā-</td>
<td>dī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2p</td>
<td>ka-</td>
<td>ka-</td>
<td>ki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3p</td>
<td>ta-</td>
<td>ta-</td>
<td>ti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The a vowel of the perfective and anterior subject-aspect markers is more usually found in the form of its morphophonemic variant a, and occasionally as i.

The 1pInc subject-aspect markers carry a low tone and the 3sAnt subject-aspect marker carries a high tone. The tone of all other subject-aspect markers is governed by the tone pattern on the verb.

3.2.2 Subject Agreement suffixes

In most verb forms there is no subject agreement suffix. The exceptions are the 2p form, and in the imperative the two 1p forms.

(4)  zlambal  ‘throw’
     di zlāmbāl  we (inc) throw
     kī zlāmbilēn  you (pl) throw

(5)  zla  ‘go’
     zlūmō  let us (dual) go!
     zlūkō  let us (inc) go!
     zlēn  go (2p)!

---

1 Mbuko, in common with other Chadic languages, has the prosodic features palatalisation and labialisation which cause vowels to harmonize their point of articulation within the scope of the prosody.

2 This analysis is based on phonological features. The clitics are affected by vowel harmony, vowel laxing and tone modifications, and relate to the following word (either a verb or a modal). The separate particles are not affected by any of these factors.
When these suffixes are combined with directional or anterior suffixes, the subject suffix deletes the other suffixes. However, a L tone on a previous suffix will remain. E.g.:

(6)  kō zlambilën     you (pl) have thrown.
     kō zlambilën     you (pl) threw (directional)
     kō slähën     you (pl) have fallen over = släh-áy-ák-én
     or you (pl) fell over = släh-áy-én
     kō slähën     you (pl) have fallen down (dir) = släh-áy-ák-én
     or you (pl) fell down (dir) = släh-áy-én

As can be seen, there are possibilities for ambiguity.

### 3.2.3 Tone Pattern

There are three basic tone patterns, which apply to the verb and its subject-aspect marker. The form MH is used for the perfective and anterior aspects:

(7)  ā-tståk  he learned
     ā-tâm  he sewed
     mā-sán  we knew

The underlying MH pattern is affected by depressor consonants to produce either a LH or a L tone melody. The depressor consonants are the voiced non-implosive stops, including pre-nasalized stops, and the voiced fricatives.

(8)  mā-šlambil  I threw
     mā-rázl  I chased
     kā-râr  You (s) walked
     ā-dâv  It shone

The M pattern is used for imperfective aspect.

(9)  nī zlambil  I am throwing
     tī njâd  They find
     kī zlā  You are going

The tone pattern is not affected by depressor consonants unless the last consonant is a depressor, in which case the pattern on the verb is L:

(10) ī ndâzl  It is bursting
     ī dáv  It is shining
     tī lizè  They are losing

The HM pattern marks the subjunctive.

(11) kō-zlambil  You should throw

### 3.2.4 Direction

The suffixes -áy and -ák are used to indicate that the motion of a verb is towards or away from the subject of the verb respectively. Their presence serves as a valency increasing device, allowing verbs to take a destination complement. -áy can occur with or without a destination marker and is almost universally productive. In some cases it functions as a derivational affix, adding to the meaning of the root verb, rather than giving it a direction (e.g. *haway* “run away”). The following table gives examples of verbs with and without this affix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-áy</td>
<td>-ák</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 : Directional verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rac</th>
<th>“eat”</th>
<th>ræcay</th>
<th>“graze”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gəbə</td>
<td>“take”</td>
<td>gəbəy</td>
<td>“bring”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haw</td>
<td>“run”</td>
<td>haway</td>
<td>“run away”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngam</td>
<td>“call (to someone)”</td>
<td>ngamay</td>
<td>“summon”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pak</td>
<td>“pour”</td>
<td>pəkay</td>
<td>“pour onto”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>“be (somewhere)”</td>
<td>nay</td>
<td>“come”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma</td>
<td>“go back”</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>“return”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slaháy</td>
<td>“fall over”</td>
<td>slaháy</td>
<td>“fall down”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jan</td>
<td>“climb”</td>
<td>jənay</td>
<td>“climb up/down/out”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ban</td>
<td>“catch”</td>
<td>bənay</td>
<td>“grab”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tam</td>
<td>“save”</td>
<td>təmay</td>
<td>“rescue”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>njaf</td>
<td>“find”</td>
<td>njafəy</td>
<td>“find and keep”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sukom</td>
<td>“buy”</td>
<td>sukuməy</td>
<td>“buy and bring back”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sla</td>
<td>“cut (grass)”</td>
<td>slay</td>
<td>“cut and gather”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ban</td>
<td>“tie”</td>
<td>banay</td>
<td>“tie up and take”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tavak</td>
<td>“carry on head”</td>
<td>tavakay</td>
<td>“place on head”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gəzəła</td>
<td>“share”</td>
<td>gəzəlay</td>
<td>“share out”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-ək is always accompanied by the directional marker ayak and is found on a smaller number of verbs.

(12) a-njaf-ak ayak do hinen 3sPfv-find-Egr to^there person other “He (went and) found there another man.”

(13) a-njaf-ak anan ayak a’am 3sPfv-find-Egr 3sDO to^there water “He found water there.”

(14) a-n-ay ahay a-juvok 3sPfv-be-Ing to^here to-guest^hut “He came to the guest hut.”

(15) a-gəb-ay anan ahay dədew uho 3sPfv-take-Ing it to^here snake outside “He brought the snake outside.”

The suffix -áy appears commonly. Like the suffix -ay it is deleted when another suffix is added. It appears to have no grammatical or semantic function. In some related languages, e.g. Mofu-Gudur, verbs must always carry a suffix and the equivalent suffix acts as a place holder. In Mbuko, verbs do not obligatorily take suffixes, but some verbs seem to have retained this suffix from a prototypical form. E.g.:

(16) nī bāslāy I count
    nī dākāy I show

3.2.5 Anterior Marker

The marker -āk marks the anterior aspect. This shows an action completed before the current time of the narrative, which has relevance to the current time:

(17) nə-zələmbəl-āk I have thrown

When this suffix is combined with the direction suffixes, the direction suffix is deleted. However, if either suffix has a L tone, this remains:

(18) nə-slāh-āk I have fallen over
    nə-slāh-ək I have fallen down
3.2.6 Indirect Object agreement

The indirect object agreement suffixes are obligatory in verbs with an indirect object. They may appear in conjunction with, or instead of, the noun phrase to which they refer. When no noun phrase is included the markers thus act as bound indirect object pronouns. The suffixes are essentially singular, with the plural forms consisting of a singular form plus a plural particle (see 4.7).

(19) ṭî vûr-ō sîlêk  he gives me a stirring stick
ième vûr-ak sîlêk  he gives you a stirring stick
ième vûr-ān sîlêk  he gives him a stirring stick
ième vûr-ān sîlêk ū dô  he gives a stirring stick to the man

If other suffixes are present then the free pronoun forms are used:

(20) kû-var-ak  uno  sîlêk
    3sAnt-give-Ant 1sIO  stirring‘stick
    “he has given me a stirring stick”

The word forms of the indirect object pronouns will be treated in the section on the verb phrase (see 4.7).

3.3 Verb classes and subclassification

Verbs may take a variety of complements as part of their valency. Possible complements are Direct Object, Indirect Object with preposition á, Indirect Object with preposition pa, Destination/Source:

Intransitive
(21) a-slahay
    3sPfv-fall
    “he fell over”

Transitive
(22) i sa a’am
    3sImp drink water
    “he is drinking water”

Indirect object (no direct object)
(23) Wînen a-can-an  ana  dana  ata  a-lumo.
    He  3sPfv-see-3sIO at  girl  that at-market
    “He saw that girl at the market.”

Di-transitive
(24) a-var-an dala  a-bahay
    3sPfv-give-3sIO money to-chief
    “he gave money to the chief”

Indirect object - pa
(25) a-cîce  pô-bahay  wa
    3sPfv-ask on-chief Src
    “he asked the chief”

Destination complement
(26) a-zla  a-kîbê
    3sPfv-go to-bush
    “he went to the bush”

Source complement
(27) a-ngom-ay  a-kutov  wa
    3sPfv-leave-Ing to-stomach Src
    “he came out of the stomach”
3.4 Aspect
Aspect plays a dominant role in the verb system. The principal division is between perfective, anterior and imperfective aspect.

(28) ni zla “I am going” (imperfective)
na-zl-ak “I have gone” (anterior)
na-zla “I went” (perfective)

3.5 Tense
Tense is almost unmarked, the exceptions being the future tenses.

(29) ni i zla “I will go” (future definite)
ni sa zla “I will go” (future possible)

3.6 Mood
The moods marked are indicative, imperative, subjunctive and subordinate. These are distinguished by the use of either a subject-aspect prefix, zero prefix or a subordinating prefix.

3.6.1 Indicative
In the indicative mood the subject-aspect marker is used, and the tone melody is either M or MH.

(30) nîzlâ “I am going”
ká-câká’d “You washed up”

3.6.2 Imperative
In the imperative mood there is no subject-aspect marker. The verb is marked for agreement with the subject in 1pInc and 1pDual, as well as in 2p as found with the other moods.

(31) zla ! “Go!”
s-uko ! “Let us (inc) drink!”

3.6.3 Subjunctive
The subjunctive is marked by the use of the HM tone melody with the perfective subject/aspect markers. The subjunctive can be used as a main verb, or subordinate to a verb in the indicative. In the orthography it is marked by a circumflex on the verb prefix.

(32) ká-zla
2sSbj-go
“You (s) should go”

(33) Ká-jalay awan bay
2sSbj-think thing Neg
“You should not worry”

(34) Mborom á-m-ak zek
God 3sSbj-return-2sIO body
“May God help you”

The conjunction a day may be followed by the indicative or the subjunctive. With the indicative it signifies temporal succession, with the subjunctive it signifies purpose.

Temporal succession:
(35) Ká-mbar-ak anan Dindez a day a-njahay zay acabâkan.
2sAnt-heal-Ant 3sDO Dindez then 3sPfv-sit health truly
“You have healed Dindez then she was well, truly.”

Purpose:
(36) Ni g-an kem ana mbaz uno, a day á-saa cáb-an bay ite.
In this last example the modal *saa* is used with the subjunctive to express a future sense.

In a subordinate clause without conjunction the subjunctive also signifies purpose.

(37) A-j-an ahay nà, á-zla sa-s-ay disise lele a-kiße wa.
3sPfv-say-3sIO to^here Top 3sSbj-go Purp-drink-Ing medecine good at-bush Src
“He said to her that she should go and drink good medecine from the bush.”

### 3.6.4 Subordinate

In subordinate mood, the subject-aspect marker is replaced by the subordinate marker *sa*.

(38) ni mba apan sa-zla
1sImp able on^it Sub-go
“I am able to go”

### 3.7 Valency changing devices

The valency of verbs can be changed by the addition of the direction markers -ay and -ak which permit the verb to take a destination complement (cf 3.2.4).

(39) A-tam iken nà, lele.
Inf-save you Top good
“It is good that I save you.”

(40) Vajè a-tam-ay anan ahay ziyel uho.
monkey 3sPfv-save-ING it to^here lion outside
“The monkey rescued the lion out (of the hole)”

In the second example the verb *tam* “save” carries the direction suffix -ay, which permits it to take the destination complement *uho* “outside”.

### 3.8 Agreement patterns

The principal agreement patterns are between the verb and subject, and verb and indirect object.

(41) a-j-an ana bahay
3sPfv-say-3sIO to chief
“He said to the chief”

(42) ki zl-en a-lumo
2Imp go-2p to-market
“You (pl) are going to market.”

(43) ka-vir-en uno ndaw
2Pfv-give-2p 1pIO millet
You(pl) gave me some millet.”

### 3.9 Deverbalizing processes

Verbs can be transformed into nouns and adjectives.

### 3.9.1 Nominalization of verbs

There are two processes for transforming verbs into nouns. The first is by adding the prefix *a*-. The resultant noun denotes the process of the verb. This process is universally productive.

(44) A-gafa dálay dukwen kà-mbadah-ak re.
Nom-take girl also 3sAnt-change-Ant also
“Marriage has also changed [since the old days].”
They broke into dance.” (from verb gɔɾaɾ “dance”)

The second process creates a noun from a verb by the addition of the prefix ma- (with its morpho-phonemic variants mə-, mi-, mu-). The resultant noun is an object associated with the verb. This process has very limited productivity.

“to pass out through the window”
window”

3.9.2 Adjective formation

Verbs are transformed into adjectives by the addition of another prefix ma- (with its morphophonemic variants mə-, mi-, mu-). As with adjectives, the state marker awan obligatorily follows the verbal adjective.

“I ate dried hyena meat.”

The same structure is used to form the participle:

“It was sitting on its eggs.”
4. Verb modifiers and verb phrase elements

4.1 Overview

The structure of the verb phrase can be represented as follows:

Table 5: Structure of the verb phrase

|-----|-----------|-------|----------------------|-----------|------|---------|----------|-------|------|-----|-------|-------------|

The tense/aspect system is characterised by a three-way distinction between perfective, imperfective and anterior aspects. Tense is not marked as such, except for relative future tenses. The moods marked are indicative, imperative, subjunctive and subordinate. The progressive marker is treated below (see 4.2).

In addition to the marking in the verb phrase, clause final adverbials further define the tense and aspect of the verb.

4.2 Progressive marker

The progressive marker `o`m is used in conjunction with the imperfective aspect to express that the action of the verb is in process at the present time, or at the current discourse time. It is always used with a subject pronoun.

(49) Winen anap i rac wanahan kutok.  
he Prog 3sImp eat 3sVol already  
“He was already in the process of eating of his own accord.”

(50) Winen anap i da way  
she Prog 3sImp cook thing  
“She is in the process of cooking.”

The progressive marker and the subject-aspect marker may contract to `oh or oh. The form `oh can be explained in the 3S as the result of the phonological processes of /n/ deletion and elision, and is to be expected. However for other persons there is no phonological process that would produce this form.

(51) Manay api zla kutok nà...  
we(ex) Prog go already Top  
“When we were already going...”

Here api is a contracted form of anap mi.

4.3 The subject-aspect marker

The subject-aspect marker consists of a consonant (except for 3sPfv and 3sImp) and a vowel and carries information on the person, number and aspect of the verb. Each of the three main aspects, perfective, imperative and anterior has a set of subject-aspect markers (see also 3.2.1):

Table 6: Subject-aspect markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perfective I threw, etc</th>
<th>Imperfective I am throwing, etc</th>
<th>Anterior I have thrown, etc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>nà zlàmbál</td>
<td>nî zlàmbál</td>
<td>nà zlàmbáláì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>kà zlàmbál</td>
<td>kî zlàmbál</td>
<td>kà zlàmbáláì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>à zlàmbál</td>
<td>tì zlàmbál</td>
<td>à zlàmbáláì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pEx</td>
<td>mà zlàmbál</td>
<td>mî zlàmbál</td>
<td>mà zlàmbáláì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pInc</td>
<td>dà zlàmbál</td>
<td>dî zlàmbál</td>
<td>dà zlàmbáláì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2p</td>
<td>kà zlàmbilén</td>
<td>kî zlàmbilén</td>
<td>kà zlàmbilénáì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3p</td>
<td>tà zlàmbál</td>
<td>tî zlàmbál</td>
<td>tà zlàmbáláì</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The imperfective is marked by the use of the vowel i in the auxiliary. The other forms have underlying a. The anterior and perfective subject-aspect markers differ segmentally only in the 3s.
The 1pInc and 3sAnt auxiliaries have their own tones (L and H respectively) whereas the tone of the other subject-aspect markers is determined by the verb tone pattern.

The subject-aspect marker slot may be occupied by other morphemes which do not carry person or number information:

### Table 7: Other subject-aspect markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject-aspect marker</th>
<th>Tone pattern</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>Imperative (IMP)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma</td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>Participle (Part)</td>
<td>clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td>Subordinator (Sub)</td>
<td>clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td>Subordinator (Sub)</td>
<td>clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ana</td>
<td>Purpose (Purp)</td>
<td></td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saa, sasa</td>
<td>Purpose (Purp)</td>
<td></td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pa</td>
<td>HM</td>
<td>Consecutive (Con)</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero, with pronoun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphatic (EMPH)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.3.1 Imperative

The imperative is formed by the omission of the subject-aspect marker (see 3.6.2):

(52) Zl-uko agay!
    Go-1pInc home
    “Let’s go home!”

The subjunctive is formed with the perfective subject-aspect markers, but with a HM tone pattern (see 3.4).

#### 4.3.2 Participial clauses

The prefix `ma` is used to form participles in subordinate clauses where the verb denotes a state which is concurrent with the event line of the discourse (cf 3.9.2):

(53) Ziyel ma-ban nga alay inde, aday i sa g-an suse ana vaje
    lion Part-hold head hand inside then 3Simp FutPos do-3sIO thanks to monkey
    “The lion, holding his head in his hands, was going to thank the monkey.”

(54) Man njakar a-manay awan inde kartek ite, winen ma-nahay awan pa-slay.
    mother chicken of-we State inside one also she Part-lie State on-eggs
    “We had a hen, incubating her eggs.”

#### 4.3.3 Embedded clauses

There are two prefixes that denote subordination: `sa` and `a`. They are identical in form to the forms of the preposition “of”. Their uses can be divided between embedded subordinate clauses, where `sa` is used, and infinitival clauses (section 4.3.4) where `a` is used.

(55) A-can-an ayak ana dø sa-ma zek kutok
    3sPfv-see-3sIO to^there Sub-return head then
    “He saw there someone to help him.”

(56) Maraha a-saa tara nà dø sa-rake way pa-cakay caved
    Meraha 3sPfv-FutPos become Top person Sub-see thing on-side road
    “Meraha would become a man who looks for things at the side of the road [homeless]”

(57) A-dazlan sa-ngam-an ayak
    3sPfv-begin Sub-call-3sIO to^there
    “He began to call to him.”
4.3.4 Infinitival clauses

In infinitival clauses the subject-aspect marker as- is prefixed to the verb.

(58) A-ndakay doh nà, ki dazlan nà, ki halay kon bayak awan.
INF-build house Top 2sImpr begin Top 2sImpr gather stone lots State
“When you begin to build a house, you gather lots of stones.”

(59) a-tam iken nà, lele
INF-save you Top good
“That I save you is a good thing.”

4.3.5 Purpose clauses

The prefixes saa and sasa are used to mark subordinate purpose clauses. These prefixes are separate words and function also as subordinating conjunctions. Saa is the most common. The variant sasa may signify hypothesis, in other words, the purpose may not be accomplished. The two forms would then be analogous to the future markers i and sa.

(60) Ma-zla saa sl-ay ahay gujed.
1pExPfv-go Purp cut-Ing to-’here grass
“We went to gather grass.”

(61) Tônjan ahay mbarka ta-zla sasa roc-ay apa a-kiñe wa.
sheep PL six 3pPfv-go Purp eat-Ing fodder at-bush away
“Six sheep went to graze in the bush.”

4.3.6 Consecutive clauses

The form o` is used for consecutive actions. It links the clause with the previous clause.

3sPfv-arrive on-road immed she Con trade DOFoc thing straightaway
“As soon as she got to the road, she straightaway sold things.”

4.3.7 Emphatic clauses

There is another form which is distinguished by its use of a subject pronoun and verb, without a verb prefix. This form is emphatic, giving prominence to the action, and can occur with an ideophone.

(63) do s-akar ahay cake kara anan zana
man of-theft PL Id steal DOFoc cloth
“The thieves Id. stole the cloth.”

4.3.8 Defective verbs

Some verbs are defective and regularly occur without a subject-aspect marker. If there is no overt subject a full pronoun must be used.

(64) Tinen dâmbed saray kôrtêk
They take leg one
“They took one leg.”

(65) tinen yak anan a-zlôben si-de
they go 3SDO at-gap of-granary
“They took it to the space behind the granary.”
4.4 Modal markers

The modal markers are optionally placed between the subject-aspect marker and the verb. They denote an action that occurs at a time off the event line and express the speaker’s illocutionary perspective on the event. They are as follows:

Table 8: Modals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>definite future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa, saa</td>
<td>possible future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sak a</td>
<td>future anterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naa</td>
<td>obligation (ingressive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>obligation (egressive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta, taa</td>
<td>habitual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.1 Definite future

The future definite marker i is used to denote that the action described is certain to take place in a time after the current time or the discourse time. It is used with the imperfective aspect.

(66) Ki i 6an-ay ahay gujed anak t-o-tiber. 2sImp FutDef tie-Ing to^here grass your with-tiber
    “You will tie together your grass with bark from the tiber tree.”

(67) winen dükwen dovac awan, i i mae bore.
    he also disease State 3sImp FutDef die soon
    “He was also ill, and was going to die soon.”

4.4.2 Possible future

The future possible marker sa is used to denote that the action described may take place in a time after the current time or the discourse time. It is used with either the imperfective or the perfective aspect.

(68) ni sa c-ay ahay p-awan na t-ide uno awan ite 1sImp FutPos see-ing to^here on-thing this with-eye my State also
    “I will see this thing (which I don’t believe) with my own eyes.”

(69) a-sa cace ahay panan ‘am 3sPfv-FutPos ask to^here on^him mouth
    “He would ask her something.”

The form saa is used with the subjunctive to describe a volition concerning future events.

(70) a-j-an atan, tâ saa g-an awan ana wan anahan bay. 3sPfv-say-3sIO 3pIO 3pSbj FutPos do-3sIO thing to child his Neg
    “He said to them that they should not harm his son.”

4.4.3 Future anterior

The future anterior marker sak a denotes that the action will have taken place at the time of another future action. It is used with the perfective aspect. It is only found in “if” or “when” clauses.

(71) na-sak a pa daf nà, ni i zla a-lumo 1sPfv-FutAnt eat food Top 1sImp FutDef go to-market
    “When I (will) have eaten, I will go to market.”

(72) ka-sak a 6in-en anak koma, ka-sa pôsik-en anak sabay 2pPfv-FutAnt catch-2p it how, 2pPfv-FutPos untie-2p it no^longer
    When you (will) have caught it, don’t untie it yet [until I have got there].”
4.4.4 Obligation

The obligation marker *naa* denotes that the speaker regards the action of the verb as necessary or obligatory. Imperfective aspect is used when the subject is in the first person, but perfective with the second and third persons.

(74) mi *naa* ma apan kula sabay
1pExImp Obl go^back on^him never no^longer
“We must never again go back to it.”

(75) ka-*naa* cace panan way anak ahay
2sPfv-Obl ask on^him thing your PL
“You must ask him about your problem.”

(76) bbay anak a a-*naa* tawal-ak umo hana na
father your Ref 3sPfv-Obl do-2IO 1pDualIO here this
“[Why...] did your father have to do this to us [...]?”

In subordinate clauses the combination *sa naa* is used to express purpose with a direction towards the discourse centre.

(77) Tə-haw-ay patan sa-*naa* təmah-ak atan ayak po-cəved wa.
3pPfv-run-Ing on^them Purp-Obl receive-Egr 3sIO to^there on-road Src
“They ran out to them to welcome them (home) from the road.”

4.4.5 Obligation (egressive)

The marker *a* denotes an obligation to be carried out in a direction away from the discourse centre.

(78) Dazay agay, ka-*a* m-an uda awan mənjəek aday.
descend home 2sPfv-Obl return-3sIO inside State little first
“Go home, you should rest a bit first.”

4.4.6 Habitual

The habitual marker *taa* is used to denote habitual actions. *taa* is used with the perfective aspect or in subordinate clauses to denote past habitual actions. *ta* is used with the imperfective aspect to denote future habitual actions.

(79) Ta *taa* jan po-pales do ahay cew daw?
3pPfv Hab climb on-horse person PL two QM
“Do they normally ride two on a horse?”

(80) A n-an umo nà, ki *ta* sl-an umo ahay gujef po-ava
3sPfv be-3sIO 1pExIO Top 2sImp Hab cut-3sIO 1pExIO to^here grass on-year
“If we want, you will cut grass for us each year.”

(81) dona mərban anahan sa *taa* tam way tə-batal anahan, a lize panan
girl uncle his Sub Hab sew thing with-needle his 3sPfv lose on^it
“His aunt, who had been sewing with his needle, lost it.”

4.5 The completive marker

The completive marker *ə* marks that an action is already completed at a time just prior to the discourse time. In past time frames it has the sense of “already”. In present or future time frames it has the sense of “first” or “before”. It is used with either anterior or perfective aspect.
(82) na-p-ak a daŋ na, ni zla a-lumo
1sAnt-eat-Ant Cpl food Top 1sImp go to-market
“When I have finished eating, I am going to market”

In a narrative discourse it is used to indicate the swift succession of events.

(83) Ta-vad zek. Malike a-vad a anan to-sungol pa-nga.
3pPfv-hit body Malike 3sPfv-hit Cpl him with-stick on-head
“They fought. Straightaway Malike hit him on the head with a stick.”

4.6 Destination markers

Within the verb phrase there are the direction markers “to here” and “to there”. These are:

àhày “to here – toward deictic centre”
àyà “to there – away from deictic centre”

These markers refer to the destination of a directional verb. This destination must be accessible to the hearer – these markers cannot be used just to express ‘away from centre’ but must refer to an activated location. They can be used in discourse to pinpoint which participant is locally prominent when more than one participant is involved.

They are only used with directional verbs. Most of these carry the direction suffixes -ày or -ák (ingressive and egressive respectively) which are often deleted by another suffix, though the low tone of the ingressive suffix may remain.

(84) Na-njat--àk ahay batal
1sAnt-find-ING-Ant to‘here needle
“I have found a needle (and have it with me here)” (destination of finding is here)

(85) ki n-èn anan ahay sla ahay a-guvo uno sabay
2pImp be-ING-2p DOFoc to‘here cow PL to-field my no longer
“Don’t bring your cows here to my field again.”

Not all motion verbs are directional verbs, for example haw “to run” and bar “to walk” are not directional verbs, whereas haway “to run away” is directional.

(86) Mñuko dùkwen da-bar na, mənjo na. zana.
We (incl) also 1pIncPfv-walk Top without cloth
“We also walked about without clothes.”

4.7 Indirect object complements

Verbs obligatorily agree with indirect objects in person and number. The indirect object agreement markers are always present whether the corresponding NP is present or not. The indirect object agreement markers, realised as unstressed clitic pronouns in the verb phrase, function to identify the referent when no NP is present in the sentence. Indirect object markers may be represented as verb suffixes, or, if the verb carries a subject agreement marker or the anterior marker, as separate words in the verb phrase.

The markers have two parts, a singular element, which may be a suffix to the verb or a separate word, and a plural element, which is a separate word used in conjunction with the singular element.

Table 9: Indirect object markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Suffix form</th>
<th>Separate word form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1S</td>
<td>-o</td>
<td>uno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2S</td>
<td>-ak</td>
<td>anak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3S</td>
<td>-an</td>
<td>anan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Pexcl</td>
<td>-an umo</td>
<td>anan umo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Pdual</td>
<td>-akumo</td>
<td>anakumo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Pincl</td>
<td>-ak uko</td>
<td>anak uko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P</td>
<td>-ak ikwen</td>
<td>anak ikwen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P</td>
<td>-an atan</td>
<td>anan atan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.8 Prepositional pronouns

There are two sets of pronouns, corresponding to complements formed with the preposition pa-. They are included within the verb phrase.

The two sets correspond to the forms pa-N ‘on N’ and pa-N wa ‘away from N’. They are as follows:

Table 10 : Prepositional pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“on …”</th>
<th>“from …”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>upo</td>
<td>puno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>apak</td>
<td>panak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>apan</td>
<td>panan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pEx</td>
<td>pumo</td>
<td>pumo wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pDual</td>
<td>pumo</td>
<td>pumo wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pInc</td>
<td>puko</td>
<td>puko wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2p</td>
<td>pikwen</td>
<td>pikwen wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3p</td>
<td>patan</td>
<td>patan wa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NP
(91) Nen pa ca po-majape dukwen.
I Con see on-stew also
“I looked at the stew.”

Pronoun
(92) I ca patan po-way ahay wa bayak awan.
3sImp see on′them on′thing Pl Src lots State
“He looked after them [his children] concerning many different things.”

NP
(93) Aday i cace zana anahan pu-do sa-lumo ataya wa.
then 3sImp ask cloth her on-person of-market those Src
“Then she asked the people at the market about her cloth.”

Pronoun
(94) Lungo a-ngazɔr-ay ahay patan wa zana ataya.
leopard 3sPfv-snatch-ing to^here on^them Src cloth those
“The leopard snatched their clothes from them.”

The particle uḍa ‘inside’ also functions as a locational pronoun in this position.

NP
(95) A-lar zek a-dalov inde.
3sPfv-throw body at-lake inside
“He threw himself into the lake.”
Pronoun
(96) kā-lar uda zek. 
2sSbj-throw inside body  
“You should throw yourself into it [fire].”

The pronominal forms of complements from other prepositions do not move into the verb phrase, and in these cases there is no special set of pronouns. The noun is simply replaced by the subject pronoun.

NP
(97) Ta-ga minje tu-do ma-mac awan. 
3pPfv-do likeness with-man Part-die State 
“He looked like the dead man.”

Pronoun
(98) Ta-ga minje ta-winen a dukwen. 
3pPfv-do likeness with-he State also  
“He looked like him too.”

4.9 Intensifier
The intensifier ̓ike is also used with intransitive verbs to give the verb an intensified sense:

(99) a-rōba ̓ike 
3sPfv-be“beautiful Int 
“She was very beautiful”

(100) ta-suwe anan, ta-rac ̓ike. 
3pPfv-fry 3sDO 3pPfv-eat Int 
“They fried it and ate (with gusto).”
5. Valency changing devices

5.1 Reflexive construction
Different strategies are used in reflexive constructions depending on the role of the subject. If the subject is coreferent with the direct object of the verb, the word *zek* ‘body’ is used as the direct object.

5.1.1 Subject coreferent with DO

(101) ta-der a’am a-zløben
3pPfv-hide water at-gap
“they hid the water in the gap behind the granary”

(102) Njøkar a-der *zek* a-ønaw inde
chicken 3sPfv-hide body at-beans inside
“The chicken hid himself in the beans.”

(103) Ta-lar gujød pa-ngø wa.
3pPfv-throw grass on-head away
“They threw down the grass from their heads.”

(104) a-lar *zek* a-döløv inde.
3sPfv-throw body at-lake inside
“He threw himself into the lake.”

5.1.2 Subject coreferent with IO
If the subject is coreferent with the indirect object of the verb *nga anahan* “his head” etc. is used as the indirect object.

(105) i p-an way ana doh anahan
3sImp eat-3sIO thing to house his
“He fed his household.”

(106) ta-mba apan sa-p-an way *a-ngø a-tinen*
3pPfv-on’him Sub-eat-3sIO thing to-head of-they
“They are able to feed themselves.”

(107) A-j-an ’am ana døna ata kwayan a
3sPfv-say-3sIO mouth to girl that straightaway
“He spoke to that girl straightaway.”

(108) A-j-an ’am *ana nga anahan*, a-wa :
3sPfv-say-3sIO mouth to head his 3sPfv-say
“He said to himself.”

5.2 Reciprocal construction
Reciprocal forms may be formed by replacing the direct object complement with *zek* “body”.

(109) Ayah a-vaød anan lungø re.
3pPfv-hit DOFoc leopard also
“The squirrel also killed the leopard.”

(110) Tinen apan ti vad *zek*
they Prog 3plmp hit body
“They were fighting each other.”
5.3 Causative construction

Causative forms can be created by adding a direct object to a normally intransitive verb, or an indirect object to a transitive verb.

With intransitive verbs, the causer is coded as the subject and the causee is coded as the direct object.

\[
\begin{align*}
zla & \quad \text{“go”} \\
zla \text{ + NP}[DO] & \quad \text{“cause something to go”}
\end{align*}
\]

(111) Uwar məduwer ata a-zla aga bahay
woman old that 3sPfv-go house of chief
“That old woman went to the chief’s house.”

(112) Ta-zla anan zana a-tinen ahay pə-tila aga njavan ahay.
3Pfv-go DOFoc cloth of-they PL on-tailor house of guinea-fowl PL
“They took their clothes from the tailor to the guinea-fowls’ house.”

With transitive verbs, the causee is coded as the indirect object.

\[
\begin{align*}
op & \quad \text{“eat something”} \\
op \text{ + NP}[DO] + \text{NP}[IO] & \quad \text{“to cause someone to eat something, to feed so. something”}
\end{align*}
\]

(113) A-pa anan daslam pa-ndaw wa.
3sPfv-eat DOFoc leaf on-millet Src
“It ate the leaves off the millet.”

(114) i p-an way ana doh anahan
3sImp eat-3sIO thing to house his
“He fed his household (He caused his household to eat thing).”

5.4 Middle voice

Certain verbs exist in the middle voice. The patient is placed in the subject position.

Active

(115) ni kad-ak ahay dodomawan.
1sImp break-2sIO to here wood State
“I will cut some wood (and bring it here) for you.”

Middle

(116) sukəl a-kad
stick 3sPfv-break
“The stick broke.”

Active

(117) a-ma nga so-lize anan zlile ta awan
3sPfv-return head Sub-lose DOFoc wealth that State
“He decided to spend all his wealth.”

Middle

(118) Batal a ana i sa lize
needle this 3sImp FutPos lose
“This needle will get lost.”

With some verbs a reflexive form is used.

(119) Ta-zlaɓ anan…Ōna, a sa zlaɓ zek na, manjek bayak a subay.
3Pfv-thresh 3sDO but 3sPfv FutPos thresh body Top little lots State no longer
“They threshed it, but when it was threshed there was very little left.”
6. Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>3p</td>
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<td>Adj</td>
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