

Tense-Aspect Categories and Standard Negation in Five Bamileke Languages of Cameroon: A Descriptive and Comparative Study

By

Eliane Sonkoue Meli Epse Kamdem

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Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Sommer

Mentor: Dr. Kerstin Winkelmann

Mentor: PD Dr. Klaudia Dombrowsky-Hahn

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Dedication

To Stephen C. Anderson, for your encouragement which made the journey easier.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of tense-aspect and standard negation in five Bamileke languages: Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba. It aims at a detailed description of the mechanisms for expressing tense-aspect categories and standard negation in each of the five languages under investigation and a comparison of the tense-aspect systems and standard negation across the languages analysed. The ultimate aim of the comparison is to test previous scholars' claims that aspects of grammar largely exhibit the same properties from one Bamileke language to the other (Nissim 1975, Sonkoue 2014). The study is mainly synchronic and is based on working sessions with language consultants, using a questionnaire and a list of topics for collecting short oral texts. The conceptual framework that guided the analysis and interpretation of the data relies basically on the works by Comrie (1976, 1985) and Dahl (1985) on tense-aspect and Miestamo (2000, 2003, 2005) on negation. The main findings of the study are: (i) tense and aspect are encoded differently in each of the languages analysed. Verb forms may either lack an overt tense or aspect marking, they may exhibit a single marker, or a construction including at least two elements (for example, two tense markers following each other). Tense-aspect markers may also have one or more basic uses. (ii) Tense-aspect and standard negation interact in an interesting way in the languages analysed; and (iii) on close inspection, both the similarities and differences between the five languages analysed with respect to tense-aspect and standard negation prove to be considerable. Thus, this study departs from previous scholars' claims and argues that Bamileke languages show a high degree of similarity in the basics of their tense-aspect systems and standard negation. Nevertheless, when deep analyses are carried out in each individual language within these domains of grammar, comparing the languages indicates that they have both, similarities and differences and thus, neither should be de-emphasised. In addition, the study indicates that various hypotheses about diachronic change relating to tense-aspect systems and standard negation in the languages under investigation, and to a certain extent in related languages outside the Bamileke group, can be advanced. For example, it is posited in the study that the near past markers (**kà** in Ngiemboon, **kā** in Feʔfeʔ and Ghomalaʔ, and **kə** in Ngombale) are probably derived from the same source. The study closes with recommendations for future research. It recommends, for instance, an analysis of the extended functions of tense-aspect categories in each of the languages analysed.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit ist eine Untersuchung der Tempus/Aspektsysteme und der Standardnegation in fünf Bamileke-Sprachen: Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale und Medumba. Ziel der Arbeit ist eine detaillierte Beschreibung der verschiedenen Mechanismen zum Ausdruck von Tempus und Aspekt und der Standardnegation in jeder einzelnen der fünf Sprachen sowie ein Vergleich der Tempus/Aspektsysteme und der Standardnegation dieser Sprachen. Der Vergleich dient der Überprüfung einer These früherer Arbeiten, wonach bestimmte Teile der Grammatiken der Bamileke-Sprachen überwiegend dieselben Eigenschaften aufweisen (Nissim 1975, Sonkoue 2014). Die Studie ist vorrangig synchron angelegt und basiert auf der Arbeit mit Muttersprachlern/Muttersprachlerinnen. Hierfür wurden ein Fragebogen und eine Liste verschiedener Themen zum Sammeln kurzer mündlicher Texte verwendet. Der konzeptuelle Rahmen für Analyse und Interpretation der Daten stützt sich in Bezug auf Tempus und Aspekt im Wesentlichen auf die Arbeiten von Comrie (1976, 1985) und Dahl (1985), bezüglich der Negation auf Miestamo (2000, 2003, 2005). Die wichtigsten Ergebnisse der Studie sind: (i) Tempus und Aspekt sind in jeder der analysierten Sprachen unterschiedlich kodiert. Verbformen können entweder keine overte Tempus/Aspektmarkierung besitzen, sie können einen einzigen Marker oder eine Konstruktion aus mehreren Elementen (z.B. zwei aufeinander folgende Tempus-Marker) aufweisen. Tempus/Aspektmarker können zudem eine oder mehrere grundlegende Verwendungen haben. (ii) Tempus/Aspekt und Standardnegation interagieren in den analysierten Sprachen auf interessante Weise. (iii) Bei näherer Betrachtung erweisen sich sowohl die Ähnlichkeiten als auch die Unterschiede zwischen den fünf analysierten Sprachen in Bezug auf Tempus/Aspekt und Standardnegation als beträchtlich. Daher weicht diese Studie von den Behauptungen früherer Wissenschaftler ab und konstatiert stattdessen, dass es in den Bamileke-Sprachen einen hohen Grad an Ähnlichkeit bei den Grundmerkmalen der Tempus/Aspektsysteme und der Standardnegation gibt. Tiefergehende Analysen zeigen jedoch, dass sich in diesen Bereichen sowohl Ähnlichkeiten als auch Unterschiede zwischen den Sprachen finden, und beides nicht unterschätzt werden sollte. Darüber hinaus stellt die Studie verschiedene Hypothesen auf über diachrone Entwicklungen in den Tempus/Aspektsystemen und bei der Standardnegation in den untersuchten Sprachen und in begrenztem Rahmen auch in verwandten Sprachen außerhalb der Bamileke-Gruppe. So wird in der Studie beispielsweise postuliert, dass die Markierungen für die nahe Vergangenheit (**kà** in Ngiemboon, **kā** in Feʔfeʔ und Ghomalaʔ und **kə̀** in Ngombale) wahrscheinlich aus derselben Quelle stammen. Die Studie schließt mit Anregungen für die künftige Forschung und empfiehlt u.a. eine Analyse der erweiterten Funktionen der Tempus/Aspektkategorien in jeder der analysierten Sprachen.

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List of Abbreviations

1, 3, 6a, 7, 7a, 9	Noun class numbering	N	Homorganic nasal consonant morpheme
1p	First person plural	N-	Homorganic nasal consonant prefix
1s	First person singular	N ₁	Homorganic nasal consonant prefix (links the verb or a verb-related element to a preceding verb-related element)
2p	Second person plural	N ₂	Homorganic nasal consonant prefix (replaces the subject of the clause, except in Medumba where N ₂ ties a series of clauses together into a coherent whole)
2s	Second person singular	N ₃	Homorganic nasal consonant prefix (ties a series of clauses together into a coherent whole)
3p	Third person plural	N ₄	Homorganic nasal consonant prefix (in Feʔfeʔ, N ₄ always appears before the imperfective marker. Therefore, it is considered the imperfective marker nasal prefix. In Ghomalaʔ, N ₄ always appears before the general future marker. Therefore, it is considered the general future marker nasal prefix).
3s	Third person singular	N _?	Homorganic nasal consonant prefix (function unclear, appears in Ghomalaʔ)
A	Aspect	NEG	negative marker
AA	Adverbial auxiliary	Neg	Negative form
ADV	Adverb	NEG ₁	first particle of a double negative marker
Aff	Affirmative form	NEG ₂	second particle of a double negative marker
An	Answer	N_FUT	Near Future
C	Consonant	NMLZ	Nominalisation marker
CONJ1	Coordinating conjunction	N_PST	Near Past
CONJ2	Subordinating conjunction	OBJ	Object
DEM1	Demonstrative 1 (indicating distance not far from the speaker)	PFV	Perfective
DEM2	Demonstrative 2 (indicating relative distance from both the speaker and the listener)		
EMPH/E	Emphatic marker		
EXT	Verbal extension		
FOC	Focused personal pronoun		
FUT	Future		
G_FUT	General Future		
H	High tone		
HAB	Habitual		
H_FUT	Hodiernal Future		
H_PST	Hodiernal Past		
INDF	Indefinite pronoun		
IPFV	Imperfective		
L	Low tone		
LH	Low-high tone		

Abbreviations

POSS	Possessive adjective/pronoun (varying depending on the noun with which it co-occurs)	SBJ	Subject of the clause
PREP	Preposition	SM	Subject agreement marker (immediately follows a nominal subject in Ngiemboon, may be omitted in fast speech)
PRF/P	Perfect	SS	Same subject as in the previous clause
PROG	Progressive	SUFF	Suffix
PRS	Present tense	SVO	Subject-verb-object
PST	past tense	T	Tense
Q	Question	UTA	Unmarked Tense-Aspect
QPTCL	Question particle	V	Vowel
R	Réponse	vb	verb
REL	Relative pronoun	-VC	Vowel copying
R_FUT	Remote Future	-VL	Vowel lengthening
R_PST	Remote Past		

General Abbreviations

AGLC	General Alphabet of Cameroon Languages
CABTAL	Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy
DEA	Diplôme d'études approfondies
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ELAN – EUDICO	Linguistic Annotator
MA	Massachusetts
SELAF	Société d'Études Linguistiques et Anthropologiques de France
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
SKY	Suomen Kielitieteellinen Yhdistys

List of Symbols

>	Developed into
-	Indicates affixation
---	Not applicable or impossible
/ /	Underlying or phonemic representation
-/-	The same thing
[]	Surface or phonetic representation
~	or , which alternates with
Ø	Represents the absence of an expected tense-aspect marking in the transcription of data.

CHAPTER I

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and Structure of the Study

The aim of this dissertation is twofold:

- (1) Provide a detailed description of the mechanisms for expressing tense-aspect categories and standard negation in five Bamileke languages: Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba.
- (2) Compare the languages analysed with respect to their tense-aspect systems and standard negation with the ultimate aim of testing previous scholars' claims that aspects of grammar – for instance, tone, noun classes, tense, aspect, etc. – largely exhibit the same properties from one Bamileke language to another (Nissim 1975, Sonkoue 2014).¹

The approach used is mainly synchronic: the study is not primarily concerned with questions about diachronic change related to tense and/or aspect and standard negation, for instance, how do individual tense-aspect and standard negation markings came about? but rather focuses on the description of the tense-aspect and standard negation markings in the investigated languages, as they are currently used by speakers. However, some hypotheses about historical antecedents are included in an attempt to explain certain present-day differences between the languages analysed. The study is organised as follows:

Chapter One introduces general aspects and the target languages.

Chapter Two presents the conceptual framework which provided guidelines for the analysis and interpretation of the data. Furthermore, it provides a summary of previous studies on the investigated languages and outlines the motivation for the present research.

Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven mainly focus on the description of the mechanisms for expressing tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ngiemboon (Chapter Three), Feʔfeʔ (Chapter Four), Ghomalaʔ (Chapter Five), Ngombale (Chapter Six), and Medumba (Chapter Seven).

Chapter Eight provides a primarily synchronic comparison of the tense-aspect systems and standard negation across Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba, with the ultimate aim of testing previous scholars' claims that aspects of grammar largely exhibit the same characteristics from one Bamileke language to another.

Chapter Nine summarises the study and makes recommendations for future research.

1.2 Geographical Location

In this section, I present general facts about the target languages and information about their location.

¹ Sonkoue (2014) and the author of the present research are one and the same.

- **Ngiemboon**

The Ngiemboon language is mainly spoken in six villages (Batcham, Bangang, Bamougong, Balatchi, Balessing, and Batang) located in two divisions of the West Region of Cameroon: Batcham, Bangang, Bamougong, Balatchi, and Batang are in the Bamboutos division, while Balessing is in the Menoua division. Around 250,000 people speak Ngiemboon (Simons & Fennig 2018) and the total area of the villages where Ngiemboon is spoken is about 260 square kilometres (Lonfo & Anderson 2014). The collective name for all Ngiemboon speakers is Mbouda, which is actually the name of the largest city of the Bamboutos division. Ngiemboon speakers also use the names of the villages where their language is spoken (see above) to refer to themselves. Also, according to my language consultants, the dialects spoken in the Ngiemboon villages have a few differences (lexical differences) that do not hinder mutual intelligibility.²

- **Feʔfeʔ**

Feʔfeʔ is mainly spoken in the following villages: Banka, Bana, Bandja, Babouantou, Fondanti, Fondjomekwet, and Fotouni. These villages are located in the Upper Nkam division of the West Region of Cameroon. Over 140,000 people speak Feʔfeʔ (Simons & Fennig 2018). The collective name for all Feʔfeʔ speakers is Bafang, which is actually the name of the largest city of the Upper Nkam division. Feʔfeʔ speakers also use the names of their villages (see above) to refer to themselves. According to my language consultants, the dialects spoken in the Feʔfeʔ villages have a few differences (lexical differences) that do not hinder mutual intelligibility.³

- **Ghomalaʔ**

The Ghomalaʔ language is mainly spoken in the following villages: Bayangam, Bameka, Bamendjou, Bahouan, Baham, Batie, Bapa, Badenkop, Baleng, Bamougoum, Bansa, and Bafounda. These villages are located in five divisions of the West Region of Cameroon: Bayangam is in the Koung-Khi division; Bameka, Bamendjou, Bahouan, Baham, Batie, Bapa, and Badenkop are in the Upper-Plateaux division; Baleng and Bamougoum are in the Mifi division; Bansa is in the Menoua division and Bafounda is in the Bamboutos division. Ghomalaʔ has an estimated 350,000 speakers (Simons & Fennig 2018). There are three collective names used to refer to Ghomalaʔ speakers: Bafoussam, Bandjoun, and Baham. These collective names are also the names of the largest cities of the Mifi, the Koung-Khi, and the Upper-Plateaux divisions, respectively. Ghomalaʔ speakers also use the names of their villages (see above) to refer to themselves. It is also worth noting that Ghomalaʔ was adopted by

² Lonfo & Anderson (2014: 11) indicate that the Ngiemboon language is on a day-by-day basis used by an ever lower proportion of the Ngiemboon's youth who today lives in a multilingual context which is dominated by foreign languages.

³ Sadembouo & Chumbow (1990: 67) note that Feʔfeʔ has been excluded from school curricula and administrative life in Cameroon. Only churches view it as a privileged instrument of oral or written communication and have often treated it as equal to the official languages of the country (French and English).

UNESCO in the 1960s as one of nine languages of wider communication for Cameroon and is taught in some Roman Catholic schools there, for instance, Collège Libermann of Douala.⁴

- **Ngombale**

Ngombale is mainly spoken in two villages (Babadjou and Bamessingue) located in the Bamboutos division of the West Region of Cameroon. There are around 45,000 Ngombale speakers (Simons & Fennig 2018) who alternatively refer to their language as Babadjou or Bamessingue.⁵

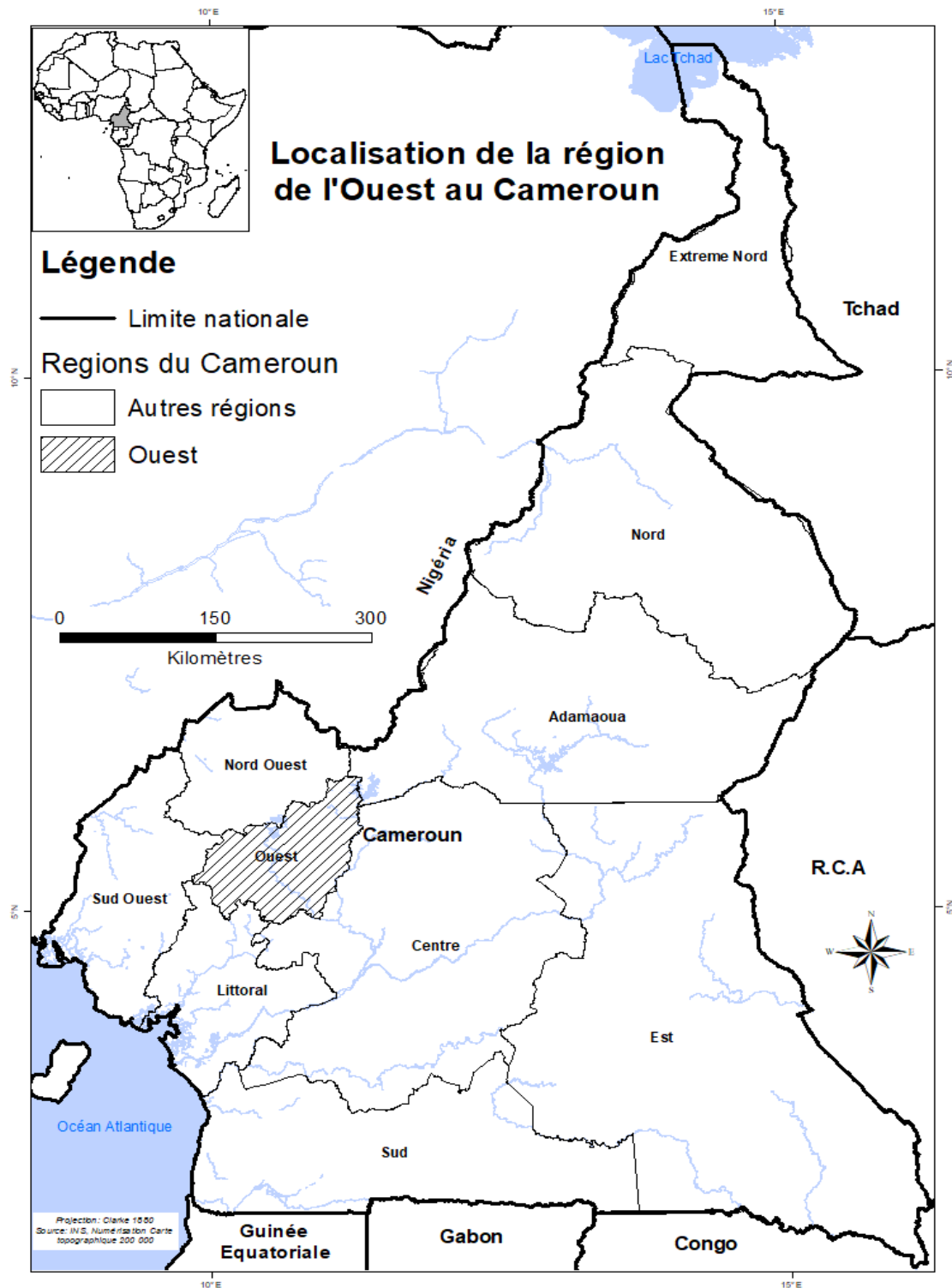
- **Medumba**

Medumba is mainly spoken in three villages (Tonga, Bandounga, and Bangoulap) located in the Nde division of the West Region of Cameroon. Around 210,000 people speak Medumba (Simons & Fennig 2018). The collective name for all Medumba speakers is Bangangte, which is actually the name of the largest city of the Nde division.

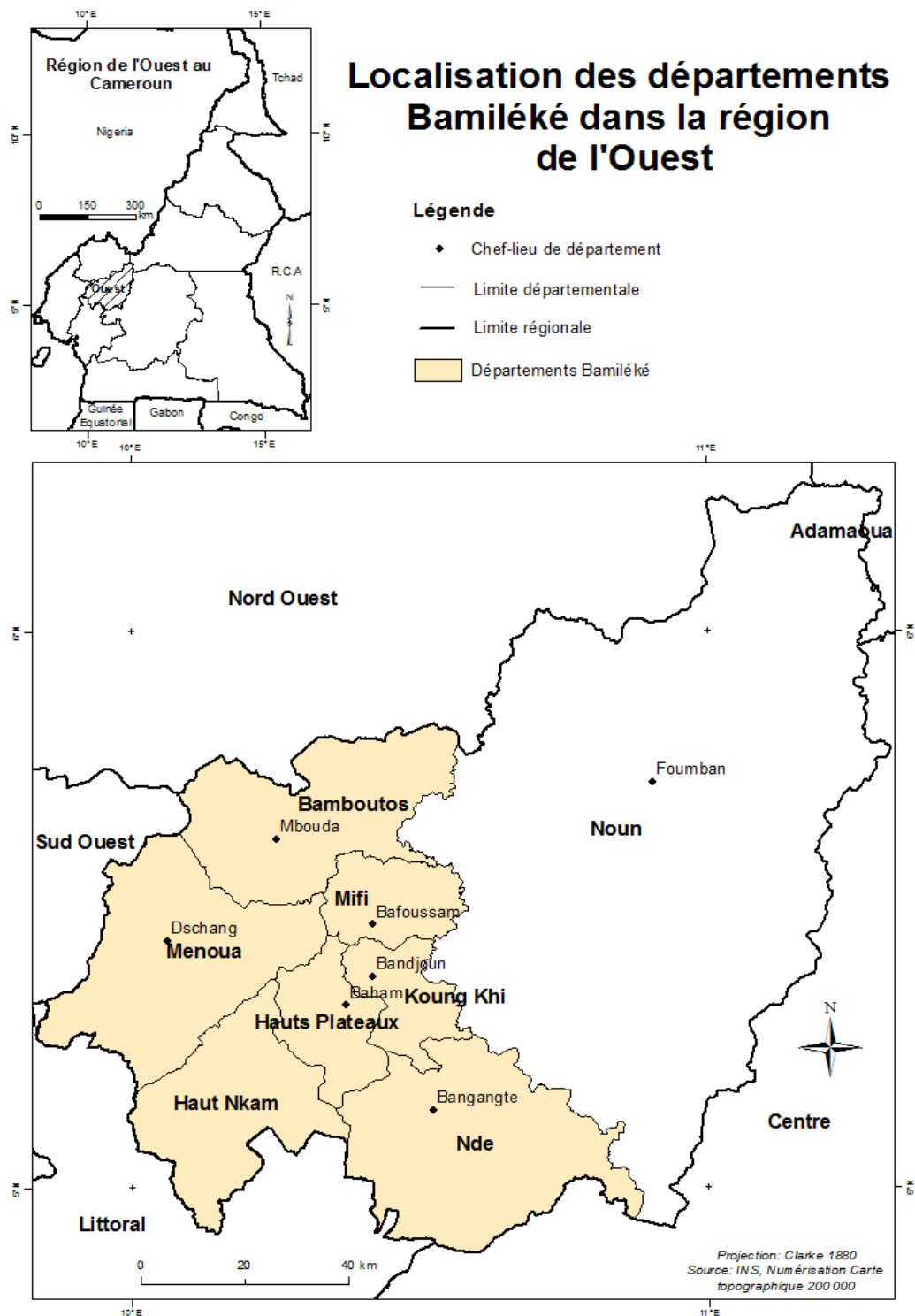
The following maps clearly indicate the geographical location of the five languages analysed.

⁴ According to Domche (2012: 57-61), Ghomala? has a considerable amount of documentation. It was taught at the University of Yaounde as early as the 1970s and is currently taught at the University of Dschang. Ghomala? is used on the radio in Yaounde, Douala, and Bafoussam (the three most important cities in Cameroon). Also, most of the children of the Ghomala's community are Ghomla?-French bilingual.

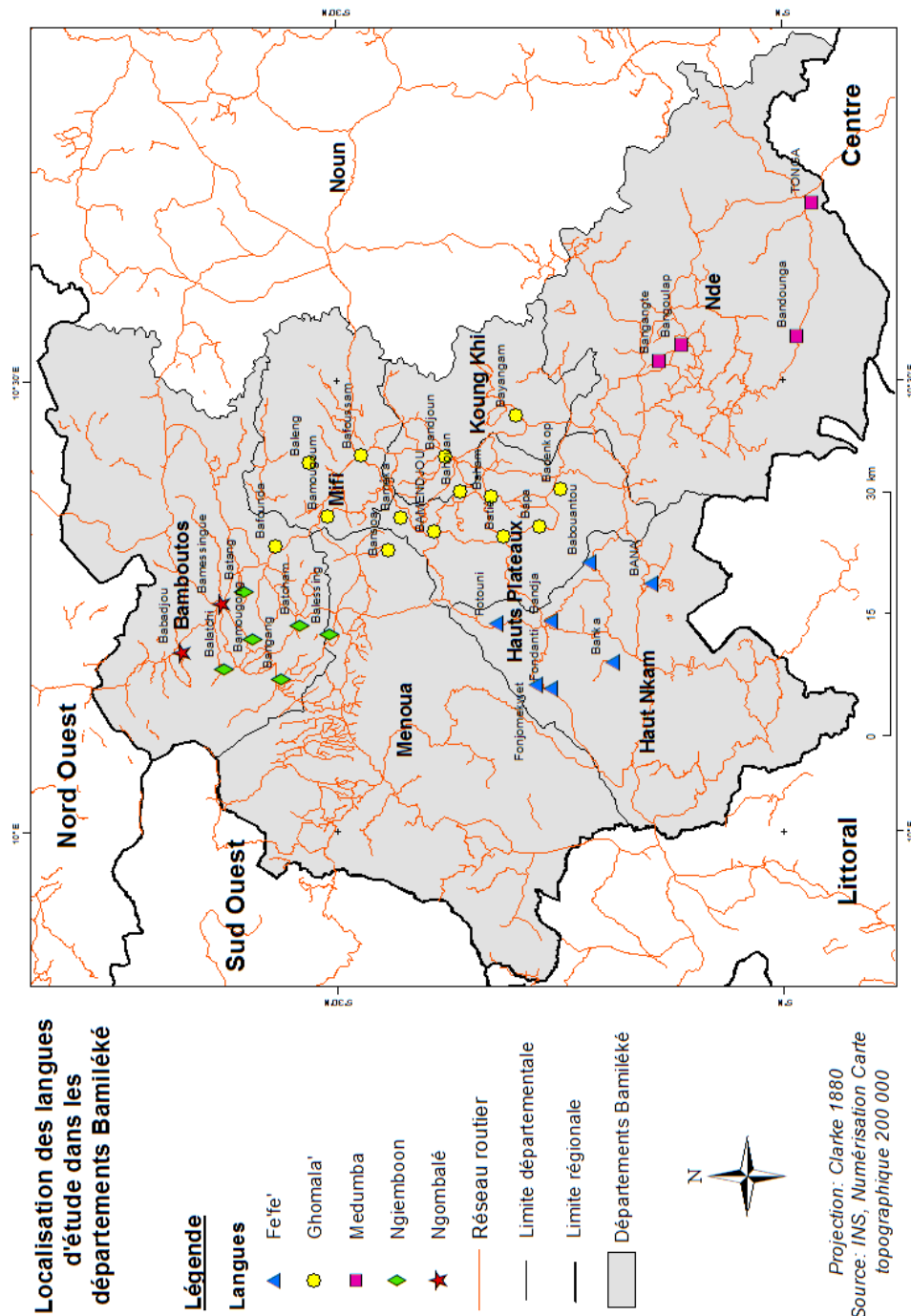
⁵ Seguin (1993: 4-5) notes that there appears to be widespread comprehension of Ngiemboon and Ngomba (two Bamileke languages spoken in the Bamboutos division of the West region of Cameroon) among adult speakers of Ngombale. This comprehension is generally acquired by age 15 and can be explained by the extensive contacts of Ngombale speakers with Ngiemboon and Ngomba speakers. In both Babadjou and Bamessingue, French is reported to be known mostly by young people who have been to school. Old people generally do not speak French well, if at all. French bilingualism among young people may be seriously affecting language vitality, however. Many people speak and understand Cameroon Pidgin English in Bamessingue, as 50% of the population is involved in trade largely oriented towards English-speaking North-West region. Seguin (1993: 9) also indicates that Ngombale "is in daily use, no other language seems to be replacing it on a wide scale, and attitudes towards mother tongue development are positive".



Map 1: Location of the West Region in Cameroon (Tsago Alex, 2018)



Map 2: Location of the Bamileke area in the West Region of Cameroon (Tsago Alex, 2018)



Map 3: Location of each of the investigated languages in the West Region of Cameroon (Tsago Alex, 2018)

1.3 Linguistic Classification

The five languages under investigation belong to a group of Grassfields Bantu languages.⁶ This group is currently known as Bamileke languages (Elias, Leroy & Voorhoeve 1984, Watters 2003, Simons & Fennig 2018, Hammarström, Forkel & Haspelmath 2019, etc.). The name Bamileke is said to have originated from the German mispronunciation of an interpreter's designation, namely, **mba lekeo**, 'the people down there', which has been associated with the chiefdoms where Bamileke languages have been spoken since at least 1910. The Bamileke group of languages includes: Ngombale, Megaka, Ngomba, Ngiemboon, Yemba, Ngwe, Ghomla?, Fe?fe?, Kwa?, Nda?nda?, and Medumba (Watters 2003).

While there is no doubt that Grassfields Bantu languages are genetically related – Stallcup (1980: 54) claims they share 60 percent of lexical similarities – their subclassification remains controversial. Various subclassifications have been proposed in the literature. Richardson (1957: 56-72) argues for a subdivision of Grassfields Bantu languages into the Nkom group and the Bamileke group. However, the linguistic criteria for this subclassification are not clearly stated. Stallcup (1980: 55) proposes a split between Western Grassfields Bantu and Eastern Grassfields Bantu on the basis of seven criteria related to noun classes and two lexical criteria. For instance, noun prefixes all carry a low tone in Eastern Grassfields Bantu languages, while most noun class prefixes carry a high tone in Western Grassfields Bantu languages. Eastern Grassfields Bantu languages do not have noun suffixes, while Western Grassfields Bantu languages have many noun suffixes. Dieu & Renaud (1983) argue for a subdivision of Grassfields Bantu languages into Momo, Menchum, Ring, and Eastern Grassfields. However, their conclusions seem largely based on impressions rather than solid linguistic evidence. Based on lexicostatistical research, Piron (1995) suggests a two-way split between the Narrow Grassfields group and all of the remaining Grassfields languages.

⁶ Grassfields Bantu languages are not part of Bantu languages. However, some of the Bamileke languages exhibit certain features that are typical of Bantu languages (Watters 2003: 227). Also, Grassfields Bantu languages are frequently referred to as Grassfields or Wide Grassfields languages.

Following Watters (2003), the languages under investigation can be classified as follows:

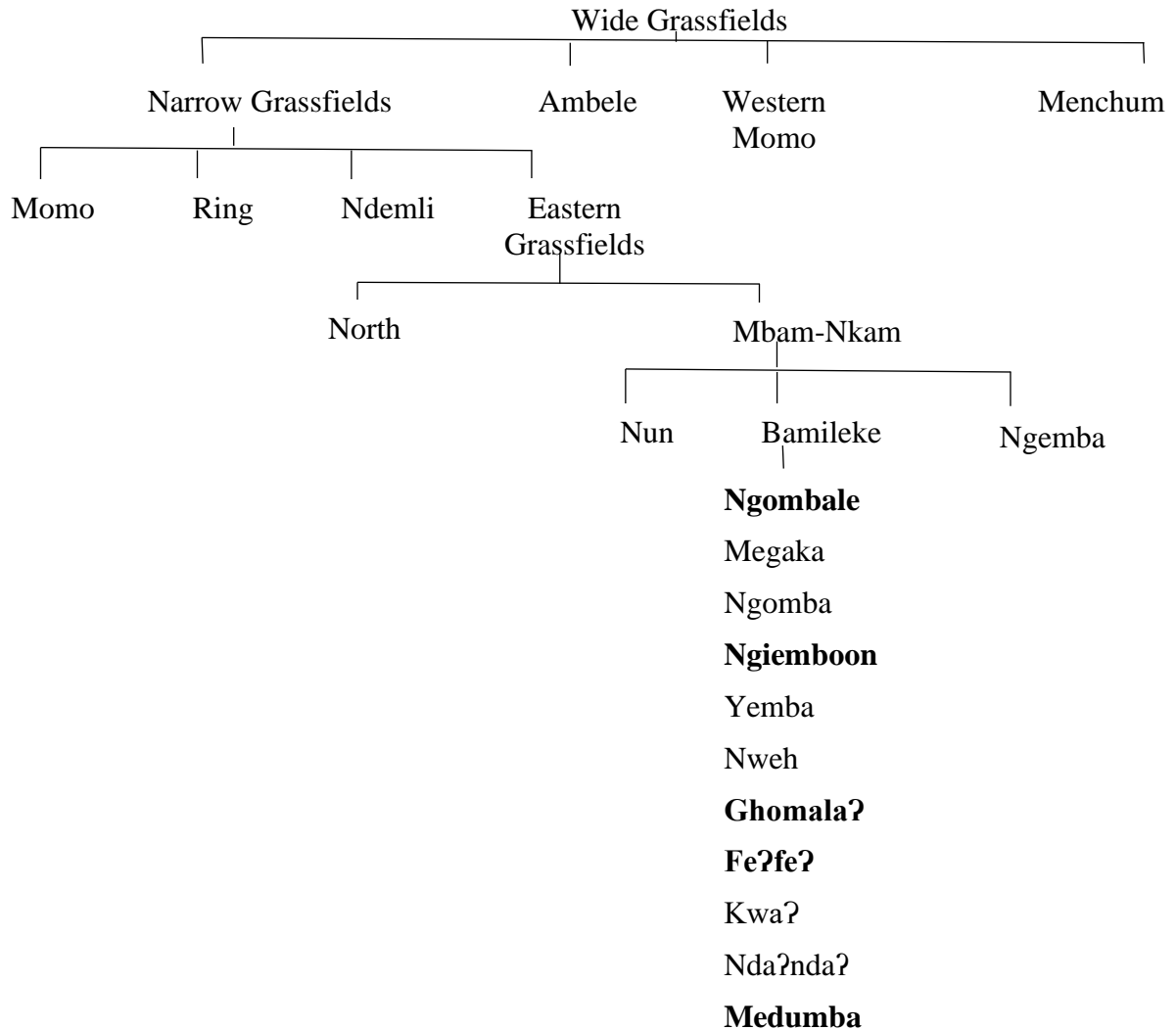


Figure 1: Genetic classification of the investigated languages.⁷

An immediate question, which may arise from this classification of the investigated languages, is whether there are linguistic features shared by Bamileke languages, such as phonological or morphological innovations, that clearly demarcate them from their close relatives, for instance, the Nun and the Ngemba languages. However interesting, this question will not be addressed in this study. It is worth highlighting that according to Larry Hyman (personal communication), Bamileke languages mostly refer to the Francophone part of Grassfields Bantu.

⁷ The classification by Watters (2003) follows various classifications proposed by previous researchers (Elias, Leroy & Voorhoeve 1984, Watters & Leroy 1989, Piron 1995). This classification is adopted here because it is recent compared to other classifications, for example, Richardson (1957).

1.4 Language Sample

From an analysis of noun class and phonological differences, Hyman (1972:7-9) claims that Bamileke languages consist of two subgroups. One, namely, West Bamileke (Ngombale, Megaka, Ngomba, Ngiemboon, Yemba, Ngwe), includes all Bamileke languages that retain typical Bantu-like noun class prefixes and are characterised by /z/ as a reflex of proto-Bamileke *z, whereas the other, namely, East Bamileke (Ghomala?, Fe?fe?, Kwa?, Nda?nda?, Medumba), comprises all Bamileke languages that have lost all noun class prefixes except for the nasal prefixes in classes 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, and 10, and are characterised by /j/ as a reflex of proto-Bamileke *z.

The investigated languages (Ngiemboon, Fe?fe?, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba) have been selected on the basis of Hyman's subclassification of Bamileke languages. I selected two languages from each of Hyman's two subgroups, as reformulated in Watters's (2003: 232-233) version. Furthermore, the Ghomala? language was added. Ghomala? is classified under East Bamileke languages in Hyman's study, but its status as a member of the East Bamileke subgroup appears problematic as one of its dialects, Ngemba, is regarded as a transitional language variety between the two subgroups and, thus, belongs to neither (Hyman 1972: 7). In this way, I believe to have taken a representative sample of Bamileke languages.

1.5 Methodology

This section is subdivided into two subsections. The first provides detailed information about the data collection procedures. In the second subsection, I describe how the data collected were analysed.

1.5.1 Data Collection

Data collection involved four and a half months of fieldwork divided into two field trips. The first lasted three and a half months: from September 2015 to December 2015. The second was from December 2017 to January 2018. During the trips, I mainly lived in the villages of the main language consultants. This made it easy to find occasional language consultants with whom I could discuss my preliminary analyses (during the first trip) or advanced analyses (during the second trip).

The data analysed were gathered through one principal method: working sessions with language consultants or native speakers of the languages under investigation. I worked with 9 main language consultants and about 25 occasional language consultants. The language consultants involved in this study all met the following criteria: (1) be available, (2) be a fluent native speaker of one of the languages under investigation and a good speaker of the intermediate language, namely, French, (3) be an adult (over eighteen years of age) and (4) they should have some basic education (this favours mental alertness). The main language consultants were particularly active in the research during the first field trip, while the occasional language consultants mostly intervened during the second field trip and they mainly helped to check the material collected from the main language consultants.

The working sessions with the language consultants were guided by one principal tool; a questionnaire, which I formulated based on Dahl's (1985) questionnaire that was used for a study investigating what tense-aspect categories are typically found in the languages of the world. I also made use of a range of information from diverse sources to elaborate the questionnaire used in this research, such as information about the various kinds of tenses or aspects discussed in previous studies on the investigated languages, as well as languages genetically related to the Bamileke group, for example, the Bafut language of the Ngemba group (Tamanji 2009).

The original questionnaire was written in English. However, due to the Bamileke area being in the Francophone part of Cameroon, it was translated into French. The following aspects of the questionnaire are worth highlighting (see Appendices C and D for concrete examples):

- It comprises 128 entries. The entries of parts I and III have the following format: the context of the sentence from which a possible tense-aspect marking is to be extracted is indicated within square brackets. Then a positive sentence is provided. Furthermore, a negative form of the positive sentence is added. Where necessary, additional information is provided in parentheses to clarify the context. The entries of part II contain, in general, more than one sentence, but the context is only indicated once for each entry.
- The verb in each sentence of the questionnaire is in the infinitive form. This is to minimize the influence of French while eliciting the target forms, that is, to avoid literal translations of French verb forms into the languages under investigation.
- The sentences of the questionnaire are mostly simple sentences of minimal contrast. That is, sentences with an identical basic SVO structure where the only elements expected to change are tense-aspect and standard negation markings. This choice was motivated by the fact that it enables data to be obtained with few variations, which is very helpful in data analysis.
- Only a couple of verbs are used in the questionnaire. The list of verbs collected in each of the investigated languages at the initial research stage was the basis from which verbs from the two major syllable structures of verb roots in the investigated languages (CV and CVC verb roots) were selected. The lexical tone of verbs was also considered in the selection of the verbs to be included in the questionnaire. In other words, I made sure the questionnaire contains the two classes of verb roots which are distinguished in the investigated languages on the basis of their lexical tones: high and low tone verb roots in Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, Ngombale, Medumba, and mid and low tone verb roots in Fe?fe?. The lexical information provided by the verb was also taken into consideration in the selection of verbs to be included in the questionnaire. This means the questionnaire contains both dynamic and stative verbs.
- Verbs and associated objects included in the questionnaire are mainly related to the cultural context of the Bamileke area, for example, *sow maize*, *cultivate maize*.

The language consultants were instructed to orally produce in their native language the appropriate sentences from the questionnaire, taking as a basis the context indicated within square brackets.⁸

The idea behind the use of working sessions with language consultants as the main data collection method for this study, was to identify all the mechanisms for expressing tense-aspect categories and standard negation in each of the investigated languages during a fieldwork period of four and a half months. In other words, unlike, for instance, the observation of native speakers using their language in real-life dialogues, or the collection of texts from various genres (narrative, procedural, expository, descriptive, etc.), which is time-consuming and might give rather limited information (most native speakers do not use all the available tense-aspect forms of their language in daily conversations), working with native speakers using tools such as questionnaires stimulates the native speaker and, thus, enables the researcher to quickly discover a wide range of forms. The use of a questionnaire was particularly appropriate for this study since it enabled me to collect more or less parallel data in the five languages. This turned out to be very helpful for the comparative chapter.

While formulating the questionnaire, I faced several difficulties including the choice of the degrees of past tense and future tense to consider in it (for example, *hodiernal*⁹ past versus yesterday past, *hodiernal* future versus tomorrow future, etc.). As suggested by previous research, Bamileke languages are particularly rich in graded tenses, that is, tenses that indicate the degree of remoteness in the past or future in relation to a reference time. Therefore, while elaborating the questionnaire I constantly pondered the following question: Do I have enough possibilities for the degrees of past tense and future tense? To overcome this, I mainly relied on previous tense-aspect treatments of Bamileke languages, as well as languages genetically closely related to the Bamileke group. Taking as a basis the observations in previous research, I included in the questionnaire eight degrees of remoteness in the past (a long time ago past, last year past, last month past, last week past, yesterday past, the day before yesterday past, today past, a few minutes ago past) and eight degrees of remoteness in the future (remote future, next year future, next month future, next week future, tomorrow future, the day after tomorrow future, today future, in a few minutes time future).¹⁰ As a native speaker of one of the investigated languages, namely, Ngiemboon, I also found it useful to include contexts which could enable me to elicit sentences related to time spans, such as the whole night or the whole day.

Like any method of data collection, the main method used in this study has limitations. For instance, the sentences elicited from the questionnaire are controlled by specific contexts given

⁸ I do not provide comments on the variations in the language consultants' responses to the questionnaire in the descriptive chapters. This is justified by the fact that although the replies/interpretations of the language consultants were not entirely straightforward from one language consultant to the other, I was able through extensive working sessions to arrive at a general agreement between the speakers in almost all cases.

⁹ The term *hodiernal* is derived from the Latin word **hodie**, 'today' (Dahl 1985: 125).

¹⁰ So far, the most degrees of past tense and future tense that I found in previous studies is five degrees of past and five degrees of future (Anderson 1983, Lonfo 2014).

within square brackets. This might trigger artificial language use, that is, the inappropriate coining of structures by the native speakers in their language just to please the researcher.

To overcome the questionnaire's drawbacks, I checked the markings I was able to identify with as many occasional language consultants as possible. For instance, I asked the occasional language consultants whether they recognise the markings I was able to identify and whether the way they are used in my data makes sense. I also collected short oral texts in order to have data in which the native speakers use their language in a natural context as much as possible. Although they did not enable me to identify any new marking, the short oral texts proved useful as they revealed a great deal of information on the distribution and functions of the nasal consonant prefix that accompanies some tense or aspect markers in the investigated languages and typically occurs before the verb. Also, they enabled me to better understand the function(s) of the tense-aspect categories I established through the data analysis. Also note that the topics I selected in advance for the collection of texts (see appendix E) were not fixed topics; other topics suggested by the language consultants were considered.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

One of the fundamental steps of the data analysis process was the transcription of the collected material. This was done using the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols. The choice for the phonetic (as opposed to orthographic¹¹) transcription for this research was motivated by my willingness to ease the reading of my work for my target audience, namely, interested readers from Cameroon or any other country. Given that the use of narrow (as opposed to broad) transcription is time-consuming (the transcriber has to specify the precise phonetic realisation) and that I had a great deal of data to transcribe – that is, sentences obtained from the questionnaire and short oral texts for each of the five languages analysed – broad transcription was used in this study. Thus, I only indicated the most noticeable features for each utterance of the material. Also, the transcription was carried out manually; I have not been assisted by a specialised software, such as ELAN or Praat. I found manual transcription practical as the only equipment required is sheets of paper, a pencil, and a voice recorder. To ensure quality, another transcriber verified and corrected the transcriptions where needed. Moreover, I was assisted in the data collection and transcription by a colleague (Blaise Talla) who has interest and expertise in the transcription of spoken texts in one of the investigated languages, namely, Ghomala?.

Another step in the data analysis process was the translation of the recordings into French. This was done by the language consultants and mainly for the text data. I then identified the morphemes in all the transcriptions in a process that can be briefly summarised by the following three points:

- I compared the transcriptions with the translations beginning with the first sentence in each of the investigated languages.

¹¹ Tadadjeu & Sadembouo (1984) provided a General Alphabet of Cameroon Languages (AGLC). However, this alphabet is, in general, only mastered by experienced linguists.

- Having identified a possible form-meaning distinction (e.g., mən̩ = ‘I’ in Ngiemboon), I checked it throughout the transcriptions.
- I repeated the activities described in point 2 until all the morphemes in the transcriptions were discovered.

It should be noted that I also made use of further elicitation questions and discussions with the language consultants to identify the morphemes of the transcriptions. Also, whenever possible¹² The Leipzig Glossing Rules were used for the glossing of the transcriptions. After having glossed all the transcriptions, I singled out the tense-aspect and the standard negation markings and examined the basic use(s) of each of the tense-aspect markings identified.

The final step of the data analysis was the comparison of the investigated languages with respect to their tense-aspect systems and standard negation. This was done on the basis of several parameters, such as the form of tense-aspect markers, the types of standard negation patterns, or the placement of negative markers in clauses with respect to tense markers.

In this chapter I have introduced general aspects of the study and target languages. The next chapter focuses on three main points: (1) conceptual framework, (2) previous research on the investigated languages, and (3) motivation of the study.

¹² I added a new abbreviation label each time a category not listed in The Leipzig Glossing Rules’ proposed lexicon of abbreviated category labels appeared in my data.

CHAPTER II

2 Background of the Study and Literature Review

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section gives a concise overview of the conceptual framework which provided guidelines for the analysis and interpretation of the data. In the second section, I provide a summary of previous research on the investigated languages. The third section outlines the motivation for the study.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This research has been shaped using assumptions found in various typological studies on tense, aspect, and standard negation. The discussion in this section is organised as follows. The first, second, and third sub-sections discuss the assumptions behind the analysis of tense (2.1.1), aspect (2.1.2), and the perfect (2.1.3). In the fourth sub-section (2.1.4), I provide an overview of the history of cross-linguistic studies on standard negation, with a particular focus on studies which address the interaction between tense, aspect, and standard negation. Concerning the first, second, and third sub-sections, it is important to specify that an overview of the history of typological studies on tense and/or aspect is not provided here. Rather, only typological studies relevant to this particular research are considered. This has to do with studies related to the aim pursued in the present research, namely those which discuss the mechanisms for expressing tense and/or aspect in the languages of the world and make cross-linguistic generalisations about the markings and functions of the grammatical category of tense and aspect (mainly, Comrie 1976, Comrie 1985, Dahl 1985, Boogaart 2004). Note that a historical review of typological studies on tense and aspect reveals that various approaches have been taken to the analysis of tense and aspect in the literature. For example, Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994) adopt a diachronic approach to the analysis of tense, aspect, and modality to analyse the major paths of development and mechanisms of change of these “semantic domains most often marked morphologically on verbs”. Hopper (1979) adopts a discourse approach to the analysis of tense and aspect and examines the discourse functions of the category of tense and aspect in languages.

2.1.1 Assumptions Regarding the Analysis of Tense

In this sub-section, I summarise and discuss several assumptions about the analysis of the grammatical category of tense. The discussion is organised as follows. First, I give a brief account of how tense is defined in the literature (2.1.1.1) and then a summary and discussion of various arguments that have been put forward by previous researchers, as regards the ways in which the past tense, present tense and future tense are expressed cross-linguistically (2.1.1.2). The final part of this sub-section focuses on parameters useful in investigating the category of tense (and to some extent aspect) in the languages under investigation, namely, tense and its relation to time, reference time, degrees of remoteness and basic versus secondary meanings (2.1.1.3).

2.1.1.1 Defining Tense

The following pair of English sentences is used by Dahl to illustrate a typical tense distinction:

- (1) It is raining today.
- (2) It was raining yesterday.

As explained by Dahl (1985: 24), the fact that sentence (2), in contradistinction to sentence (1), “concerns an interval in time which wholly precedes the point of speech triggers the choice of the Simple Past verb form *was* rather than the Present *is*”.

The term ‘tense’ is defined by Comrie as “grammaticalised expression of location in time” (Comrie 1985: 9). In my understanding, this means that a language where it is possible to indicate location in time by means of grammatical expressions has the grammatical category of tense. According to Comrie, “all clear instances of tense cross-linguistically can be represented in terms of the notions of deictic centre”, that is, the reference points with reference to which situations can be located in time. Furthermore, the typical instances of grammaticalised expressions satisfy two criteria: “they are obligatory and morphologically bound” (Comrie 1985: 9-10).

Regarding the encoding of tense, Comrie argues that in most languages that have the grammatical category of tense, tense is indicated on the verb, either by the verb morphology, as with the English past *loved* versus non-past *loves* or by grammatical words adjacent to the verb, as in the distinction between à kè táŋ’ ń ‘he bargained yesterday’, à lè táŋ’ ń ‘he bargained some days ago’, and à lè lá? ń’ táŋ ‘he bargained a long time ago’ in Bamileke-Dschang/Yemba (Comrie 1985: 11-12). As will be shown in the following chapters, Comrie’s assumption about the marking of tense in the languages of the world holds true for the investigated languages in that the tense markings identified from the material collected are mostly free-standing markers adjacent to the verb.

Dahl (1985) lists several properties that are typical for tense categories:

- (i) They are expressed by the choice of one of several possible morphological forms of the finite verb or the auxiliary.
- (ii) They semantically depend on the relation between the time that ‘is talked of’ in the sentence and the time of the speech act – what is often referred to as ‘the deictic centre’.
- (iii) They have to be expressed – the choice of tense form has to be made – whether or not there is an explicit time indicator such as an adverbial in the sentence (Dahl 1985: 24).

According to the collected data, the languages analysed in the present research all exhibit most of the properties of the grammatical category of tense listed by Dahl. For instance, except cases of Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA), the tense marking has to be overtly expressed in each of the investigated languages, whether or not there is an explicit time indicator, such as an adverbial in the sentence.

Four features that are characteristic of tense are described in Smith, Perkins & Fernald (2003):¹³

- (i) Inflectional verbal morpheme
- (ii) Obligatory
- (iii) Temporal meaning ‘basic’
- (iv) Atemporal meanings in certain contexts

The first feature means that tense is expressed by inflectional morphemes in sentences. The second feature indicates that a tense morpheme is required in all clauses, that is, all clauses must have tense coded on the verb. The third feature means that a tense morpheme must express location in time and finally, the fourth feature (“less familiar as a feature of tense”) means that tense forms convey atemporal (as opposed to temporal) meanings, such as non-actual, conditional or hypothetical in certain contexts (Smith, Perkins & Fernald 2003: 180). As will be shown in the following chapters, the tense forms identified in the languages under investigation do not meet some of the criteria of tense listed by Smith, Perkins & Fernald (2003). Thus, when considering the languages analysed, these criteria are typical rather than necessary characteristics of tense. For example, the “inflectional verbal morpheme” feature does not hold for the languages considered in this study since as already noted above, tense is mainly indicated by free-standing markers preceding the verb in Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba.

Given that the present moment of speech is the deictic centre, Comrie (1985: 36) identifies three tenses that “have formed the backbone of much linguistic work on time reference in grammar”: past, present, and future.

In the following sub-section, a brief account of the characterisation of these tenses is provided.

2.1.1.2 Characterisation of the Past, Present, and Future Tenses

This sub-section summarises and discusses some arguments put forward by previous researchers, as regards the past tense, present tense and future tense.

➤ Past tense

According to Comrie (1985: 41), the meaning of the past tense is “location in time prior to the present moment, and any further deductions about temporal location that are made on the basis of individual sentences in the past tense are the result of factors other than simply the choice of tense”. Furthermore, Comrie indicates that the past tense simply locates the situation in question prior to the moment of speech, and says nothing about whether the past situation occupies:

¹³ The study by Smith, Perkins & Fernald (2003) is not a typological study. However, this particular assumption was included in the discussion of the conceptual framework in this research since it is regarded as a broad generalization about the analysis of the tense category.

- a single point prior to the moment of speech, as in *at seven o'clock yesterday John promised to give me ten pounds*,
- an extended time period prior to the moment of speech, as in *John lived in Manchester from 1962 to 1982*,
- or the whole of time up to the moment of speech, as in *up to this moment this disease was incurable*.

Comrie also points out that the concept of past time reference is neutral as between the interpretations assigned to the following two English sentences: (1) *John was in Paris* (there is a specific occasion on which John was in Paris, the ability to refer to which is shared by speaker and hearer), and (2) *John has been in Paris* (there is some time in the past, not necessarily further identifiable by speaker or hearer, at which the proposition *John be in Paris* held). Moreover, the use of the past tense only locates the situation in the past without saying anything about whether that situation terminated in the past, continues to the present, or continues into the future (Comrie 1985: 41-42).

Dahl (1985: 116) discusses a cross-linguistic category type labelled PAST which is said to correspond to traditional past tenses. Furthermore, he notes that for certain reasons, for example, that the category type PAST may combine with other categories to form complex tense-mood-aspect categories, such as pluperfect and conditionals, it is difficult to determine the exact uses of this cross-linguistic category.

Dahl (1985: 117) indicates that the category PAST is most often marked by morphological means; more precisely by suffixes. Other marginal ways of encoding the PAST mentioned by Dahl include periphrastic constructions (see, non-Bantu Niger-Congo languages), non-bound markers (see, Fitzroy Crossing Kriol), or a copula (see, the Semitic languages, the Czech language).

The definition of the past tense by Comrie has been adopted in this study due to it being unambiguous. Also, as will be shown in the following chapters, the markings analysed as past tense markings in this study are basically employed to exclusively locate a situation prior to the time of speaking.

➤ **Present tense**

Comrie (1985: 36) describes the present tense as a tense that indicates the location of a situation at the moment of speech. Furthermore, he observes that it is relatively rare for a situation to coincide exactly with the moment of speech, that is, to occupy literally a single point in time which corresponds exactly to the moment of speech. Two situation types are mentioned by Comrie as examples of situations where the location in time of the situation described is taken to coincide with the moment of speech. These are: (1) performative sentences, that is, sentences where the act described by the sentence is performed by uttering the sentence in question, for example, *I name this child John* (the utterance of this sentence constitutes the act of naming the child) and (2) simultaneous reports of an ongoing series of events, for example, *Red Rover crosses the finishing line* (Comrie 1985: 37).

Comrie also discusses some examples of frequent uses of the present tense in the languages of the world. The present tense is often used to talk about states or processes which hold at the time of speaking, but which began before the time of speaking and may well continue beyond it. For example, *the Eiffel Tower stands in Paris, the author is working on chapter two*. In each of these two examples, it is not the case that the situation described is restricted only to the moment of speech. In many languages, the present tense form is used to convey the habitual meaning, as in the English sentence *John goes to work at eight o'clock everyday* (Comrie 1985: 37-39).

As pointed out by Comrie, the frequent uses of the present tense in the languages of the world do not compromise the definition of the present tense:

“The situation referred to by the verb in the present tense is simply a situation holding literally at the present moment, whether or not this situation is part of a larger situation extending into the past or future is an implicature, rather than part of the meaning of the present tense, an implicature that is worked out on the basis of other features of the structure of the sentence and one’s knowledge of the real world” (Comrie 1985: 38).

Also, a sentence with habitual meaning refers to “a habit, a characteristic situation that holds at all times” (Comrie 1985: 39).

Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 126) criticise Comrie’s treatment of present tense. They indicate that unlike Comrie (1985: 36-41), they find it difficult to view the so-called present tense as a tense, that is, as having to do primarily with deictic temporal reference. Furthermore, they argue that “a present situation cannot be perfective” and “what present covers are various types of imperfective situations with the moment of speech as the reference point”. This means that the present includes ongoing activities and habitual situations, it is also typically used for gnomic situations, that is, those that apply to generic subjects and basically hold for all time, as in the sentence *dogs pant to cool off*.

As will be shown in the following chapters, the collected data revealed that the five languages analysed have no marking that can be unambiguously analysed as the present tense marking. Thus, the present tense has a certain meaning, but no marking in the languages analysed. However, in certain contexts, the imperfective construction, the progressive construction, or the habitual construction may convey a present time reference in addition to aspectual values.

➤ **Future tense**

Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 244) regard the future as “equivalent to a prediction on the part of the speaker that the situation in the preposition, which refers to an event taking place after the moment of speech, will hold”. To illustrate this definition, they provide a few English sentences, for example, (i) *at this rate of development, Paris is going to look like London and London like New York*, (ii) *I think the bulk of this year’s students will go into industry*. In these examples, two ways are used to talk about future events; the expression *to be going to* and the form *will* which in English grammar happen to show certain differences in meaning.

Comrie (1985: 43) characterises the future tense as a tense which locates situations in time after the time of speaking. Taking this as a basis, one might argue that the future tense is the opposite (in terms of function) to the past tense discussed above. While such an approach to the characterisation of the future tense is well-suited to the description of the facts observed in the investigated languages, it is important to note that certain observations in individual languages, for example, in English, have caused controversy over the notion of future tense.

Many languages, including most European ones, seem to lack constructions which exclusively express the future tense. This is reflected in the frequent use of the verb form used to express the present tense in those languages to locate situations in time after the moment of speech (for example, German *Ich gehe morgen fort* 'I am leaving tomorrow'). Also, the fact that the form *will* in English is at the same time considered as a future tense marker and a modal verb (see Palmer 1986: 216-217) might suggest that the future tense marker in English is not exclusively a tense marker, but also a modality¹⁴ expression. Another observation leading to controversy over the notion of future tense is that the future tense form *will* in English might be exclusively used to express modal meaning, as in the sentence *that will be the postman* (epistemic modality). This means that it might be analysed as a marker which basically has modal meaning and can often be used to refer to future time situations (Comrie 1985: 43-46).

All these observations notwithstanding, Comrie argues that the general theory of tense will need to recognise the notion of future tense. As justification, he notes that although many languages seem to lack the future tense, there are a number around the world, especially those which distinguish different degrees of remoteness in the future, for example, the Haya language of Tanzania, which "illustrate the existence of clear-cut future tenses" (Comrie 1985: 48). In other words, the forms analysed as future tense markings in those languages are primarily used to make statements or ask questions about future time reference.

In his discussion of tense categories, Dahl (1985: 103) identifies a cross-linguistic category type labelled future (FUT) which is assumed to underlie most of the forms called future tenses. Furthermore, he argues that most typical instances of the future category involve actions that are planned by the agent of the sentence and that future time reference (as opposed to intention or prediction) could be regarded as a dominant feature of this category. Thus, the traditional view of the Future as a tense can be defended (Dahl 1985: 105-107).

Dahl (1985: 105) notes that the category type future occupies the third position amongst the category types that are most often marked morphologically.

He also states that some languages, for example, Tunisian Arabic, Estonian, Japanese, etc. do not have the category type future. However, other categories may be used to signal future time reference in those languages. For instance, the Present tense is used in Estonian to express a future time reference (Dahl 1985: 108-109).

It will be shown in the following chapters that the markings analysed as future tense markings in the investigated languages are primarily used to locate situations in time after the

¹⁴ The term 'modality' is used in this study to refer to a semantic notion relating to such concepts as obligation, necessity, possibility. It differs from mood, which is regarded here as the grammatical expressions of different modalities.

time of speaking. That is, they primarily indicate future time reference. Therefore, one can say that following Comrie (1985) and Dahl (1985), this study supports the existence of clear-cut future tenses in certain world languages.

2.1.1.3 Parameters Relevant to the Analysis of the Tense Category

Comrie (1985: 2-35) and Dahl (1985: 3-31) introduce and discuss certain parameters that may be useful to consider in analysing tense (and to some extent aspect) in the languages of the world. Some of these parameters that have proven necessary to ensure an adequate description of how the category of tense (and to some extent aspect) is expressed and used in the investigated languages, namely: (1) tense and its relation to time, (2) reference time, (3) degrees of remoteness from the deictic centre, and (4) basic versus secondary meanings, are considered here.

➤ Tense and its Relation to Time

Tense is a grammatical category. It relates to the use of grammatical devices to describe how situations are located along the past-present-future timeline. Time is the human perception of the progression of the flow of time. It typically has the following three major divisions: the past time, the present time and the future time. While every language has means for expressing time, for example, adverbs of time, such as *yesterday*, *tomorrow* or *tonight*, not all languages express tense, that is, use grammatical devices to indicate the time of the situation described. As an example of a language that does not express the grammatical category of tense, Comrie mentions Hopi; a Uto-Aztecan language spoken in Northeastern Arizona (Comrie 1985: 4).

Comrie (1985) explains tense in terms of time. He assumes that time can be represented as a straight line, with the past represented conventionally to the left of the moment of speech (a now point of time) and the future to the right. Furthermore, he argues that this representation of time is adequate for a description of the category of tense in any human language. For instance, to say that an event occurred in the past is to locate it to the left of the moment of speech (Comrie 1985: 2).

Comrie's conceptualisation of time has been used as a background idea for investigating tense markings in this study. This means that I investigated the five languages with Comrie's conceptualisation of time in mind and the data analysis revealed that the investigated languages all express tense.

➤ Reference Time

Tense is deictic as it locates situations in time in relation to a deictic centre or reference time. According to Comrie (1985: 14), the reference time/point, as far as tense is concerned, is most typically the time of speaking or moment of speech. This clearly suggests that the reference time may be different to the moment of speech. Comrie (1985: 36) distinguishes between absolute and relative tenses. An absolute tense includes "as part of its meaning the present moment as deictic centre", that is, the reference point for the location of a situation in time is the moment of speech. A relative tense "does not include as part of its meaning the present moment as deictic centre", that is, the reference point for the location of a situation in time is

some point in time given by the context. The phenomenon of absolute versus relative tense is illustrated in Comrie (1985: 56-57) by examples from English: “although English finite verb forms have absolute time reference in nearly all instances”, “English non-finite verb forms characteristically have relative time reference”. For example, the sentence *the passengers awaiting flight 26 proceeded to departure gate 5* can receive the following interpretation: the main verb *proceeded*, which is a finite verb form receives absolute time reference, whereas the gerund *awaiting* receives relative time reference, that is, its time reference is not interpreted as coinciding with the moment of speech, but rather with the past moment in time of the main verb *proceeded*.

A notion close to the reference time of Comrie (it is worth mentioning that Comrie has this notion from Reichenbach 1947), namely, topic time (TT), is used in Klein (1994). Topic time denotes the time talked about in a sentence. In the question *what did you notice when you looked into the room?* a definite topic time is determined (when you looked into the room), and an answer that talks about exactly that topic time is expected. As explained by Klein (1994: 3-4), the topic time (TT) is different from the time of the utterance (TU) or time of speaking, and “tense concerns the relation between the topic time and the time of utterance”.

Hyman (1980: 229-230) argues that in Bamileke-Dschang/Yemba, a language belonging to the Bamileke group, “tense markers can be combined within a single clause, in which case the timing of a second tense marker is calculated relative to the first marker”. This is illustrated by the following example:

(3) Relative time reference in Bamileke-Dschang/Yemba (data from Hyman 1980: 229)

àà ‘lùù ‘pìŋ’ŋ táŋ
3SG F₃ F₁ bargain

‘He will bargain later tomorrow.’

As explained by Hyman, the F₃ tense marker in example (3) above establishes the time reference as being tomorrow, that is, the day after the time of speaking and, thus, has an absolute time reference. The F₁ tense marker, defined as meaning ‘later the same day’, thus now refers to ‘later time tomorrow’. That is, it establishes the time reference relative to the preceding time reference and, thus, has a relative time reference. However, upon closer examination, I have found that Hyman’s F₁ tense marker is actually an adverbial auxiliary which modifies the situation described by the verb by indicating a repetition (again).

Except for Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA) which appears to have its time reference established relative to the previous situation, the various tenses discussed in this study take the time of speaking as their deictic centre as in example (4) below.

(4) Absolute time reference in Ngiemboon

à kà zùó pwó? ñgèsán¹⁵
à kà zùó pwó? ñ-gèsán
3s N_PST yesterday harvest 9-maize
'S/he harvested maize yesterday.'

In example (4), the reference time for the location of the situation described in time, is the moment of speech.

➤ **Remoteness Distinctions**

A significant number of the world's languages show graded tenses. This means they distinguish tenses that indicate the degree of remoteness in the past or future in relation to a reference point which is typically the moment of speech (for example, today past tense versus near past tense, today future tense versus tomorrow future tense, etc.). According to Botne (2012: 536), languages with graded tenses appear to be concentrated in three general areas: the Niger-Congo languages of Africa, the Trans-New Guinea languages of Papua New Guinea, and the Amerindian languages of the Americas.

In his cross-linguistic analysis of tense, Comrie (1985: 85-93) discusses some parameters relevant in analysing the category of tense in languages that show graded tenses. These parameters are summarised below:

- Temporal distance is relevant only with respect to the parameters of 'before' and 'after'. That is, in principle one would expect to find distinctions of temporal distance among past and future tenses.
- The reference point from which the temporal distance is measured should be specified. For most languages expressing remoteness distinctions grammatically, it seems that the reference point/deictic centre from which the temporal distance is measured is typically the moment of speech. However, examples of languages where some other deictic centre is necessary are attested.
- Most languages with graded tenses make a small number of remoteness distinctions, often two or three degrees of remoteness, but there are languages with up to five degrees of remoteness in both the past and future, for example, five degrees of remoteness in the past and in the future are attested in Bamileke-Dschang/Yemba.
- Multiple degrees of tenses are more frequent in the past than in the future.
- The cut-off points for the various tense distinctions should be specified. The most common cut-off point found across languages seems to be that between today and before today. Another common cut-off point is that between recent and non-recent.

¹⁵ Throughout the thesis, some examples have three levels or lines before the English translation is given (as in example 4) and others have only two lines (as in example 37 below). This is mainly because while in some examples at least two different levels of analysis are necessary to provide information about the functions and grammatical properties of morphemes, in others, one level of analysis is sufficient.

- Many of the cut-off points refer to cyclically recurrent changes, such as the succession of days. In a few languages, some tense markers have a discontinuous interpretation. In Burera, an Australian Aboriginal language, for instance, the tense marker **-de** has a discontinuous time reference in that it can be used to refer to situations that took place earlier today or more than a few days ago.
- The rigidity with which the cut-off points between different degrees of remoteness from the deictic centre are to be interpreted should be indicated. In some languages, the dividing lines between various degrees of remoteness distinctions are fairly rigid. For example, in a language which distinguishes a today past tense and a yesterday past tense, such as Haya, a Northeast Bantu language, the yesterday past can only be used for situations that occurred yesterday (Comrie 1985: 90). However, in others, the dividing lines between the degrees of remoteness are flexible. That is, an inappropriate tense form might be used to give a subjective impression of temporal distance. For example, in Sotho, a Southern Bantu language, it seems possible to combine any past tense with any past time adverbial without giving rise to ungrammaticality, since distinctions of temporal distance are subjective rather than objective. In other words, an apparently incorrect combination in Sotho is interpreted to mean that the situation referred to, though objectively at a certain temporal distance from the reference point, is being presented as subjectively closer or more distant than that literal distance (Comrie 1985: 90-91).

As will be shown in the following chapters, the investigated languages all distinguish graded tenses. Therefore, the parameters summarised above are relevant to analysing the tense category in this study.

➤ **Basic and Secondary Meanings**

Comrie (1985: 18) observes that assigning meanings to grammatical categories raises problems that are far from trivial:

“When an analysis of a given grammatical category as being tense is advanced, it is often objected that this grammatical category has certain uses which are not subsumed by, and may even be contradictory to, the definition in terms of location in time [...] Although most uses of the English past tense will serve to locate situations prior to the present moment, there are several uses that do not. One is in counterfactuals, e.g. *if you did this I would be very happy*, where *did* clearly does not have past time reference, but refers rather to a potential action in the present or future” (Comrie 1985: 19).

In an attempt to solve the problems related to the task of assigning meanings to grammatical categories, Comrie adopts an approach which acknowledges that:

- a given grammatical category may have more than one meaning. Thus, it is possible that the auxiliary *will* in English might have both temporal and modal meanings.
- a grammatical category may have a basic meaning and peripheral meanings or uses. For example, past time reference is the basic meaning of the English past tense form, while politeness is a secondary meaning or use of this same form.

- the basic meaning of a lexical item may be definable in terms of a prototype, that is, in terms of the most characteristic instance, rather than in terms of necessary-and-sufficient conditions. Also, a definition in terms of necessary-and-sufficient conditions establishes strict criteria for deciding whether a given entity belongs to the set being described or not. That is, it sets a clear dividing line between members and non-members of the set.

According to Dahl (1985: 9), the notion basic meaning can be interpreted in several ways. It can be looked at extensionally or intensionally. In the first case, the extension of a term, that is, the set of contexts in which a term is found in a language, is divided into different regions, one of which is regarded as basic/primary. In the intensional case, one might, for instance, postulate that “the ‘meaning’ or ‘sense’ of the word consists of several components (features, markers or whatever), one or more of which are then said to be primary or basic with regard to the others” Dahl (1985: 9).

In the present research, a similar approach to the intensional interpretation of the notion basic meaning by Dahl has been adopted to analyse the basic function of the tense-aspect categories. More precisely, I argue that the tense-aspect system of each of the target languages can be analysed as operating according to a variety of tense-aspect categories. These tense-aspect categories may have one or more basic uses and secondary uses. Only the basic use of the tense-aspect categories is discussed in this study.

To establish the basic use of tense-aspect categories, I posit that the meaning of a grammatical marking may be defined in terms of the structural linguistic environment or the contextual linguistic environment. Also, I argue that the basic meaning of a grammatical marking refers to the meaning derived from the structural linguistic environment, while its secondary meaning is the meaning derived from the contextual linguistic environment. By structural linguistic environment of a grammatical marking I mean:

- the word a grammatical marking replaces. For example, in the sentence *Paul loves all women, and he wants all women to love him*, the meaning of the pronoun *he*, that is, masculine third person singular, is defined in terms of the structural linguistic environment or the word it replaces, namely, *Paul*.
- the word with which a grammatical marking co-occurs. For example, a stative verb, a dynamic verb, an expression of time, such as *today, yesterday, last week, tomorrow, next year, presently, usually, everyday* or *always*, etc.
- the distribution of the grammatical marking in relation to the other elements of the clause.

The contextual linguistic environment refers to the particular circumstances in which a marking is uttered. For example, the construction **kò nè N-...-VL^L, -VC^L** is basically used in one of the investigated languages, namely, Ngiemboon (see Chapter Three below), to describe a situation which was ongoing on the day the utterance is made, but before the moment of speech. However, it could be used to describe a remote past progressive situation, that is, a situation which took place a month ago or any time before that if the speaker is telling a story and wants to make a remote past situation seem a bit more temporally near.

2.1.2 Assumptions Regarding the Analysis of Aspect

This sub-section summarises and discusses the assumptions which provided guidelines for the analysis of the category of aspect in the investigated languages. Before embarking on the discussion of the category of aspect, it is useful to characterise the notion of Aktionsart to avoid confusion between the two terms, that is, aspect and Aktionsart. This is because the notion of Aktionsart tends to be discussed in books or studies which examine the grammatical category of aspect, for example, Comrie (1976). Also, some studies, for example, Boogaart (2004) presented arguments in favour of the idea that aspect and Aktionsart are interrelated.

According to Boogaart (2004: 1168), the notion of Aktionsart is used most commonly in contemporary linguistics to refer to “a typology of states of affairs, or, more often, to the linguistic manifestation of such a typology”. Vendler’s (1957) classes, represented in (5) below, are cited by Boogaart as the most influential typology of states of affairs:

(5)

- state: love, know, believe, hate, etc.
- activity: run, walk, swim, push, pull, etc.
- accomplishment: run a mile, paint a picture, make a chair, read a novel, draw a circle, etc.
- achievement: reach the hilltop, win the race, spot, etc.

As explained in Boogaart (2004: 1168-1169), Vendler’s classification of states of affairs or situations into four types is semantically based on three underlying binary distinctions:

- telic/atelic: telic situations include explicit reference to the endpoint of the situation described, whereas atelic situations do not. The telic versus atelic distinction makes it possible to distinguish accomplishments from activities in the sense that items belonging to the accomplishment class (*run a mile, paint a picture*) have a set terminal point which has to be reached; they are telic, while those belonging to the activity class (*run, walk*) have no set terminal point or do not include explicit reference to an endpoint; they are atelic.
- dynamic/stative: dynamic situations involve a change from one moment to the next, whereas states do not involve a change. The dynamic versus stative distinction makes it possible to distinguish activities and accomplishments from stative situations. This is explained by the fact that items belonging to the activity and accomplishment classes can be associated with the progressive meaning; they are dynamic, whereas those belonging to the stative class (*love, know*) do not generally accept the progressive meaning; they are stative.
- durative/punctual: durative situations have temporal duration or are conceived of as lasting for a certain time period. Punctual situations lack temporal duration; they are not conceived of as lasting in time. The durative versus punctual distinction makes it possible to distinguish states from achievements in that items belonging to the stative class (*know, believe, love*) last for a period of time; they are durative, whereas those belonging to the achievement class (*reach the hilltop, win the race*) take place at a definite or a single moment; they are punctual.

More recent works on Aktionsart (for example, Smith 1991, Croft 1999) have added additional Aktionsart classes to the Vendler classes. Smith (1991), for instance, distinguishes five rather than four types of states of affairs. She introduces the category semelfactives for situations that are dynamic, punctual, and atelic. For example, *cough*, as in *he was coughing* has an iterative (as opposed to progressive) reading when marked for the progressive.

Comrie (1976) and Boogaart (2004) claim that it is difficult to find verbs that are unambiguously telic or atelic. This is because a single verb may describe a telic or an atelic situation depending on the context, for example, the arguments of the verb. The verb *sing*, for instance, describes a telic situation in the sentence *John is singing a song*; the situation described has a set terminal point, namely, that point at which the song is completed. In the sentence *John is singing*, it describes an atelic situation; the situation described by the verb *sing* has no set terminal point, John can stop singing at any point, and it will still be true that he has sung (Comrie 1976: 45). Also, stative situations may begin or end at some point in time, that is, they may involve a change as in the sentence *I stood there for an hour*. However, they remain the same at every moment of their duration (Boogaart 2004: 1168). Therefore, the elements of the entire clause rather than just the verb or the lexical information provided by the verb are involved in the determination of Aktionsart.

Particular attention is paid to the interaction between aspect and Aktionsart in Comrie (1976) as well as Boogaart (2004). For instance, the fact that the combination of items belonging to Vendler's achievement class with the English progressive form, as in *the soldiers are already reaching the summit* does not have the ongoing interpretation typically associated with the progressive form in English, but rather an iterative/repetitive reading (some soldiers have already reached it, some have not yet reached it; there are several individual acts of reaching the summit) is viewed by Comrie as an instance of the interaction between aspect and Aktionsart (Comrie 1976: 42-43).

Boogaart (2004: 1178-1179) argues that an atelic state of affairs (Aktionsart) is typically imperfective (aspect). This suggests that in languages that mark the imperfective aspect, states (*love, know, believe*) will typically be presented by means of imperfective forms. Similarly, a non-durative state of affairs (Aktionsart), is typically perfective (aspect).

It appears from the preceding that Aktionsart is a property of verbal clauses in the sense that it refers to the type of situation (for example, activity, state, etc.) denoted by a given clause that contains a finite verb form. As will be seen in the following chapters, Aktionsart is not treated in this study. However, it might be invoked to explain certain language-specific constraints regarding the basic function of tense-aspect categories. For instance, the Hodiernal Past in Feʼfeʼ describes a present state when its marking occurs together with a stative verb. The remainder of this sub-section is organised into two main parts. In the first part (2.1.2.1) I give a brief account of how aspect is defined in the literature; in the second (2.1.1.2) I briefly summarise and discuss the main arguments that have guided the analysis of the perfective aspect and the imperfective aspect in this study.

2.1.2.1 Defining Aspect

It has been argued in sub-section 2.1.1 above that tense is a grammatical category connected with time. Just like tense, aspect is a grammatical category connected with time. However, the relation between tense and time is different to that between aspect and time. Tense locates situations in time in relation to a reference time, which is typically the moment of speech, whereas aspect is concerned with the internal temporal structure of a situation.

Gvozdanović (2012: 781) claims that there are certain differences that are ascribed to the phenomenon of aspect: “situations may be conceptualized either as total, indivisible wholes or by envisaging their internal constituency. The total view of situations takes into account the situations’ boundaries, which are not conceptualized in the internal view of situations”. Furthermore, he notes that “the insight that aspect operates on the level of situations remains probably the most important contribution, widely accepted in western aspectology” (2012: 784).

Comrie (1976: 3) has given the following general definition for the category of aspect: “aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation”. The pair of sentences in (6) and (7) below may be used to illustrate Comrie’s definition of aspect:

(6) Paul was dancing on the top of the pole.

(7) Paul used to dance on the top of the pole.

The difference between *Paul was dancing on the top of the pole* and *Paul used to dance on the top of the pole* in examples (6) and (7) is one of aspect. In example (6), the action described (a past action) is presented as ongoing through the use of the English *-ing* form, whereas in (7) the action described (still a past action) is presented as habitual using the construction *used to*.

Regarding the means used to express the category of aspect, Comrie states the following: “the first major division that can be made in ways of formally expressing aspectual oppositions in languages is between morphological (synthetic) and syntactic (analytic) means” (Comrie 1976: 87). Furthermore, he points out that among languages that do have morphological means of expressing aspectual oppositions, a distinction can be made between those languages where there is a clearly identifiable marker of aspect, and languages which lack clearly identifiable markers of aspect. As examples of languages which have a clear marker of aspect, Comrie mentions those such as Chinese or Persian where an affix, namely, the progressive suffix **-zhe** in Chinese or the imperfective prefix **mi-** in Persian, is used to indicate aspect. For languages where the aspect marker is not clearly identifiable, for example, those where it is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between the aspect marker and markers of other verbal categories, Comrie mentions languages such as French where one cannot separate the element that marks the aspect category from the marker of tense as in the imperfect (*imparfait* in French), or Modern Greek where the rigid separation of aspect from other morphological categories is true only for the active voice (Comrie 1976: 88-98).

In his discussion of the syntactic means used to express aspect, Comrie notes that in many languages belonging to various genetic and geographical groupings there is a similarity between the formal expression of the imperfective (especially the progressive) and various locative

constructions. Irish (Indo-European), for instance, uses a construction which consists of the copula *be*, a locative preposition and the verbal noun of the verb in question to express the progressive aspect. In Yoruba (Niger-Congo), a form meaning ‘(be) in’, namely, *ń* (allomorph *I*’ before vowels) is used to express the progressive aspect (Comrie 1976: 98-102).

Another syntactic means used to express the category of aspect discussed by Comrie is the use of directional expressions to indicate the prospective meaning or the perfect meaning. Motion towards serving as the model for prospective meaning (for example, the verb *aller* ‘to go’ in French, plus the infinitive form of the verb is used to express the prospective meaning, as in *je vais écrire une lettre* ‘I am going to write a letter’) and motion from, as the model for perfect meaning (for example, *venir de*, literally ‘come from’, is used in French to express the perfect meaning, as in *je viens d’écrire une lettre* ‘I have just written a letter’ (Comrie 1976: 106).

According to Boogaart (2004: 1173), the term aspect is used to refer to “the interpretation of a language-specific grammatical category of the verb, as expressing either imperfectivity or perfectivity”. This suggests that aspect is concerned with the use of grammatical markings to convey either the perfective or the imperfective meaning. Boogaart also argues that the formal expression of aspect ranges from inflectional and derivational to periphrastic and zero-expression, and that tense and aspect may be formally expressed by a single form in a given language (Boogaart 2004: 1175).

It will be shown in the following chapters that the languages under investigation typically indicate the category of aspect through a combination of several items, for example, a free-standing aspect marker which appears before the verb, followed by a homorganic nasal prefix attached to the verb and a verb suffix. Also, contrary to the languages mentioned in Comrie’s book, there appears to be no similarity between imperfective constructions and locative constructions in the investigated languages. That is, imperfective constructions in the investigated languages seem not to contain prepositions indicating location or verbs of locations. Also note that some of the investigated languages distinguish clearly identifiable aspect markers, as well as markers which resulted from the fusion of an aspect marker with other formal categories, for example, the tense category.

2.1.2.2 Perfective versus Imperfective Aspect

As suggested by Boogaart’s (2004) definition of aspect, the category of aspect may be viewed as consisting of two main subcategories: the perfective and the imperfective. A brief summary and discussion of some arguments put forward by previous researchers regarding the perfective and the imperfective aspects are provided below.

➤ Perfective Aspect

Comrie (1976: 16-21) observes that there are some essentially inadequate characterisations of the notion perfectivity that frequently occur in the general linguistic literature on aspect, as well as grammars of individual languages. These characterisations of perfectivity are summarised below:

- perfective forms indicate situations of short duration,
- the perfective describes a situation with limited, as opposed to unlimited, duration, for example, *an hour, one week, ten years*, etc.,
- perfectivity indicates a punctual or momentary situation,
- perfectivity indicates a completed action,
- perfectivity indicates the successful completion of a situation.

According to Comrie, these characterisations of the notion perfectivity are inadequate since it is easy to find examples from individual languages that contradict them. For instance, the French sentence, *il régna trente ans* ‘he reigned for thirty years’, contradicts the assertion that the function of the perfective is to indicate punctual or momentary situations (thirty years of reign extend over a period of time, and thus, cannot be considered as a momentary situation of the type *reach the hilltop*). Similarly, the existence of the Perfective Future in Russian invalidates the claim that perfectivity indicates a completed action (a future situation, whether it is perfective or imperfective has not yet occurred and, thus, cannot be viewed as completed/terminated).

Comrie (1976: 12) provides the following definition for the term perfective: “the term ‘perfective’ contrasts with ‘imperfective’, and denotes a situation viewed in its entirety, without regard to internal temporal constituency”. In my understanding this means that when there is no explicit reference to the internal temporal structure of a situation or when there are no details about the unfolding of a given situation, it is in the perfective.

Also, Comrie (1976: 21) states “there are both languages where a perfective is marked (e.g., the Perfective in the Slavonic languages), and languages where a perfective is unmarked (e.g., the Past Definite in French, the Aorist in Ancient Greek, Bulgarian, and Georgian)”.

Dahl (1985: 78) argues that prototypical instances of the cross-linguistic category type perfective denote “a single event, seen as an unanalysed whole, with a well-defined result or end-state, located in the past. More often than not, the event will be punctual, or at least, it will be seen as a single transition from one state to its opposite, the duration of which can be disregarded”. Dahl also claims there is a difficulty in deciding which member of the Perfective-Imperfective opposition is marked and which member is unmarked. In other words, it seems impossible to choose one member of the opposition as being clearly unmarked (Dahl 1985: 69-73).

The perfective is characterised in this study following Comrie’s definition of the perfective. When there is no explicit reference to the internal temporal structure of a situation, it is understood as being in the perfective or being complete. That is, the requirement that the situation described by the verb was completed or is going to be completed is added. Also, as will be shown in the following chapters, the languages analysed in this study do not mark the perfective.

➤ Imperfective Aspect

In contrast to the perfective, the imperfective focuses on the unfolding of the situation described and generally represents situations that continue over a period of time.

Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 125-126) define the imperfective as follows: “an imperfective situation may be one viewed as in progress at a particular reference point, either in the past or present, or one viewed as characteristic of a period of time that includes the reference time, that is, a habitual situation”. The definition of the imperfective by Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994) suggests that the imperfective does not fit with future time. However, this suggestion is cancelled by an explicit comment from the same authors: “imperfectives may be applicable to either past, present, or future time, as in Russian, or more commonly, restricted to the past, as for instance, the Imperfects of Spanish or French, which cover both ongoing and habitual situations, but only in the past” (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 126).

Comrie (1976: 24) gives the following general characterisation for the function of the imperfective: “explicit reference to the internal temporal structure of a situation, viewing a situation from within”. Furthermore, he notes that while many languages have a single category to express imperfectivity, there are other languages where imperfectivity is subdivided into distinct categories, and yet others where there is some category that corresponds only partly to the meaning of imperfectivity. Figure 2 below shows the most typical subdivisions of imperfectivity according to Comrie.

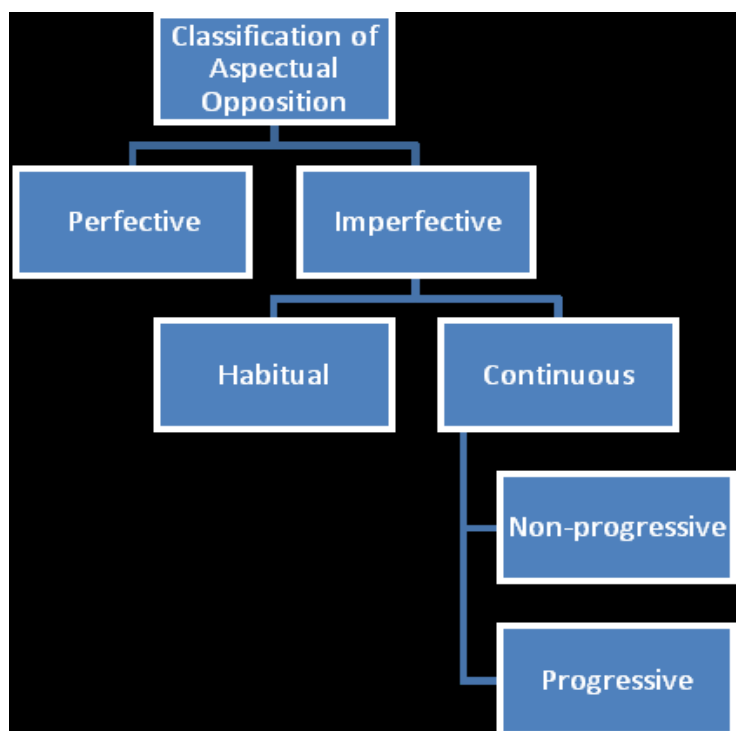


Figure 2: Classification of aspectual oppositions (Comrie 1976: 25)

As can be observed from Figure 2, Comrie makes a distinction between the progressive and the continuous, the former being a subdivision of the latter. However, the difference between the progressive and continuous is not clearly outlined in Comrie’s study. In fact, Comrie (1976: 33) defines the continuous as “imperfectivity that is not occasioned by habituality”. In my

understanding, this means the continuous is a kind of imperfective and that it differs from the other kind of imperfective, that is, the habitual. Thus, Comrie's definition of the continuous could be used to characterise the progressive since as suggested by Figure 2, the progressive is a kind of imperfective and it clearly differs from the habitual.

Mair (2012) notes that closely related to the progressive is the continuous aspect. Also, he makes the following distinction between the progressive and the continuous aspects: "essentially, while the progressive is usually reserved for dynamic verbs and predicates, non-progressive continuous aspectuality additionally covers stative predicates, i.e., those in which in contrast to dynamic predications, there is no volitional agent involved and which therefore do not usually occur in the imperative or allow modification with adverbs such as *eagerly*" (Mair 2012: 806). As pointed out by Mair, considerable problems of demarcation remain between the progressive and continuous categories, both in typological taxonomies and with regard to the empirical facts of individual languages. However, it makes sense to keep the progressive and continuous apart, and the distinction between them can best be grasped in those languages which have grammaticalized them both, such as, for example, Cantonese; a language in which the progressive is marked by the particle **gán** and the continuous by the particle **jyuh** (Mair 2012: 806-807).

It will be shown in the following chapters that the subdivision of imperfectivity in this study is slightly different to the one presented in Figure 2 above. More precisely, imperfectivity is subdivided into the habitual and progressive in this study.

- **Habitual**

Carlson (2012: 831) argues that "habitual aspect must at least canonically include habits". Furthermore, he points out that "the habitual markers identified in the languages clearly in many instances encompass a range of meaning beyond the expression of habits alone" (Carlson 2012: 842). To illustrate this, he mentions, for instance, Westermann (1930) who explicitly notes in discussing Ewe – a Niger-Congo language spoken in Togo and Southeastern Ghana – that the habitual form of the verb may be used to express (i) actions taking a usual course, as in *when bitten by a snake, a man cries out*, (ii) truths in proverbs, as in *one tree does not make a forest*, (iii) prescriptions of right, reasonable, or customary actions, as in *one does not smoke in this classroom*.

According to Carlson, a distinction should be made between languages where there are forms which, if they appear in a sentence, require that the sentence must be interpreted habitually and languages where a given form may be interpreted as habitual, but has other interpretations as well. For example, a form is interpreted as a habitual or a progressive marker. It is also indicated in Carlson's work that habitual markers are commonly verbal affixes. They may also appear as a form of an auxiliary or a free morpheme. A periphrastic construction, a tone on the verb, or a verb stem (habitual versus non-habitual verb stem) may also be a habitual marker (Carlson 2012: 832-838).

Talking about the interaction between habitual aspect and other verbal categories, Carlson (2012: 837) notes that in one language, the habitual marker will alternate with present-past-future tense morphemes, but in another, it may co-occur with any of the present-past-future

morphemes. In some cases, habitual markers are reported to co-occur only with certain tenses, such as past only. In one case, the habitual marker may take a perfective form, but in the next case it may not; in some languages, imperative forms cannot be habitual, but in others, they can be.

Comrie introduces his discussion of the habitual by arguing that a distinction should be made between habituality and iterativity because the mere repetition of a situation, that is, iterativity is not sufficient for that situation to be described using a specifically habitual verb form. In the sentence *the lecturer stood up, coughed five times, and said...*, the second verb, namely, *cough* describes a repeated action in the past. However, it cannot occur together with the English habitual past construction *used to*. Likewise, a verb can occur together with the English habitual past construction *used to* without there being any iterativity at all. In the sentence *the Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus*, the verb *stand* co-occurs with the past habitual construction *used to* although there is no implication of repetitiveness (Comrie 1976: 27).

According to Comrie (1976: 27-28), the feature that is common to all habituals, is that:

“they describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period. If the individual situation is one that can be protracted indefinitely in time, then there is no need for iterativity to be involved (as in *the Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus*), though equally it is not excluded (as in *the policeman used to stand at the corner for two hours each day*). If the situation is one that cannot be protracted, then the only reasonable interpretation will involve iterativity (as in *the old professor used always to arrive late*)”.

Comrie further points out that the decision that a situation constitutes a characteristic feature of an extended period of time, rather than an incidental property of the moment, is conceptual rather than linguistic. In my understanding, this means it is the speaker who decides, on the basis of extra-linguistic elements such as the knowledge of the world (for example, *the Eiffel Tower stands in Paris*), whether a situation is characteristic of an extended period of time or not.

Comrie (1976: 28-30) also notes that in discussing habitual past verb forms in some languages, such as English or Russian, “it is often claimed that a further element of the meaning of these forms is that the situation described no longer holds”. However, according to Comrie, this assumed implication of the meaning of the Habitual Past is not strictly an implication since “one can quite reasonably say, without self-contradiction, in answer to a question whether or not Bill used to be a member of a subversive organisation: *yes, he used to be a member of a subversive organisation, and he is still*”. That is, the assumed implication (that Bill is no longer a member of a subversive organisation) can be cancelled by an explicit denial.

Concerning the relationship between the habitual and other aspects, Comrie observes that “habituality is in principle combinable with various other semantic aspectual values” and “if the formal structure of the language permits combination of the overt markers of these various semantic aspectual values, then we can have forms that give overt expression both of habituality and to some other aspectual value”. In English, for instance, the habitual past construction *used*

to can combine freely with the progressive form to give such forms *used to be playing* (Comrie 1976: 30).

Three cross-linguistic habitual categories, namely, the habitual, the habitual-generic, and the habitual-past are distinguished by Dahl (1985: 95-102). As he explains, these categories have in common that “they express actions that take place habitually or repeatedly”. Also, “they may have a number of secondary uses”. Dahl claims that cases where the category type habitual is typically used are those in which the adverb *usually* is possible in English. Also, the characteristic property of the habitual-generic is that it describes “the typical or characteristic properties of a species, a kind, or an individual”. As for the category habitual-past, its basic semantics appears to be describable as a combination of the habitual and past time reference (Dahl 1985: 101).

Regarding the interaction between the habitual categories and the expression of time reference, Dahl notes that some languages, (for example, Akan, a Central Tano language spoken in Ghana) which have the category type habitual, mark past habituals with a combination of the marker of the habitual and a standard past time marking. Dahl also indicates that combinations of the category habitual with the category future appear to be difficult to find in his material and that this may be due to lack of suitable examples (Dahl 1985: 100).

Following Comrie (1976), the habitual is used in this study to refer to cases where an action is performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time. The term habitual may also be used in this study to refer to a permanent state,¹⁶ that is, a situation that does not imply the repetition of the same action (for example, *she used to live in Yaounde*). According to the data I collected, each of the five languages analysed in this research has a form which may convey a habitual or progressive meaning depending on the context. Also, none of the five languages analysed shows a distinction between the category habitual and the category habitual-generic. However, a generic meaning may be conveyed by means of the habitual form in some of the investigated languages. The data collected for this study also show that there are restrictions in the combination of the habitual aspect with certain tenses in some of the languages analysed. For example, the hodiernal past marker does not co-occur with the habitual marker in Ngiemboon (see Chapter Three, section 3.4).

● **Progressive**

Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 126) give the following definition for progressive: “progressive views an action as ongoing at a reference time”. Furthermore, they point out that progressive, as it is used in English and defined by Comrie (1976) “applies typically to dynamic predicates and not to stative ones”. Thus, the progressive is typically used for actions that require a “constant input of energy to be sustained”, as in *Sara is reading*.

Dahl (1985: 91) claims that the prototypical instances of the cross-linguistic category type progressive involve what could be labelled an ‘on-going-activity’. Furthermore, the category

¹⁶ In this research, permanent states are contrasted with temporary ones. The former refers to states not expected to be changed any time soon (for example, the verb *like* in the sentence *she used to like banana* describes a permanent state), whereas the latter may change at any moment as from the time of speaking (for example, the verb *like* in the sentence *my baby likes banana these days* describes a temporary state).

type progressive is “normally not used for stative constructions”. Thus, one can say that the definition of progressive by Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994) is compatible with that of Dahl (1985).

Regarding the mechanisms for expressing the progressive, Dahl notes that there is a strong tendency for it to be marked periphrastically, most often by auxiliary constructions. Furthermore, cases which distinguish the category imperfective from the category progressive are relatively rare and it is to be expected that diachronically, a category can shift from imperfective to progressive or vice versa (Dahl 1985: 93). Cases where progressive constructions are restricted to present time reference, for example, in Karaboro or Hawaiian, are also mentioned in Dahl’s study (Dahl 1985: 94).

Comrie (1976: 35) infers that the progressive interpretation is, in principle, incompatible with stative verbs. However, as Comrie rightly points out, the difference between stative and non-stative or dynamic verbs is not so clear-cut as often thought. While in some languages there is a more or less strict lexical classification – for example, in Italian, *essere* ‘be’ is stative, and thus, it does not co-occur with the progressive form – in others there are many verbs that are treated sometimes as stative, sometimes as non-stative, depending on the particular meaning they have in a given sentence. The verb *to be* in English is, for instance, treated as a stative verb, as in the sentence *Fred is silly* or a non-stative verb, as in the sentence *Fred is being silly* (Comrie 1976: 36). Therefore, it might be appropriate to talk of the stative or dynamic senses in which verbs are used in some languages.

As reported by Comrie (1976: 33), while in some languages, for example, English, the distinction between progressive and non-progressive meaning by means of progressive and non-progressive forms is obligatory, in others, for example, Spanish or Italian, the use of specifically progressive forms is optional. That is, the non-progressive form does not exclude the progressive meaning. The sentence *John is singing* can, for instance, be translated into Italian as *Gianni sta cantando* (progressive form) or *Gianni canta* (non-progressive form).

Concerning the interaction between the progressive and other aspects, Comrie (1976: 33) notes that “progressiveness is not incompatible with habituality”. This means that a given situation can be viewed as habitual and progressive at the same time, as in *John used to be writing poems*; each individual occurrence of the situation described is presented as being progressive and the sum total of all these occurrences is presented as being habitual.

Timberlake (2007), who includes the progressive as one of the four cardinal aspectual operators alongside the perfect, perfective, and iterative, summarises the typical features of grammaticalized progressives as follows: “process ongoing at contextual occasion (commonly the here-and-now of speech) that is projected to continue in the immediate future, but could easily change or cease; natural with process predicates (not states); often in conflict with (or even interrupted by) other situations” (Timberlake 2007: 304).

The progressive is used in this study to refer to cases where a situation is ongoing at or around a particular time. It will be shown in the following chapters that not all the investigated languages have the progressive category. Also, the progressive or imperfective construction must be used to convey the progressive meaning in the languages under investigation. Note also

that one of the investigated languages, Medumba, has a progressive construction restricted to present time reference.

2.1.3 About the Perfect

There appears to be a lack of agreement among cross-linguistic studies on tense and/or aspect regarding the categorisation of the perfect. Comrie (1976: 52) classifies the perfect under the category of aspect, but at the same time argues that it is an aspect in a rather different sense from the other aspects: the perfective and the imperfective. As an example of the ways in which the perfect differs from the perfective and the imperfective, Comrie (1976: 52) indicates that unlike the perfective and the imperfective which do not involve deictic relations, that is, relations between the time of the situation described and a reference time, the perfect “expresses a relation between two time-points, on the one hand the time of the state resulting from a prior situation, and on the other the time of that prior situation”.

Dahl (1985: 129-153) postulates a perfect category type which is not classified under the category of tense or aspect, but rather analysed as an independent category type beside tense and aspect.

Scholars generally agree that there are four uses commonly associated with the perfect:

- perfect of continuation which describes a situation that has started in the past, but continues or persists into the present, as in the sentence *she has lived here for ten years*;
- perfect of recent past which describes a situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred, that is, it immediately precedes the time of speaking, as in the sentence *I have just arrived*;
- perfect of experience which indicates that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present, as in the sentence *John has been to France*;
- perfect of result where a present state is referred to as being the result of some past situation, as in the sentence *I have had a bath*, which implies that the result of my bath (that I am clean) still hold.

According to Botne (2010: 36-37), in Luwanga and Lusaamia (two north-eastern Bantu languages spoken in Western Kenya), the Perfect of result (marked by the form **-a-**), can be said to differ significantly in use from the other Perfects (marked by the form **-axa-**). This is because the description of its use is heavily dependent on the situation expressed by the verb: when used with action or dynamic verbs, it has a remote past tense interpretation, whereas when used with stative and achievement verbs, it has a present tense interpretation.

As reported by Comrie (1976: 60-61), the perfect may be used in many world languages (for example, English) to describe a past situation that is very recent. Comrie further points out that the use of the perfect does not necessarily imply that the past situation referred to is very recent and that the gradual relaxation of the degree of recentness required for the use of the perfect is likely a key part of the development of the perfect in many Romance languages, for example, French, Italian, etc. to replace the simple past completely.

Concerning the relationship between the perfect and other aspects, Comrie (1976: 61-63) indicates that while in some languages (for example, Modern Greek) the perfect can only be formed from perfective verbs, in others it is possible to combine the perfect form with other aspectual forms. In English, for instance, the perfect form may combine with the progressive form, as in the sentence *the police have recently been keeping my neighbour under observation*. In other words, a verb form can convey both the perfect meaning and the progressive meaning in English (a present state is linked to a past situation which is an incomplete process).

Thus, there appears to be a semantic connection between the perfect and the past tense, that is, the grammatical category of tense, on the one hand and the perfect and the perfective aspect, that is, the grammatical category of aspect, on the other hand. This justifies its examination in this study. The link between the perfect and the past tense can be explained as follows: just like the past tense, the perfect can be used to locate a situation in the past time. However, the perfect differs from the past tense in various respects. For instance, in addition to locating a situation in the past, the perfect, unlike the past tense, implies that the past situation referred to has a present relevance. In other words, both location in time and the present relevance of the situation referred to are involved in the definition of the perfect. Another element which may be used to distinguish the perfect from the past tense is that unlike past tense forms, forms which have any of the perfect functions typically do not co-occur with time adverbials, such as *yesterday*, *last week* or *last month*. For instance, one cannot normally say in English *I have got up at four o'clock yesterday* (four o'clock yesterday, which specifies the time of the past situation, is incompatible with the English present perfect form, namely, *have* plus past participle).

The connection between the perfect and the perfective can be described as follows: the perfect looks at a situation in terms of its present consequences or results, and a situation which has results is likely to be one which is seen as perfective or complete. It should be noted, however, that unlike the perfective, which is conceived of as including the initial and the end points of the situation referred to, the perfect may not include the end point of the situation described. This can be illustrated by the examples in Swahili and Luwanga below where the perfect form may have a present state reading (8) or may indicate that an event has continued all morning and has not yet ended (9).

(8) Perfect in Swahili (data from Comrie 1976: 57)

a-**me**-choka 'He is tired.'

(9) Perfect of continuation in Luwanga (data from Botne 2010: 33)

y	-axá-	lím-	a	ítsuli	ína:mba
3SG	PRF	till	F	9.morning	9.whole

'He has been tilling all morning.'

The perfect forms in examples (8) and (9) above, that is, **-me-** and **-axá-**, respectively, do not imply the end point of the situation referred to.

Dahl (1985: 129) indicates that the perfect is frequently marked by means of periphrastic constructions. Typically, constructions involving a copula or some auxiliary together with some past participle, or similar form of the verb.

Following Dahl (1985), the Perfect is not subsumed under the category of tense or aspect in this study, rather it is considered a grammatical unit connected to some extent with tense and aspect and whose basic function(s) may be dependent on the situation expressed by the verb. On the one hand, the perfect marker may be used with a dynamic verb to describe a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred or to present a current state as being the result of some past situation; on the other hand, it may be used with a stative verb to describe a present state without any implication of how this state arose. As will be shown in the following chapters, two of the languages under investigation (Feʔfeʔ and Ngombale) do not have a dedicated perfect marking. However, some of the functions of the Perfect mentioned above are expressed in these two languages through other means, for example, using the marker of the Hodiernal Past (see Chapter Four). The discussions in the following chapters will also show that unlike the languages in the material analysed by Dahl (1985), which consistently indicate the Perfect periphrastically, the investigated languages typically indicate the Perfect by a tone alternation on the verb or the pronominal or nominal subject preceding the verb.

2.1.4 Tense, Aspect, and Standard Negation

The expression ‘standard negation’ originates from Payne (1985) and can be characterised as the means that languages have for negating declarative verbal main clauses. Previous works have demonstrated that in some languages of the world there are cases of interaction between tense, aspect, and standard negation. Akumbu (2016: 150), for instance, notes that at least three negative markers are distinguished in the Bum language, a Central Ring Grassfields language of Northwest Cameroon, namely, (1) the discontinuous marker **tá... (jè)** which combines only with the past tenses, (2) the discontinuous marker **wí... (jè)** which combines with the present tense as well as future tenses, and (3) the marker **bú** which can combine with the present tense and past tenses to form negative constructions. In this sub-section, I examine some previous cross-linguistic studies on standard negation, with a focus on cross-linguistic studies that address the issue of the interaction between tense, aspect, and standard negation. It is important to note that not all cross-linguistic studies examined in this sub-section use the term standard negation.

On the basis of a sample of approximately 240 languages, Dahl (1979) discusses the main means used by languages to negate simple indicative sentences with a verbal predicate. He makes a primary division between morphological and syntactical means of expressing negation. In the first case, that is, morphological means of expressing negation, negation is further subdivided into prefixal, suffixal, circumfixal, prosodic, and reduplicative negation; the latter two types are only marginally attested (see Dahl 1979: 81-82). In the second case, that is, negation expressed by syntactical means, the negative marker can be an uninflected negative particle or a negative auxiliary, and in both cases a further distinction can be made as to whether the verb is modified morphologically. There is a third type mentioned by Dahl where the negative marker is a particle, a dummy auxiliary is added to the clause, and the finite verb occurring in the affirmative clause is modified morphologically. Dahl also suggests that a type where negation is expressed by change in word order might also exist, however, this remains uncertain. According to Dahl’s analysis, negative morphemes tend to occur pre-verbally. Dahl also notes that in many languages where negation is indicated by morphological means,

portmanteau realisations of negative morphemes and the subject or a tense marker may be found.

Payne (1985) identifies four types of negative markers that occur in the languages of world: morphological (affixal) negative markers, negative particles, negative verbs, and negative nouns. Payne also mentions that in some languages certain modifications accompany the use of the negative marker: change in word order, change in tone, neutralisation of tense distinctions, and change in noun case (see Payne 1985: 228-231).

Honda (1996) identifies three types of negative constructions on the basis of the differences between the finite elements in affirmative versus negative clauses. In the first type, the same element functions as the finite element of the negative clause and the corresponding affirmative clause. In the second type, a non-negative auxiliary is added as the finite element in the negative clause and the lexical verb generally occurs in a non-finite form. The third type involves the addition of a negative verb as the finite element of the negative clause. Honda also discusses various kinds of structural differences between affirmative and corresponding negative clauses. For instance, changes in tense and aspect marking, appearance of markers of irrealis categories in the negative clause.

On the basis of a representative sample of 297 languages, Miestamo (2000, 2003, 2005) proposes a typological classification of standard negation that distinguishes between symmetric and asymmetric negation. In symmetric negation, affirmative and corresponding negative clauses show no difference except for the presence of the negative marker(s) in the negative clause. In asymmetric negation, a distinction is made between asymmetric constructions and asymmetric paradigms. In asymmetric constructions further structural differences, asymmetries, are observed between affirmative and corresponding negative clauses in addition to the presence of the negative marker(s) in the negative clause. In asymmetric paradigms, the correspondences between the members of the paradigms used in affirmative clauses and negative clauses are not one-to-one. For example, the affirmative paradigms make more tense distinctions than the negative paradigms. Also, according to Miestamo (2000, 2003, 2005), it is possible to distinguish four subtypes of asymmetric negation on the basis of the nature of the asymmetry:

- asymmetry finiteness (A/Fin): the finiteness of the lexical verb is reduced or lost and a new finite element is usually added in the negative clause.
- asymmetry non-real (A/NonReal): a marker that denotes a non-realised state of affairs is added in the negative clause.
- asymmetry emphasis (A/Emph): a marker that denotes emphasis in non-negative clauses is added in the negative clause. This type is quite marginal.
- asymmetry category (A/Cat): the marking of grammatical categories in negative clauses differs from their marking in affirmative clauses. The most commonly affected categories are tense-aspect-mood and person-number-gender.

Agbetsoamedo (2014: 52-53) provides a survey of standard negation across the languages of the Kwa group and classifies the Kwa languages under three groups based on the strategy or strategies they use for standard negation:

- languages which have a single strategy for standard negation, namely, the addition of a negative marker which is independent of tense-aspect marking, for example, Ewe, Akan, Logba, Sekpele;
- languages which have a general negative marker as well as a dedicated negative marker for a specific tense-aspect category, for example, Siwu, Tutrugbu. In Siwu, for instance, there is a general standard negation marker (the prefix *i-*) which is used with all tense-aspect forms, except the habitual form which has a separate negative marker, namely, the prefix *si-*;
- languages with three or more strategies for standard negation, such as Sɛlɛɛ, Tuwuli, or Tafi. In Sɛlɛɛ, for instance, there are mainly three strategies for standard negation: (1) the use of polarity tone, which means changing the tone of a verbal affix from non-high to high changes an utterance from being affirmative to being negative; (2) the use of a negative variant of a tense-aspect marker; and (3) the addition of a dedicated negative marker for a given tense/aspect form.

Following Payne (1985), standard negation is used in this study to typically refer to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses. This means that the negation of imperative clauses, interrogative clauses, as well as non-main clauses or dependent clauses, is beyond the scope of this study. In my discussion of standard negation in the languages analysed, I examine the strategies for expressing standard negation and the distribution of negative markers in clauses. Therefore, information about whether standard negation is expressed by items, such as affixes, particles or tonal changes is relevant to this study. The discussion of standard negation in the following chapters also pays particular attention to the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation. On the one hand, this involves investigations about the use of standard negation markings in relation to tense-aspect markings and, on the other hand, the description of the types of asymmetries that are observed in the expression of standard negation (Miestamo 2000, 2003, 2005).

2.2 Previous Research

Previous research on the investigated languages can be organised into two main groups: research on each individual language of the study, and comparative studies on the investigated languages. The following sub-sections summarise previous studies on the investigated languages. Particular attention is paid to studies which relate to those aspects of grammar scrutinised in this study, that is, tense, aspect, and standard negation.

2.2.1 Previous Research on Ngiemboon

The studies dealing specifically with the Ngiemboon language that I consulted include Anderson (1983, 1985, 2007, 2008), Mba & Djiafeua (2003), Ndiola (2008), Lonfo & Anderson (2014), and Lonfo (2014).

Anderson (1983) analyses the tonal phenomena found in Ngiemboon's noun and verb phrases. He formulates various tone and morpheme rules that apply to Ngiemboon, for example, the Noun Class Prefix Tone Rule.¹⁷ On the basis of the verb paradigms collected for his primarily phonological study, Anderson identifies nine tenses in Ngiemboon (four past tenses, a zero tense, four future tenses) and makes a semantic contrast between the realis and the irrealis modes (Anderson 1983: 248). The tenses identified by Anderson are organised as follows: the four past tenses (today past, yesterday past, distant past, and remote past) are interpreted as realis and subdivided into perfective and imperfective constructions, with imperfective constructions further distinguishing between non-progressive, that is, general imperfective and progressive constructions. The four future tenses (today future, tomorrow future, distant future, and remote future) are interpreted as irrealis and subdivided into perfective and imperfective constructions, with imperfective constructions further distinguishing between non-progressive, that is, general imperfective and progressive constructions. The zero tense shows five constructions: a realis perfective construction, a realis non-progressive imperfective construction, a realis progressive imperfective construction, an irrealis non-progressive imperfective construction, and an irrealis progressive imperfective construction.

Anderson (1985) examines the pronominal systems of Ngiemboon (subject, direct object, indirect object, possessive, demonstrative, relative, locative) and posits various rules for forming complex pronouns. This refers to pronouns which imply that more than one person is acting as the subject of the clause.

Mba & Djiafeua (2003) analyse Ngiemboon verbal extensions. They provide evidence for two verbal extensions in Ngiemboon, namely, the suffix *-te* and vowel lengthening or copying.

In the domain of orthography development, Anderson (2007) proposes an alphabet of Ngiemboon as well as the orthographic principles for the writing of Ngiemboon.

Ndiola (2008) examines the Ngiemboon syntax, focusing mainly on the description of the types of questions found in Ngiemboon: direct, indirect, partial, echo, and rhetorical.

Anderson (2008) provides a phonological sketch of Ngiemboon.

Lonfo & Anderson (2014) compile a large Ngiemboon-French-English dictionary which contains over 5,000 entries.

Lonfo (2014) provides a sketch of Ngiemboon grammar that focuses on word classes (noun, verb, adjective, pronoun, preposition, adverb, conjunction). In one section, which focuses on the verb, Lonfo argues that Ngiemboon distinguishes thirteen tenses: three present (simple present, present progressive, present habitual), five past (immediate past, today past, yesterday past, distant past, remote past),¹⁸ and five future¹⁹ (near future, today future, tomorrow future, distant future, remote future). Furthermore, a four-way division of the aspect category is observed in Ngiemboon: perfective, imperfective, habitual, and progressive. In addition, Lonfo

¹⁷ This rule states that any syllable on the syllabic tier, which is a noun class prefix, is given a low tone in the same morpheme on the tonal tier (Anderson 1983: 331).

¹⁸ Lonfo expresses doubts about the status of the remote past (P5) as a "pure tense" (Lonfo 2014: 66).

¹⁹ Lonfo argues that all future tenses are indicated by verbal auxiliaries in Ngiemboon (Lonfo 2014: 66).

briefly mentions some markers, referred to as ‘complex markers’ in Lonfo’s study, that are said to express various categories at the same time. These are: **kǎn** (past 3 habitual), **kéen** (past 3 perfective-emphatic-counter expectation), **lǎn** (past 4 habitual), **léen** (past 4 perfective-emphatic-counter expectation), **ne** followed by a nasal verb prefix **ń-** (realis progressive), **ssé** followed by a nasal verb prefix **ń-** (realis-progressive-emphatic). Table 1 below shows the tense and aspect markers in Ngienboon as described by Lonfo (2014).

Table 1: Tense and aspect markings in Ngienboon (data from Lonfo 2014: 65-67)

<i>Marking</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Label</i>
not mentioned	not mentioned	simple present
not mentioned	not mentioned	present progressive
not mentioned	not mentioned	present habitual
a rising tone on the verb root or a high tone on the verb suffix	not mentioned	immediate past (P ₁)
ně followed by a nasal verb prefix ń-	It describes an action that took place on the day of speaking.	today past (P ₂)
ka	It describes an action that took place yesterday.	yesterday past (P ₃)
la	It describes an action that took place before yesterday.	distant past (P ₄)
la láʔ followed by a nasal verb prefix ń-	It describes an action that took place in the remote past.	remote past (P ₅)
ge	It describes an action which will take place immediately after the time of speaking.	near future (F ₁)
ge piŋ	It describes an action which will take place on the day of speaking.	today future (F ₂)
ge gǎo/ge tó/ge lu	It describes an action which will take place one day after the moment of speech.	tomorrow future (F ₃)
ge táa	It describes an action which will take place in the distant future.	distant future (F ₄)
ge láʔ	It describes an action which will take place in the remote future.	remote future (F ₅)
unmarked	not mentioned	perfective aspect
vowel lengthening or echo vowel on the verb root	not mentioned	imperfective aspect
vowel lengthening on the subject pronoun + echo vowel on the verb root	not mentioned	habitual aspect
ne + echo vowel on the verb root	not mentioned	progressive aspect

In his discussion of the word class ‘adverb’, Lonfo (2014: 79-81) provides a list of words said to be used to negate clauses in Ngiemboon. These are: **kaa**, **tè...wó/mó**, **té**, **téen...wó/mó**, **le**, **laa**, **mǝn**, and **tà**.

2.2.2 Previous Research on Feʼfeʼ

The works on Feʼfeʼ that I consulted include Hyman (1972), Ndaʼkayii (1974), and Sadembouo & Chumbow (1990).

Hyman (1972) provides a phonological description of Feʼfeʼ which is concerned with both synchronic and diachronic aspects of Feʼfeʼ’s phonology.

Ndaʼkayii (1974) provides a grammatical description of the Feʼfeʼ language which is said to be adapted for the teaching and learning of Feʼfeʼ. He argues that Feʼfeʼ distinguishes six tense-aspect categories, namely, the present habitual, the present progressive, the immediate past, the yesterday/near past, the remote past, and the simple future. Furthermore, the tense-aspect forms found in Feʼfeʼ may be negated using the markers **sī...bō** (used to negate the yesterday/near past form, the remote past form, and the simple future form), **sī...bō** (used to negate the present habitual form and present progressive form), or **kō?...bō** (used for the immediate past form).

Table 2 below presents the tense-aspect markings in Feʼfeʼ as described by Ndaʼkayii (1974: 73-75, 81-95).

Table 2: Tense-aspect markings in Feʼfeʼ (data from Ndaʼkayii 1973: 73-75, 81-95)

<i>Marking</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Label</i>
not mentioned	It describes a habitual action, a general truth or an action which will take place immediately after the time of speaking.	present habitual
mu	It describes a present progressive action.	present progressive
not mentioned	It describes an action which has ended in the present.	immediate past
kō	It locates an action in the past (yesterday or a day before yesterday).	yesterday/near past
lǝ/dǝ	It describes an action which occurred some time ago.	remote past
kó/in	not indicated	simple future

In the domain of language development, Sadembouo & Chumbow (1990) outline the history of the standardisation of Feʼfeʼ (choice of dialect, orthographic symbols, etc.) and the process of enrichment of the language, for example, through word-formation and loanwords.

2.2.3 Previous Research on Ghomalaʼ

The studies on Ghomalaʼ that I consulted include Sofu (1979), Nissim (1981), Mba (1997), Domche (2012), and Bessala & Moguo (2017).

Sofu (1979) proposes an analysis of the category of tense in Ghomalaʼ. He identifies three tenses in Ghomalaʼ (simple present, present progressive, immediate past) and indicates that

each has its own negation strategy. The double negative markers **tâ...pá** and **tǎ...pá** are used to negate the simple present and the present progressive, respectively. The immediate past is negated using the pre-verbal negative particle **ka** and the optional post-verbal negative particle **pá/pə**. Sofo further provides a list of forms said to be used to indicate the past and the future in Ghomala?.

Table 3: Tense markings in Ghomala? (data from Sofo 1979: 41-45)

<i>Marking</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Label</i>
not mentioned	It describes a permanent state, a habit or an ongoing action.	simple present
wá/sí	It describes an action taking place at the time of speaking.	present progressive
not mentioned	It describes an action that has just ended.	immediate past
ê	It describes an action that took place less than 24 hours ago.	very close past
kə	It describes an action that took place at least one day before the time of speaking.	not mentioned
kě	It describes an action that took place at least one day before the time of speaking.	near past
kâ	It describes a punctual past or a near past habitual action.	not mentioned
lə	It describes an action that occurred once in the past.	not mentioned
fá	It describes an action that occurred once in the past.	not mentioned
lě	It describes an action that occurred a long time ago.	not mentioned
lǎ?/lə lǎ?	It describes an action that occurred long ago.	not mentioned
lǎ	It describes a permanent action that has ended at the time of speaking.	not mentioned
gə	It describes an action which will take place immediately after the time of speaking.	not mentioned
tí/dí	It describes an action which will take place tomorrow or expresses the simple past.	not mentioned
sə?	It describes an action which will take place in the near future.	not mentioned
lá?	It describes a distant, but certain future action.	not mentioned
cwá/shwá	It describes an action which will take place at any time from the time of speaking.	not mentioned
tyá/dyá	It describes a future action which is deemed certain.	not mentioned

Nissim (1981) provides a phonological analysis of Ghomala?. From an analysis of the phenomenon of downstep in the language, he argues that Ghomala? makes use of floating tones. He further investigates the noun morphology of Ghomala? and pays particular attention to the phenomenon of consonant alternation which is quite extensive in the Ghomala? language.

Mba (1997) analyses verbal extensions in Ghomala?. He identifies two verbal extensions in Ghomala?: **-nyə** and **-tə**, and discusses their functions in detail.

Domche (2012) undertakes a sociolinguistic study of Ghomla? with an aim to determine whether the Ghomala?-Jo variety (spoken mainly in Bandjoun) could be objectively treated as the standard dialect of the Ghomla? language. He offers good reasons for considering the Ghomala?-Jo variety as the standard dialect of Ghomala?.

Bessala & Moguo (2017) examine the conditional mood in Ghomala?. They distinguish between two types of conditionals – real and unreal – and argue that in addition to the structure of the protasis and that of the adoposis, tenses play a role in determining whether a conditional is real or unreal in Ghomala?. In other words, the conditional marker in Ghomala? expresses an unreal conditional when the verbs of the protasis and the adoposis are in the past tense; however, when the verb of the protasis and that of the adoposis are in the present and future tense, respectively, the conditional marker in Ghomala? expresses a real conditional. Bessala & Moguo further demonstrate that the elements used to express conditionals in Ghomala? can play various roles in the language (focus particle, relativizer, copula) and that conditionals in Ghomala? have many pragmatic uses, such as argumentational uses, speech act uses or qualified denials.

2.2.4 Previous Research on Ngombale

Ngombale appears to be the one language in the study about which little has been published. Seguin (1993) conducts a survey of Ngombale to clarify the need for codification of Ngombale by attempting to gain a general overview of the sociolinguistic situation of the language. He focuses on three main points: (1) dialect situation and inter-comprehension, (2) multilingualism, and (3) language viability and vitality. It appeared from Seguin's research that Ngombale meets the criteria for a language standardisation project: the language is in daily use, no other language seems to be replacing it on a wide scale and attitudes towards mother tongue development are positive.

Voutsa (2003) investigates verbal morphology in Ngombale. She argues that the indicative mood may be conjugated in various tenses in Ngombale: present, past 1, past 2, past 3, future 1, future 2, and future 3. Furthermore, she indicates that the imperative mood, which involves the second-person subject 'you' or the first-person subject 'we', is unmarked in Ngombale. As reported by Voutsa, Ngombale distinguishes the subjunctive and the conditional moods. Also, a distinction is made between two types of subjunctive moods, namely, subjunctive 1 which is marked by the marker **ngó** that occurs before the subject of the clause and subjunctive 2 which is indicated by the construction **mbwhó'...ke**. The conditional mood is subdivided into conditional 1 and conditional 2 which are both expressed in complex sentences. Voutsa distinguishes three main types of aspect in Ngombale: inherent, lexical (which is further subdivided into the inchoative and the completive), and derived (which is further subdivided into the perfective and the imperfective). Voutsa also indicates that the negative form of a clause where the verb is conjugated in any of the seven tenses of Ngombale is obtained through the use of a discontinuous morpheme: **ká...pronoun**. The imperative verb form on its part is negated using the clause initial marker **ko**. Table 4 below shows the tense-aspect markings in Ngombale as described by Voutsa (2003: 52-77).

Table 4: Tense-aspect markings in Ngombale (data from Voutsas 2003: 52-77)

<i>Marking</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Label</i>
lè	It describes an action that took place one week ago, one month ago or even one year ago.	remote past
kè	It describes an action that occurred yesterday, two days ago, one week ago, one month ago or even one year ago.	recent past
yá	It describes a past action that has just taken place or been finished, as well as actions that took place on the day of speaking.	immediate past
unmarked	It describes an action that takes place at the time of speaking or a habitual action.	present
any of the tense markers	It describes a completed process.	perfective
ńyań mbó	It describes a process which takes place on multiple occasions.	habitual
mbó	It describes an ongoing process.	progressive
ńguo	It describes an action which will take place immediately after the time of speaking.	future 1
ńgu	It describes an action which will take place one day after the time of speaking, within a week or within a month.	future 2
ńguo tãã	It describes an action which will take place at a point of time conceived of as quite remote in the future.	future 3
ńdʒĩ + infinitive form of the verb	It describes an action which is starting.	inchoative
mĩak + infinitive form of the verb	It describes an action which is ending.	completive

2.2.5 Previous Research on Medumba

The works on Medumba that I consulted include Voorhoeve (1971, 1974), Nganmou (1991), and Danis, Barnes & O'Connor (2012).

Voorhoeve (1971) undertakes a study on the tone system in Medumba (or Bamileke-Bangangté in Voorhoeve's study). He proposes an analysis which makes use of floating tones preceding and following monosyllabic noun stems in underlying forms to account for a number of intricate tone alternations found in Medumba nouns.

Voorhoeve (1974) examines locatives in Medumba (or Bamileke-Bangangté). He shows that in Medumba various strategies are used to indicate location, unlike in Bantu languages where locative class prefixes, namely, **pa-**, **ku-**, and **mu-** corresponding to classes 16, 17, and 18, respectively, are used to express location. The strategies are locative prepositions, locative adverbs, a change of concordial class (in a restricted number of nouns), or a change in the tonal relation between the verb and the locative complement.

Nganmou (1991) analyses the categories of tense, aspect, and mood in Medumba. She identifies and describes ten tenses in Medumba: a present tense, six past tenses (past 1, past 2, past 3, past 4, past 5, past 6), and three future tenses (future 1, future 2, future 3). In the domain of aspect, Nganmou argues for a three-way division of the category of aspect in Medumba: inherent aspect, which is an inherent property of the verb and, therefore, does not have a dedicated marker; grammatical aspect, which is further subdivided into the inchoative, the completive, and the durative; and derived aspect which is further subdivided into the perfective, the imperfective, the progressive, the habitual, and the iterative. Three subcategories of mood in Medumba are identified by Nganmou: (1) realis which is implied in the utterance of the speaker and, thus, unmarked; (2) irrealis, which is further subdivided into the unmarked imperative mood and the conditional mood indicated by a floating high tone; and (3) infinitive. It is also claimed in Nganmou's study that Medumba sentences where the verb describes a simple present, a habitual or an iterative situation are negated using the marker **kǎ**. Sentences where the verb describes a past action are negated using the marker **kǎ̃**. Also, sentences where the verb describes a future action are negated by means of the marker **kǎ̂**. Table 5 below shows the tense and aspect markings in Medumba as discussed by Nganmou (1991).

Table 5: Tense and aspect markings in Medumba (data from Nganmou 1991: 142-188)

<i>Marking</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Label</i>
a floating high tone which is realised on the subject and the verb of the clause at the same time	It describes historical facts.	past 6
zí	It describes events which took place a few days later than anticipated.	past 5
cág	It describes an event which took place one day after the day it was expected. It may also be used to describe historical facts.	past 4
ná?	It describes actions or states which occurred at least two days ago.	past 3
lò	It describes an event which occurred yesterday.	past 2
fǎ̃	It describes an event which has occurred today, but some time before the time of speaking.	past 1
-kǎ	It describes phenomena that are always true.	eternal truths present
nǎ	It describes timeless events, events that are located in the past, but persist in the present or future events.	present
cwèd/kǎ	It describes ongoing events.	present progressive

<i>Marking</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Label</i>
núm/bó/kó	It describes permanent situations.	present habitual
a floating high tone	It describes a recent past event.	accomplished present
unmarked	It describes future events.	non-accomplished present
à?	It describes an event which will take place today.	future 1
à? cág	It describes an event which will take place tomorrow.	future 2
à? zí	It describes an event which will take place in the remote future.	future 3
yǔb nótó? + infinitive form of the verb	It expresses the beginning of an action or a state.	inchoative
(yǔb) myàgtà + infinitive form of the verb	It expresses the completion of the event described.	completive
-kó	It describes an action or a state conceived of as lasting for a certain period of time.	durative
a floating low tone after the verb which may be realised on the verb or may remain floating when the verb occupies the clause final position	It describes historical facts, remote events.	perfective
a floating high tone before the verb	It presents a situation as ongoing.	imperfective
cwèd , often -kó	It describes ongoing situations.	progressive
nùm (in the present tense), -bó (negative variant of nùm), -kó	It describes permanent situations.	habitual
-bèn followed by a nasal verb prefix	It describes a recurrent event.	iterative

Danis, Barnes & O'Connor (2012) investigate the phenomenon of downstep and contour formation in Medumba. To account for different surface representations of the same sequence among different grammatical constructions in Medumba, they argue that sequences of /H(L)H/²⁰ are realised as either [HL H], that is, a high-low tone followed by a high tone or [H H], that is, a high tone followed by another high tone within a single phonological word.

2.2.6 Previous Comparative Studies on Bamileke Languages

Nissim (1975) provides a preliminary treatment of some aspects of the grammar of Feʔfeʔ, Medumba, and Ghomalaʔ. He identifies somewhat corresponding grammatical features across Feʔfeʔ, Medumba, and Ghomalaʔ and makes several claims about the grammar of the Bamileke languages. Bamileke languages distinguish four level tones: high, mid, central, low, and two contour tones: rising and falling “en bamileke, nous avons quatre tons ponctuels et deux tons

²⁰ The tone in parentheses represents a floating low tone. It can either be part of the underlying lexical representation of a word, or be a grammatical floating tone between words (Danis, Barnes & O'Connor 2012).

mélodiques: les tons ponctuels sont, du haut en bas de la gamme: TH: le ton haut (´), TM: le ton moyen (˘), TC: le ton central (ˆ), souvent non marqué, TB: le ton bas (ˋ). Les tons mélodiques sont: TMT: le ton montant (ˊ), TDt: le ton descendant (ˋ)” (Nissim 1975: 11). Sounds can combine in any of the following basic canonical structures in Bamileke languages: CV, CVC, CVV, CVVC “la structure du lexème en bamileke est fondamentalement de la forme CV (VC). On peut donc rencontrer les forms suivantes: CV, CVC, CVV, CVVC” (Nissim 1975: 56). Nouns in Bamileke languages are classified into six noun classes, which are further subdivided into three singular and plural classes according to the forms taken by the possessive adjective “si on observe la construction du possessif en bamileke, on s’aperçoit que la forme de ce possessif varie selon les noms avec lesquels il s’accorde [...] nous pouvons conclure à l’existence, en bamileke, de six classes nominales, trois ayant valeur de singulier, les trois autres ayant valeur de pluriel” (Nissim 1975: 68-69). The associative construction in Bamileke languages is of the form head noun-modifying noun “en bamileke, l’ordre du syntagme associatif est toujours: déterminé-déterminant” (Nissim 1975: 121). There are at least five past tenses and six future tenses in each of the Bamileke languages “le système des temps est plus complexe qu’en français par exemple. Au mode indicative, le plus développé de ce point de vue, on doit distinguer deux actuels, au moins cinq temps du passé et au moins six temps du futur” (Nissim 1975: 150), etc. Furthermore, Nissim argues that the designation ‘Bamileke languages’ stems from the Bamileke people not always understanding themselves from region to region, but in reality there is only one Bamileke language which is subdivided into several varieties “les Bamileke ne se comprennent pas toujours d’une région à l’autre, d’une chefferie à l’autre. De ce fait, on a pu parler de langues bamileke au pluriel [...] Il faut donc constater qu’il y a une langue bamileke” (Nissim 1975: 2).

Based on data retrieved from previous studies, Watters (2003) compares some Bamileke languages (Ngwe, Yemba, Ndaʔndaʔ, Ngiemboon) with respect to tense marking. He notes that most Bamileke languages mark four degrees of Past and four degrees of Future, along with a Present tense that may also serve as a Perfect. Furthermore, he indicates that in all the Bamileke languages, future markers come from earlier consecutive constructions and that while past tense markers occur before the negative marker and the verb stem, future tense markers usually occur after the negative marker but before the verb stem (Watters 2003: 246-247).

Sonkoue (2014)²¹ compares three Bamileke languages: Ngiemboon, Yemba, and Ghomalaʔ with respect to the tense, aspect, and mood categories. She argues that Ngiemboon, Yemba, and Ghomalaʔ show a high degree of similarity as far as the categories of tense, aspect, and mood are concerned. Some of the correspondences between Ngiemboon, Yemba, and Ghomalaʔ noted in Sonkoue’s study are: (1) tense and aspect markers typically appear before the verb in Ngiemboon, Yemba, and Ghomalaʔ, (2) Ngiemboon, Yemba, and Ghomalaʔ all distinguish five past tenses, five future tenses, and an unmarked present tense, (3) many of the tense, aspect, and mood markers in these languages are derived from lexical verbs. Sonkoue also argues that Bamileke languages could be described in a common or polylectal grammar. This refers to a grammar which describes two or more languages as one, highlighting common features and

²¹ Recall that Sonkoue (2014) and the author of the present study are one and the same.

including (though de-emphasizing) differences between them, on the basis that these languages actually share the same properties of grammar.

2.3 Motivation of the Study

It appears from the discussion in the preceding section that the languages analysed are rich in tense-aspect markings but, in general, lack solid analyses about these markings. This justifies my interest in tense-aspect marking strategies. Despite the considerable descriptive value of some of the works on tense and/or aspect summarised above, important shortcomings emerge from a critical examination of previous research on tense-aspect categories in the investigated languages. Some of these shortcomings are summarised below:

- Much of the research on tense-aspect categories in the investigated languages lacks clarity in the presentation of data. This means that the provided examples are not glossed or do not distinguish between various levels of linguistic representation (for example, see Lonfo 2014, Nda?kayii 1974, Sofo 1979).
- In some of the previous investigations summarised above, for example, Lonfo (2014), many of the tenses and aspects acknowledged are limited to a listing of tense or aspect labels. In other words, no information is provided about the form(s) and function(s) of the tenses and aspects listed.
- There is a lot of overlapping in the function of tenses which are not commented on. For instance, in Ngombale, the function of the remote past tense seems to overlap with that of the recent past tense as both tenses are said to be used to refer to an action that took place one week, month or even year ago (Vousta 2003).
- Some of the previous research claims still await clarification. For instance, as indicated in Lonfo (2014), the question of whether there is really a remote past tense (P5) in Ngiemboon remains open.
- The issue of the interaction between tense, aspect, and standard negation which appears to be a relevant facet of the analysis of the categories of tense and aspect in the investigated languages (for example, at the morphological level) is not addressed in general.
- In some of the previous studies summarised above, it is often the case that two tenses which are claimed to be distinct in form and function are actually complementary in neighbouring dialects.

Although no work that deals specifically with standard negation has been carried out in the investigated languages, the review of studies provided above suggests that there are cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation in the investigated languages. Sofo (1979), for instance, mentions that different tense forms take different negation strategies in Ghomala? (see 2.2.3 above). This mainly justifies why standard negation was included in this study. I assumed that tense, aspect, and standard negation interact in an interesting way in the investigated languages and it turned out to be true as will be shown in the following chapters (Chapters Three to Eight).

The review of research on the investigated languages also reveals that scholars have assumed that aspects of grammar, for example, tone, noun classes, tense, aspect, etc. largely exhibit the same properties from one Bamileke language to another. However, there are good reasons to believe these assumptions might be untrue – thus the necessity to check them. In all the previous studies summarised above, there are serious doubts about the representativeness of the language sample. While Nissim (1975) specifically investigates Bamileke languages found in the Eastern part of the Bamileke area, Sonkoue (2014) focuses on Bamileke languages found in the Western part of the Bamileke area. Furthermore, the language sample of each of these studies does not reflect the proposal about the subgrouping of Bamileke languages made by Hyman (1972: 7-9). The results of the comparison carried out in Nissim (1975) as well as Sonkoue (2014) are based on shallow descriptions of individual languages. For instance, in his discussion of tense, aspect, and mood, Nissim (1975) does not provide concrete data for the validity of his analysis to be clear. Also, the discussion in Nissim (1975) as well as Sonkoue (2014) overemphasises the similarities between the target languages at the expense of the differences. As will be demonstrated in the rest of the study, the present research departs from previous claims that aspects of grammar largely exhibit the same characteristics from one Bamileke language to another.

It is worth highlighting that initially my thesis project included an analysis of mood in the investigated languages (thus the presence of the term mood in the title of the questionnaire). Eventually, though, the final thesis project was restricted to an investigation of tense-aspect categories and standard negation. This could be justified by the fact that after some preliminary analyses of the data I collected, it appeared that the languages investigated do not use grammatical devices, that is, a set of forms that express meanings from the same conceptual domain, occur in contrast to each other, and are typically expressed in the same fashion (for example, verb affixes, free-standing particles) to express different modalities. Modality, defined in this study as a semantic notion relating to such concepts as necessity, factuality, permission, obligation, uncertainty, potentiality appears not to be signalled through grammatical devices, that is, moods, in the investigated languages. Therefore, one can say that unlike many well-studied languages, such as English or French which distinguish various types of moods (for example, subjunctive, indicative, imperative, infinitive, or conditional) the languages analysed in the study do not seem to have moods. Based on my preliminary analyses, I argue that modality is not implemented through moods in the investigated languages. In Ngiemboon, for instance, it may be implied in the utterance (realis modality), signalled by the intonation of the voice (directive modality) or indicated by various forms which do not easily fit the understanding of grammatical devices outlined above. For example, the conditional is expressed by use of a word corresponding in meaning to the subordinating conjunction *if* in English in the protasis²² and a word corresponding in meaning to the subordinating conjunction *then* in English in between the protasis and the adoposis.²³ Necessity is indicated by use of an adjective (for example, necessary, good, advisable) immediately followed by a word corresponding in English to the subordinating conjunction *that*. For this reason I decided to

²² This refers to the dependent or condition clause of a conditional sentence.

²³ This refers to the main or consequence clause of a conditional sentence.

exclude mood and modality and concentrate on elements (tense, aspect, standard negation) that are clearly expressed through grammatical devices in the investigated languages.

This chapter has presented the conceptual framework that guided this thesis. Furthermore, a review of the literature on the investigated languages has been provided and the motivation for the present study has been discussed. In the following chapter, an in-depth description of the mechanisms for expressing tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ngiemboon is provided. Also, the basic functions of the tense-aspect categories in Ngiemboon are discussed.

CHAPTER III

3 Tense-Aspect and Standard Negation in Ngiemboon

This and the following four chapters pursue the same objective: describe the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in one of the five languages analysed. To ease the task for the reader, each chapter has been organised following more or less the same format: section 1, ‘structure of the main clause’, provides a brief description of the basic ordering of elements within the main clause; section 2, ‘general comments’, presents bits of information I deemed relevant to the discussion in the chapter; section 3, ‘overview of the tense-aspect system and standard negation’, provides a brief description of the basic facts about the tense-aspect system and standard negation; section 4, ‘tense-aspect categories’, focuses on the description of the expression and basic function(s) of the tense-aspect categories; section 5, ‘final remarks on the description of tense-aspect categories’, makes some closing remarks about the discussion of the tense-aspect categories, and section 6, ‘standard negation’, discusses the negation of declarative verbal main clauses. Another point worth noting is that each language being treated separately sometimes makes the exposition slightly repetitious. In other words, there are certain points where the languages analysed do not really differ and, thus, information about these points should not necessarily be repeated. However, in order to avoid extensive cross-reference in the discussion and make it possible for each chapter to be read on its own, I decided not to condense information.

Before focusing on the main objective pursued in this chapter, a few points connected with the study of tense-aspect categories and standard negation in the languages under investigation, in general, need to be considered.

The first point I would like to consider concerns the specific or unusual surface tone patterns which are associated with the verb²⁴ in particular, and sentence elements in general, in Bamileke languages. Grassfields languages, under which Bamileke languages fall, are well known for their complex tonal systems (see Hyman 1972, Anderson 1983, Nguendjio 1992, Watters 2003, Tamanji 2009, Akumbu 2015). The surface tone of a verb root in these languages may, for instance, represent the combination of a lexical tone belonging to the verb root and a tonal morpheme preceding or following the verb root. This tonal morpheme may be introduced by grammatical markers, such as aspect markers. Moreover, tonal processes, for instance, Meeussen’s rule, which may be very different from one language to another may cause changes in the surface tone patterns of morphemes. Concerning the complexity of tonal systems in the Grassfields region, Watters (2003) makes the following observation:

“Perhaps the most complex system in the Grassfields Bantu region is that of Yemba (or Dschang-Bamileke) and its closest neighbours, Ngiemboon (Anderson 1983) and Nweh. Research on the tone system of Yemba has contributed significantly to the development of tone theory over the past thirty years. Following Voorhoeve (1971), Tadadjeu (1974) presented Yemba with its surprising combination of downstep without

²⁴ The word *verb* is used in this study to refer to verb roots as well as verb stems (a combination of a verb root and a verbal extension).

automatic downdrift, including both downstepped high and downstepped low tones. Downstepped low tones were something new. Yemba also allows for downstepped tones immediately after pause, another new twist. In addition, seven contrasts occur after H and eight after L, further confirming the complexities [...]” (Watters 2003: 239).

In an account of the surface tonal melodies found on the verb in Babanki (a Grassfields language of Northwest Cameroon), Akumbu (2015) shows that depending on the construction type, three tonal patterns may be found on both lexical low and high tone verbs in Babanki: “an underlying high tone may surface normally as high, but unexpectedly as low, or falling while underlying low tones surface as high, falling, but normally as low” (Akumbu 2015:1). Anderson’s (1983) Ph.D dissertation is mainly devoted to the analysis of the tonal phenomena found in Ngiemboon’s noun and verb phrases.

From this brief discussion of the complexity of tone systems in the Grassfields area, it appears that the analysis of the particular tonal behaviour of sentence elements, in each of the five languages under investigation, may very well constitute the topic of a separate work. Therefore, the present study will not delve into the analysis of the various unusual surface tone patterns associated with verbs as well as other elements within the clause.²⁵ However, attention will be paid to those tone alternations (surface tone patterns of words in sentences which diverge from the tones in isolation) that clearly and consistently signal tense-aspect meaning or are relevant as indicators of tense/aspect.

A set of words I have labelled ‘adverbial auxiliaries’, also deserves attention. This refers to a group of words that precede the verb and express meanings commonly expressed by adverbs in European languages. Moreover, adverbial auxiliaries have verbal properties which are reflected in the fact that they may be marked for tense or aspect. Also, just like verbs, they may take a nasal consonant prefix. Kießling (2011: 241-284) refers to words which have almost the same features as adverbial auxiliaries in the Isu language, a Grassfields Bantu language of Cameroon that belongs to the West Ring subgroup, as “hybrid adverbials”. Adverbial auxiliaries are used in the languages analysed to modify the situation denoted by the verb by indicating, for instance, anteriority (earlier, first of all), repetition (again), speed (quickly) or the seriousness of the event encoded by the verb (seriously, really). Some of the items belonging to this set of words, namely, ‘no longer’, ‘not yet’, ‘already’, and ‘still’ are analysed in some grammar descriptions under the category of aspect and sometimes also tense (for example, see Carlson 1990: 585-590). Also, some of the adverbial auxiliaries in the investigated languages, such as **ʔúʔù...wó** ‘no longer’ (in Ngiemboon) or **pjé** ‘still’ (in Ngombale) may be classified under the grammatical category *phasal polarity* that has recently been acknowledged by (Kramer 2017: 1). It will be shown in the discussions below that adverbial auxiliaries are found in all the languages analysed. While very interesting, adverbial auxiliaries will not be discussed in detail in this work.

Another point worth mentioning involves the occurrence of a nasal consonant prefix before the verb and some verb-related elements (tense or aspect markers, adverbial auxiliaries,

²⁵ Interested readers are referred to Anderson (1983) for a detailed discussion of the various tonal melodies found on verbs and nouns in Ngiemboon.

negative particles). This nasal prefix, symbolized by the archiphoneme ‘N-’ throughout this study, is realised as a syllabic nasal (see Hyman (1972: 151), Nissim (1981: 123), Nganmou (1991: 61), and Anderson (2008: 3) for a discussion on the syllabic status of the nasal prefix in Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Medumba, and Ngiemboon, respectively) whose tone may vary from one language to another. Moreover, it is homorganic with the following consonant, that is, the nasal and the consonant following the nasal have the same place of articulation, and this is attributed to a place feature assimilation of the nasal to the following consonant. Also, the presence of the nasal consonant prefix before the verb, as well as verb-related elements, may cause the consonant alternation of the initial consonant of the verb or verb-related elements. This is illustrated in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Initial consonant alternation in the investigated languages²⁶

[l] alternates with [nd] or [d]				
Ngiemboon	Feʔfeʔ	Ghomalaʔ	Ngombale	Medumba
[lɔ:]~[ń-dɔ:] ‘cook’	[lɔ]~[ń-dɔ] ‘cook’	[lɑ]~[dɑ] ‘stick to’	[lɔt]~[ń-dɔt] ‘go’	[lù]~[ń-dù] ‘wake up’
[ɣ] alternates with [ŋg] or [g]				
[ɣuà]~[ŋ-guà] ‘go’	[ɣè]~[ŋ-gè] ‘go’	[ɣò]~[gò] ‘go’	[ɣúʔ]~[ŋ-gúʔ] ‘be big’	[ɣɔb]~[ŋ-gɔb] ‘share’
[w] alternates with [ŋgw], [gw] or [ŋg]				
[wáʔ]~[ŋ-gwáʔ] ‘throw’	[wēn]~[ŋ-gwēn] ‘request aid’	[wòʔ]~[gwòʔ] ‘grind’	[wò]~[ŋ-gwò] ‘possess’	[wúʔɔ]~[ŋ-gúʔɔ] ‘be big’
[p] alternates with [mb] or [b]				
[pí]~[m-bí] ‘take’	[pèn]~[m-bèn] ‘accept’	[púʔ]~[búʔ] ‘lift’	[pī]~[m-bī] ‘sow’	
[v] alternates with [mbv] or [bv]				
[vè]~[m-bvè] ‘burst’	[vjàt]~[m-bvjàt] ‘burst’	[vù]~[bvù] ‘fall’		

²⁶ As can be observed from Table 6, the nasal prefix is not overtly marked before the initial consonant in Ghomalaʔ. Therefore, its presence is only betrayed by the systematic initial consonant alternation of verbs. My data analysis revealed that the nasal prefix elides when followed by voiced plosive, for example, [b, d, g] or affricate sounds, for example, [dʒ, bv, dz] in Ghomalaʔ. This suggests that after having modified the word initial consonant, the nasal prefix is deleted. It will be shown in Chapter Five that in a study on the Ghomalaʔ language, Nissim (1981) clearly spells the nasal prefix in all environments. However, as reported by Nissim, the nasal consonant prefix is often silent or not articulated in Ghomalaʔ. Table 6 also suggests that the initial consonant sounds which are not preceded by a nasal prefix, for instance, [l] and those occurring after the /N-/ prefix, for instance, [d] are two variants of the same phoneme which are in complementary distribution. In other words, [l, ɣ, w, p, v, z] occur in the initial position of a word which is not preceded by a nasal consonant prefix, whereas [d, g, gw, b, bv, dz] occur in the initial position of a word which is preceded by a nasal consonant prefix. In this study, verbs as well as verb-related elements that are not preceded by a nasal prefix, that is, which have as initial consonant the variants [l, ɣ, w, p, v, z] are taken as the underlying forms. I postulate that [d, g, gw, b, bv, dz] are derived from [l, ɣ, w, p, v, z], respectively, through phonological rules, such as a spreading of voicing (p→b) or occlusion (ɣ→g, l→d, w→gw, w→g) from the nasal prefix to the word initial consonant or by post-nasal affrication (Campbell 2004: 45), for example, z→dz, v→bv, ʒ→dʒ. Note, however, that some of these rules require further adjustments in some languages. In Medumba, for instance, the sound [b] occurs in the initial position of the word in the presence or absence of a nasal consonant prefix.

[z] alternates with [ndz] or [dz]				
[zòp]~[ń-dzòp] 'sing'	[zjé]~[ń-dzjé] 'sleep'	[zè]~[dzè] 'be bitter'	[záp]~[ń-dzáp] 'sing'	
[ʒ] alternates with [ndʒ] or [dʒ]				
[ʒúʔ]~[ń-dʒúʔ] 'understand'	[ʒíʔsí]~[ń-dʒíʔsí] 'learn'	[ʒòwptè]~[dʒòwtè] 'hum'	[ʒúʔ]~[ń-dʒúʔ] 'cultivate'	

The striking fact about the nasal consonant prefix described in this study is that it does not have the same distribution from one language analysed to the next. Moreover, its function(s) is/are not always clear. In a study on Ngiemboon, Anderson (1983) made an observation similar to the second aforementioned one while talking about Ngiemboon's verbal markers: "in the preceding chart, the /ne/ marker clearly signals progressive meaning and the imperfective verb suffix (symbolized by 'I') signals imperfective aspect, but the homorganic nasal consonant verb prefix (symbolized by 'N-') has a more vague meaning" (Anderson 1983: 60-61). In each of the languages analysed, it has proven difficult to attribute a function to the nasal prefix discussed in this study. Research on the diachronic source of the nasal consonant prefix in the investigated languages might help shed light on its function(s). However, this will not be covered in the present study. On the basis of synchronic data, I attempted to lay out five possible functions of the nasal consonant prefix in this study. Note that these functions are not attested in all the investigated languages. The functions of the nasal consonant prefix, as well as further details on the nasal prefix in each language analysed, are discussed in the appropriate sections below.

To gain an understanding of the basic functions of tense-aspect categories in the investigated languages, it is useful to more closely consider the notion of 'graded tenses'. As noted in the preceding chapter, this has to do with tenses that differ in terms of the temporal distance from a reference point, which is typically the moment of speech. Reference to the natural cycle of the sun (day after day) is the basis of the divisions between graded tenses in the languages analysed. For instance, Ngombale has a today versus any time after today division in the expression of future tense. Noteworthy is that a Bamileke day appears to start with sunrise of the same day and ends just before the next sunrise.

The dividing lines between graded tenses appear somewhat rigid in the languages analysed. This is because while in certain languages, for example, Sotho (Comrie 1985: 90-91), it is possible to combine any past tense marker with any past time adverbial without giving rise to ungrammaticality, in the languages analysed there appears to be a co-occurrence restriction that operates between remoteness (tense) markings and the time adverbials they allow. For example, in Ngiemboon, the time adverbials that refer to today, such as **lyěʔò** 'today', **mbàʔámàʔ** 'in the morning', or **ñfwòndzəm** 'in the evening' can occur together only with the marking of the Hodiernal Past or the marking of the General Future. In Medumba, the time adverbials that refer to the remote past, such as **ñgũʔ mùʔ** 'last year' occur together only with the marking of the Remote Past, etc. Also, the delimitations or divisions between the degrees of past tense or future tense appear to be precise. In other words, each degree of past tense or future tense is somewhat

related to a clear time interval or measure. For example, the Remote Past tense in all the languages analysed is clearly related to the time interval ‘a month ago or any time before that’.

However, it is important to note that the remoteness markings in the languages analysed may have extended functions that seem controlled by various factors, such as the discourse context in which they occur (for example, they occur in a story) or subjective elements (for example, how the speaker perceives or wants the listener to perceive the situation described). The analysis of text data revealed, for instance, that in Ngiemboon there is the possibility to refer to a situation as close, even if in reality it is remote. That is, the hodiernal (today) past marker in Ngiemboon may be used to describe a remote past situation if the speaker is telling a story and wants to make a remote past situation seem slightly temporally nearer.

The precise limits of the rigidity of temporal reference, as well as the extended or special uses of the remoteness markings in individual languages, require further exploration (recall that, as indicated in Chapter One, only the basic uses of tense-aspect categories are discussed in the present research).

It is also important to specify that although tense and aspect are well established as two distinct grammatical categories (Comrie 1976, Comrie 1985, Nurse 2008), I deemed it appropriate not to analyse them, in general, separately in this study. This is because the two categories are intricately related in the investigated languages. There are several ways in which tense is related to aspect in the languages analysed. The absence of an aspect marker in a clause where the verb co-occurs with a marker that clearly indicates tense is the best indication that the situation denoted by the verb is in the perfective. Similarly, the absence of a tense marker in a clause where the verb co-occurs with a marker that clearly expresses the category of aspect clearly indicates that the situation denoted by the verb is in the present tense. In some of the investigated languages (Ngiemboon and Feʼfeʼ) there are some markers that clearly indicate tense and aspect simultaneously and appear to be markers which arose from the fusion of a tense marker and an aspect marker. Also, in three of the five languages analysed, there are some co-occurrence restrictions that operate between tense and aspect markers. In Ngiemboon, the hodiernal past marker never co-occurs with the habitual marker. Also, none of the future tense markers co-occur with the habitual marker. In Ghomalaʼ, the hodiernal past marker does not co-occur with the imperfective marker or the progressive marker. In Medumba, the hodiernal past marker does not co-occur with the imperfective marker. Also, none of the tense markers co-occur with the progressive marker. The expression “tense-aspect” used in this study, thus, refers to a grammatical domain that covers the expression of tense (location in time in relation to a reference time) and aspect (representation of the time within the event).

3.1 Structure of the Main Clause

As a great deal of the data elicited for this study represents main clauses,²⁷ something needs to be said about the basic structure of the main clause in Ngiemboon.

²⁷ It is important to specify that the tense-aspect and standard negation markings that appear in main clauses in the investigated languages may occur in subordinate clauses (clauses which cannot stand alone as complete clauses and are introduced by words, such as because, when, who, which or that) with the same basic functions as in main clauses.

The linear ordering of elements within the main clause in Ngiemboon may be schematised as follows:²⁸

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 ²⁹	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
SBJ	SM	N-	T	A	NEG ₁	N-	AA	T	A	N-	Root	-EXT	-A/-P	OBJ	ADV	NEG ₂

*Position 1.*³⁰ This position is occupied by the subject of the clause. This might be a subject pronoun or a noun in subject position. Subject pronouns in Ngiemboon and its Bamileke language neighbours seem to be divided into simple and complex or compound pronouns where complex or compound pronouns differ from simple ones in that they represent a combination of two pronouns. For example, **pjàpò** (you and them) is made up of **pì** ‘second person plural’ and **pò** ‘third person plural’. Table 7 shows the subject pronouns in Ngiemboon. Only simple human subject pronouns (simple subject pronouns that replace human nouns in subject position) are considered. This is due to the lack of clarity of data about the other subject pronouns.

Table 7: Subject pronouns in Ngiemboon

<i>Person/number</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
1s	mə̀ŋ/N	I
2s	ò, yù (+FOC)	you
3s	à, jé (+FOC)	he/she
1p	pàq	we
2p	pì	you
3p	pò	they

It will be shown in section 3.4 that the habitual marker in Ngiemboon (a combination of vowel lengthening or copying and tonal alternation) may surface on the subject of the clause.

Position 2. This position may be filled by a subject agreement marker (SM), which agrees with the noun it follows. When the subject of the clause is a noun in subject position, it is usually immediately followed by a subject agreement marker. The subject agreement marker that I clearly identified is **à**. It appeared in my data following nouns belonging to class 1³¹ as well as personal names. The subject agreement marker in Ngiemboon tends to be omitted in rapid speech. Also, the habitual marker may surface on it.

²⁸ Multi-verb main clauses are not considered here. This refers to main clauses with more than one verb which may be conceptualised as describing a single event. Also, only declarative clauses (as opposed to interrogative, imperative, or exclamative clauses) are considered when discussing the structure of the main clause in this chapter as well as the following four chapters.

²⁹ AA here, and anywhere else in this study does not mean Aspect+Aspect, but rather Adverbial Auxiliary (see list of abbreviations).

³⁰ The subject of the clause and the verb root (see *position 12*) are compulsory. All other positions are optional. This is also observed in the other languages analysed.

³¹ According to Lonfo (2014), the noun class of a word in Ngiemboon is determined on the basis of the noun class prefix (for example, the plural prefix **mè-** of class 6, the singular nasal prefix of classes 1, 3, and 9) and the morphemes used in different types of concord: possessive pronoun agreement, possessive adjective agreement, relative pronoun agreement, and interrogative adjective agreement. Lonfo identifies five singular noun classes (classes 1, 3, 5, 7, 9), which pair up with five plural noun classes (classes 2, 4, 6, 8, 10) to form genders in Ngiemboon. Furthermore, he indicates that certain nouns in Ngiemboon only have a singular or a plural form. Thus, the occurrence of single class genders in the language, such as 1a, 2a, 3a, etc. (Lonfo 2014: 56-61).

Position 3. Position 3 may be filled by the first-person-singular pronoun nasal prefix (see 3.2). This nasal may be attached to the verb and to verb-related elements that are immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun. The first-person-singular pronoun nasal prefix is mutually exclusive with the subject agreement marker. In other words, positions 2 and 3 cannot be filled simultaneously. More will be said about the nasal consonant prefix in Ngiemboon in section 3.2 below.

Position 4. This slot may be occupied by a tense marker that locates situations in the past. For example, the near past marker **kà**, the remote past marker **là**.

Position 5. This slot may be occupied by the habitual marker.

Position 6. At position 6, one may find the first part of the negative markings **tè...wó**, **tě:...wó**, and **kà:...wó**.

Position 7. This position may be occupied by a linking nasal consonant prefix (see section 3.2). This nasal prefix is attached to the verb and to verb-related elements.

Position 8. This position may be filled by any of the adverbial auxiliaries found in Ngiemboon. The following items represent examples of adverbial auxiliaries in Ngiemboon: **pú** ‘all’, **kwà?** ‘really’, **pjé** ‘still’.

Position 9. This is another slot for tense markers. Only tense markers that locate situations in the future, for example, the general future marker **yè**, may occur in this position. Also, it is possible to have the general future marker immediately followed by another future tense marker in this position.

Position 10. This slot may be occupied by the progressive marker **nè**.

Position 11. This is another slot for the linking nasal consonant prefix. Note this position may be filled only when position 8 and/or 10 is/are filled.

Position 12. Position 12 is filled by the verb root. Verb roots in Ngiemboon are basically mono-syllabic with one of the following two major syllable structures: CV, for example, **mì** ‘swallow’ and CVC, for example, **sàq** ‘wash’. Two classes of verb roots are distinguished in Ngiemboon on the basis of their lexical tones: high and low tone verb roots (Anderson 2008: 7). However, the lexical tone of the verb root may be modified depending on the tense-aspect category. Also, irrespective of their lexical tones, verb roots in Ngiemboon may take a nasal consonant prefix.

Position 13. This position may be occupied by a verbal extension. Mba & Djiafeua (2003) provided evidence for two verbal extensions in Ngiemboon. The extension **-te**, which may be associated with the meanings of reciprocity, valency-change, and plurative (for example, the verb **kxwé** ‘die’ becomes **kxwété** ‘die in great numbers’; the extension **-té** adds a plural meaning to the verb or indicates that the situation described is experienced by several people) and vowel lengthening or copying that roughly yields the meanings of stativity, reflexivity, valency change, and reciprocity (for example, the verb **kwòŋ** ‘love’ becomes **kwòŋò** ‘love each other’; the copied vowel **-ò** adds the meaning of reciprocity to the verb). The two verbal extensions in Ngiemboon have no inherent tone, but take their tone from the vowel of the preceding syllable

by tone spreading. Moreover, only one verbal extension may occur on a single verb. The verbal extension which represents a copied vowel shows a few irregularities in that the copied vowel is not always segmentally identical to the vowel of the verb root. For instance, the vowel **u** may become **o** following a few CVC verb roots, for example, **tún** ‘dig’ becomes **túnó** ‘widen’.

Position 14. This position may be filled by the imperfective marker or the perfect marker.

Position 15. This position may contain the object of the clause. This might be a nominal or a pronominal object.

Position 16. Position 16 may be filled by items such as adverbs, prepositional phrases or indirect objects.

Position 17. This position may contain the second particle of the negative markings **tè...wó**, **tě:...wó**, and **kà:...wó**.

3.2 General Comments

In this section, I present facts deemed relevant to the discussion of tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ngiemboon.

3.2.1 The Nasal Consonant Prefix

The nasal consonant prefix that may precede the verb and some verb-related elements in Ngiemboon’s main clauses always bears a high tone. The morphophonemic rules of Ngiemboon disallow the prefixing of a nasal consonant before words which begin with a voiceless fricative; [f, s, ʃ]. In this case, the nasal consonant is replaced by the vowel [é-]. In other words, /N-/ becomes [é-] before words which begin with a voiceless fricative. Three types of nasal consonant prefix in Ngiemboon are described in this study:

- (N₁-): this nasal is prefixed to the verb and to verb-related elements. It is used to link a verb or a verb-related element to a preceding verb-related element.

- (10) **à ně mbú mbí ñkáb jè**
à ně N₁-pú N₁-pí ñ-káb jè
 3s H_PST N₁-all N₁-take 9-money her/his
 ‘S/he took all of her/his money.’ (today)

The nasal prefix that appears before the verb **pí** ‘take’ in example (10) links the verb to a preceding verb-related element (the adverbial auxiliary **pú** ‘all’). Similarly, the nasal consonant prefix that appears before the adverbial auxiliary **pú** ‘all’ links the adverbial auxiliary to a preceding verb-related element, namely, the hodiernal past marker **ně**. This function of the nasal prefix is found in all the languages analysed. Also, it is very similar to the function of the N- prefix in Bamileke-Ngomba described by Satre (2010: 44).

- (N₂-): this nasal prefix occurs before the verb and before verb-related elements that are immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun. It repeats the first-person-singular pronoun. The N₂- prefix probably originated from a phonological process: a non-nasal initial consonant takes a nasal prefix due to the presence of a neighbouring nasal. The reason behind this analysis is that unlike the other personal pronouns, the first-person-

singular pronoun in Ngiemboon ends in a nasal sound (see Table 7). Interestingly, this hypothesis about the origin of the N₂- prefix in Ngiemboon may be extended to the other languages analysed where this nasal prefix is attested.

- (11) **məŋ ħgè tó zùó yùà mètùá**
məŋ N₂-yè tó zùó yùà mètùá
 1s N₂-G_FUT N_FUT tomorrow go 1.market
 ‘I am going to go to the market tomorrow.’

The nasal prefix that appears before the general future marker in example (11) repeats the subject of pronoun **məŋ** ‘I’.

- (N₃-): this nasal is attached to the verb or to adverbial auxiliaries. It ties a series of clauses into a coherent whole.

- (12) **à ně ħdùsé á ħkũ mǫfé mǫmó ħdzɔdɔq ħkásim mbìŋ**
à ně N₁-lùsé á ħ-kũ N₃-pǫfé m-mó N₃-zɔdɔq ħ-kásim N₃-pìŋ
 3s H_PST N₁-wake.up on 3-bed N₃-eat 7-food N₃-sweep 1-kitchen N₃-after
 ‘S/he woke up from bed (today), and ate, and swept the kitchen, and then (...)

ħgùà ǫǫsè
N₁-yùà ǫǫsè
 N₁-go 1.church
 (s/he) went to church.’

The nasal consonant prefix that appears before the verbs **pǫfé** ‘eat’, **zɔdɔq** ‘sweep’, and the adverbial auxiliary **pìŋ** ‘after’ in example (12) ties a series of clauses into a coherent whole.

3.2.2 About the Imperfective

Ngiemboon distinguishes two variants of the imperfective marker. One, namely, vowel lengthening is used when the verb has an open syllable structure (CV or CVV). It involves the lengthening of the only or last vowel of the verb and the alternation of the tone of the lengthened vowel into a low tone. The second form, namely, vowel copying is used when the verb has a closed syllable structure (CVC). It involves the copying of the vowel of the verb after the verb’s final consonant and the alternation of the tone of the copied vowel into a low tone. Of particular interest is the first of these two variants, that is, vowel lengthening. This is because the low tone carried by the lengthened vowel might provoke the modification of the lexical tone of the verb. In other words, when the verb has a lexical high tone, the tone of the verb and the low tone of the imperfective marker merge into a high-low tone. This is shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Influence of the tone of the imperfective marker on the tone of the verb in Ngiemboon

<i>Underlying high tone verbs</i>	<i>Underlying low tone verbs</i>
nú ‘drink’ +ù→[nû:]	mì ‘swallow’ +ì→[mì:]
lí ‘be late’ +ì→[lí:]	lù ‘get up’ +ù→[lù:]
lúó ‘ask’ +ò→[lúó:]	lùà ‘cry’ +à→[lùà:]
zú? ‘cultivate’ +ù→[zú?ù]	kwàŋ ‘think’ +à→[kwàŋà]

Another interesting fact about the Imperfective in Ngiemboon is that it is always used together with another aspect, namely, the Habitual or the Progressive. This means it acts as a General Imperfective with a certain expression and a certain function (description of habitual or progressive situations), but which is always used with a specific Habitual or Progressive aspect.

3.3 Overview of the Tense-Aspect System and Standard Negation in Ngiemboon

Ngiemboon distinguishes three degrees of past tense (hodiernal past, near past, remote past), a present tense, and three degrees of future tense (general future, near future, remote future). Except for the present tense, which is not marked, tense in Ngiemboon is typically encoded by free-standing markers. Also, all tense markings in Ngiemboon appear in pre-verbal position. A four-way aspectual division is observed in Ngiemboon, namely, perfective, habitual, progressive, and imperfective. The habitual is indicated by a combination of a habitual suffix and an imperfective verb suffix. The habitual suffix may be attached to a pre-verbal element (the subject of the clause, a negative marker) or it may merge with a preceding tense marker. The progressive is indicated by a combination of a free-standing progressive marker which occurs before the verb and an imperfective verb suffix. The imperfective is indicated by a verb suffix. No perfective marking is observed in Ngiemboon.

In addition to the tenses and aspects mentioned above, Ngiemboon distinguishes a Perfect category indicated by a low-high tone alternation on the verb root, a verb suffix, or a high tone alternation on the verbal extension, and an Unmarked Tense-Aspect, which is marked for neither tense nor aspect, but has two basic functions.

Also, some tense or aspect markers in Ngiemboon must be accompanied by a nasal prefix that typically occurs before the verb.

To negate declarative verbal main clauses, Ngiemboon makes use of three standard negations patterns: (1) 'NEG₁...NEG₂', (2) 'NEG₁...(NEG₂)', and (3) 'NEG₁ N-...(N-)...NEG₂'. Noteworthy is that the first particle of the negative marking, namely, NEG₁, occurs immediately after the tense marker if the tense marker is a past tense marker, and before the tense marker if the tense marker is a future tense marker. The second particle of negative markings always occurs in the clause final position.

3.4 Tense-Aspect Categories in Ngiemboon

Tense and aspect connect to give eighteen tense-aspect categories in Ngiemboon. This refers to grammatical units that may be manifested by any of the following: a single marker (a free-standing marker, a tonal modification, or a verb suffix), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking. Also, Ngiemboon's tense-aspect categories may have one or more basic uses. The tense-aspect system of Ngiemboon can, thus, be analysed as operating according to eighteen tense-aspect categories, namely: Hodiernal Past (H_PST), Hodiernal Past Progressive (H_PST PROG), Near Past (N_PST), Near Past Habitual (N_PST HAB), Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG), Remote Past (R_PST), Remote Past Habitual (R_PST HAB), Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG), Habitual (HAB), Progressive (PROG), General Future (G_FUT), General Future Progressive

(G_FUT PROG), Near Future (N_FUT), Near Future Progressive (N_FUT PROG), Remote Future (R_FUT), Remote Future Progressive (R_FUT PROG), Perfect (PRF), and Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA). It is important to specify that the labels of the tense-aspect categories in Ngiemboon (as well as the other languages analysed) should not be assumed to fully capture the tense-aspect functions.³²

The markings that are used to indicate the tense-aspect categories in Ngiemboon are shown in the overview in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Tense-aspect markings in Ngiemboon

<i>T \ A</i>	<i>Perfective</i>	<i>Habitual</i>	<i>Progressive</i>	<i>Perfect</i> ³³
Hodiernal past	ně N-		kò nè N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	
Near past	kà	kǒ: N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	kà nè N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	
Remote past	là	lǒ: N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	là nè N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	
Present		-VL ^{LH} , -VC ^{LH} N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	nè N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	
General future	yə		yə kú nè N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	
Near future	yə yxuqò/tó/lù		yə yxuqò/tó/lù nè N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	
Remote future	yə lá?		yə lá? nè N-...-VL ^L , -VC ^L	
Perfect				LH tone, -VC ^H , H tone

3.4.1 Hodiernal Past (H_PST) ně N-vb

The Hodiernal Past is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the hodiernal past marker **ně** and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, which is attached to the verb. The Hodiernal Past describes past perfective³⁴ situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

³² The labelling of the tense-aspect categories in this study was done using two principal methods: (1) by applying descriptive names, that is, the names drawn from the basic function of tense-aspect markings, and (2) by a formal identification. For example, the label ‘Unmarked Tense-Aspect’ is based on a formal identification.

³³ In this table, as well as the other tables in this study, the empty boxes, generally, mean ‘not applicable’ or ‘impossible’. The occurrence of the label Perfect twice, that is, on the horizontal axis (headings for the category of aspect) and on the vertical axis (headings for the category of tense) is justified by the fact this category does not neatly fit into the category of tense or aspect as explained in Chapter Two above.

³⁴ Recall that a situation in the perfective is one which does not make explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of the situation described (see Chapter Two).

(13) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her brother has done earlier today.

à ně mbwó? ñgèsán³⁵

à ně N₁-pwó? ñ-gèsán

3s H_PST N₁-harvest 9-maize

‘He harvested maize.’

3.4.2 Hodiernal Past Progressive (H_PST PROG) kò nè N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The Hodiernal Past Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (-VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the hodiernal past marker **kò**, which is considered as a grammatically conditioned allomorph³⁶ of the marker **ně** described in 3.4.1 above, the progressive marker **nè**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Hodiernal Past Progressive describes situations which were ongoing on the day the utterance is made, but before the time of speaking.

(14) Context: Q: What was your sister doing when I phoned her this morning? (What activity was she engaged in? She did not answer my call).

(14a) à kò nè mbwó? ñgèsán

à kò nè N₁-pwó?- ñ-gèsán

3s H_PST PROG N₁-harvest-IPFV 9-maize

‘She was harvesting maize.’

(14b) à kò nè ñdô: fúm lézfuó

à kò nè N₁-lô: (à)-fúm³⁷ lé-3fuó (lexical tone of the verb: ló)

3s H_PST PROG N₁-cook.IPFV 7-thing NMLZ-eat

‘She was cooking food.’

3.4.3 Near Past (N_PST) kà vb

The Near Past is indicated by the marker **kà** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations that took place less than one month before the moment of speech, except situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(15) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her brother did last week.

à kà pwó? ñ-gèsán

à kà pwó? ñ-gèsán

3s N_PST harvest 9-maize

‘He harvested maize.’

³⁵ Adverbials of time may co-occur with tense-aspect markings, where necessary, in order to pinpoint the event’s location in time.

³⁶ **ně** and **kò** are considered as grammatically conditioned allomorphs because their selection is determined by a grammatical feature, namely, whether the verb appearing after either of them co-occurs or does not co-occur with a progressive marker.

³⁷ The class 7 noun prefix in Ngiemboon only surfaces following a pause. This explains why it appears in parentheses in the glossing.

3.4.4 Near Past Habitual (N_PST HAB) **kǎ:** N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The Near Past Habitual is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (-VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the near past habitual marker **kǎ:** and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Near Past Habitual describes a past habitual situation which stopped in the near past. That is, approximately³⁸ less than one month ago.

(16) Context: The speaker is talking about the profession of his/her brother when he (the brother of the speaker) was still living in the village (it is known that the brother of the speaker left the village not long ago).

à	kǎ:	ńdʒúʔù	ḡgəsáŋ
à	kǎ:	N₁-ʒúʔ-ù	ḡ-gəsáŋ
3s	N_PST.HAB	N ₁ -cultivate-IPFV	9-maize

‘He used to cultivate maize.’

As indicated in the interlinear glossing in example (16), the marker **kǎ:** clearly expresses both the near past tense and the habitual. It will be shown below that the remote past habitual marker also indicates the past tense and habitual aspect at the same time.

3.4.5 Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG) **kà nè** N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The Near Past Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the near past marker **kà**, the progressive marker **nè**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Near Past Progressive describes situations which were ongoing in the near past, that is, less than one month before the moment of speech, except situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(17) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her aunt yesterday.

ʒùndòn	à	kà	nè	ńdʒuʔɛ̀	ḡkásim	à	ʒùó	ńdʒúʔ
ʒùndòn	à	kà	nè	N₁-ʒuʔɛ̀-ò	ḡ-kásim	à	ʒùó	N₃-ʒúʔ
Jounda	SM	N_PST	PROG	N ₁ -sweep-IPFV	9-kitchen	on	yesterday	N ₃ -hear

‘Jounda was sweeping the kitchen yesterday, and (she) heard (...)’

á	Ø	ɣwáʔá	fùʔ	ɲìŋ	à	Ø	pí	à	nè	ńdùà:
á	Ø	ɣwáʔá	(à)-fùʔ	ɲìŋ	à	Ø	pí	à	nè	N₁-lùà:
it	UTA	be.like	7-time	1.person	SM	UTA	be.outside	SM	PROG	N ₁ -cry-IPFV

as if someone was outside crying.’

3.4.6 Remote Past (R_PST) **là vb**

The Remote Past is expressed by the marker **là** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations which took place either a month ago or any time before that.

³⁸ Despite the lengthy working sessions I spent with the language consultants, I have not been able to clearly identify when the near past habitual starts. Thus, the use of the word “approximately” here.

(18) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘A motorbike accident’

mé	là	kà:	jé	íná	lóqtà	à	Ø	ké	tè	yúé	wó
mé	là	kà:	jé	N ₃ -ná	lóqtà	à	Ø	ké	tè	yúé	wó
one	R_PST	carry	him	N ₃ -give	1.hospital	3s	UTA	all.the.same	NEG ₁	die	NEG ₂

‘One carried him and gave (=took) him to the hospital, he did not die all the same.’

3.4.7 Remote Past Habitual (R_PST HAB) lǎ: N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The Remote Past Habitual is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the remote past habitual marker **lǎ:** and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Remote Past Habitual describes a past habitual situation which stopped in the remote past. That is, a month ago or any time before that.

(19) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘A motorbike accident’

pèq	tsǎ	jìŋ	lǎ:	ŋgwǎkǎ	à	Ø	nû:	siká:
pèq	tsǎ	jìŋ	lǎ:	N ₁ -ŋwǎkǎ	à	Ø	nû:	(à)-siká:
1p	1.certain	1.person	R_PST.HAB	N ₁ -work-IPFV	3s	UTA	drink-IPFV	7a-cigarette

‘We used to work (with) a certain person, he used to smoke cigarette.’

3.4.8 Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG) là nè N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The Remote Past Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the remote past marker **là**, the progressive marker **nè**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Remote Past Progressive describes situations which were ongoing in the remote past, that is, one month ago or any time before that.

(20) Context: Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last year at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?)

à	là	nè	mbwǎŋ	ŋgǎsǎŋ
à	là	nè	N ₁ -pwǎŋ	ŋ-gǎsǎŋ
3s	R_PST	PROG	N ₁ -harvest-IPFV	9-maize

‘He was harvesting maize.’

3.4.9 Habitual (HAB) -VL^{LH}, -VC^{LH} N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The Habitual is indicated by a combination of vowel lengthening or copying and tonal alternation. More precisely, the subject marker, or the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun undergoes a vowel lengthening or copying process³⁹ and further takes a low-high tone.⁴⁰ Also,

³⁹ The vowel lengthening process occurs on the subject marker, or when the subject pronoun ends in a vowel, whereas the vowel copying process occurs when the subject pronoun ends in a consonant.

⁴⁰ As reported by Anderson (2008: 6), Ngiemboon has four possible tone melodies on noun stems. For example, monosyllabic noun stems with a preceding low tone prefix display the following stem tones in isolation: rising, downstepped high, low, low falling.

the verb takes a nasal prefix ‘N₁-’ and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (-VL^L, -VC^L). The Habitual describes situations performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time. Also, it implies that the situation described still holds true at the moment of speech.

(21) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘Our next family meeting’

pə̀əǎ́ ɲgɛ̀: **àʔfúʔtè tsìɲè ɲdá nà ɲbvòqɲbvò**
pə̀əǎ́ N₁-ɣɛ̀: **(à)-ʔfúʔtè (à)-tsìɲè ɲ-dá nà ɲbvòqɲbvò**
 1p.HAB N₁-have.IPFV 7-meeting 7-bottom 9-house on first

‘We usually have a family meeting on the first (...)’

sáásèndê nà sàɲ lèkùà à nà ɲgùʔ láʔ
sáásèndê nà sàɲ lèkùà à nà ɲ-gùʔ (à)-láʔ
 1.Saturday on 1.moon four on on 9-year 7-village
 Saturday of the month of April.’

(22) Context: Q: What does your sister usually do when she is happy?

ǎ: **ɲgàbà ɲkáp**
ǎ: **N₁-yàb-à ɲ-káp** (lexical tone of the subject: à)
 3s.HAB N₁-distribute-IPFV 9-money
 ‘She distributes money.’

(23) Context: The speaker is talking about a woman who usually makes financial donations.

mánè ǎ: **ɲgàbà ɲkáp tɛʔ**
mánè ǎ: **N₁-yàb-à ɲ-káp tɛʔ** (lexical tone of the SM: à)
 mane SM.HAB N₁-distribute-IPFV 9-money a.lot
 ‘Mane distributes money a lot.’

As explained in section 3.1 above, the subject agreement marker in Ngiemboon tends to be omitted in rapid speech. When this occurs, the habitual marker shows up on the last vowel of the noun in subject position.

When one considers the habitual marker and that the present tense is not marked in Ngiemboon (see section 3.3 above), one can postulate that the near past habitual marker **kǎ:**, as well as the remote past habitual marker **lǎ:**, discussed in 3.4.4 and 3.4.7, respectively, arose from the merging of two markers. That is, the near past marker **kà** or the remote past marker **là** with a habitual marker which once (at some point earlier in the history of Ngiemboon) consisted of a segment with a tone but disappeared through the development of the language over time; leaving its traces in the form of morphophonological changes.

3.4.10 Progressive (PROG) **nè** N-**vb**-VL^L, -VC^L

The Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the progressive marker **nè** and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Progressive describes present progressive situations, that is, situations ongoing at the time of speaking.

(24) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he can see through the window (right now).

múʃ m̀bàŋà né múʃ m̀d̩dzɛ́ pó nè ɲgɣuò: mèyùà
 múʃ m̀bàŋà né múʃ m̀d̩dzɛ́ pó nè N₁-ɣɣuò: mèyùà
 1.child 1-man and 1.child 1-woman 3p PROG N₁-do.IPFV 6a.games
 ‘A boy and a girl are doing games (=playing).’

3.4.11 General Future (G_FUT) yè vb

The General Future is expressed by the marker **yè** which occurs before the verb. It describes future perfective situations that are expected to take place on the day the utterance is made.

(25) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her brother is planning to do today.

à yè pwóʔ ɲgə̀sáŋ
 à yè pwóʔ ɲ-gə̀sáŋ
 3s G_FUT harvest 9-maize
 ‘He is going to harvest maize.’

There is a short form of the Ngiemboon general future marker that frequently appears in daily conversations amongst native speakers. It involves the substitution of the marker **yè** by a process of vowel lengthening or copying on the last vowel of the subject of the clause. This is illustrated in the following sentence.

(26) Context: Q: What is your brother planning to do today?

à: pwóʔ ɲgə̀sáŋ
 à: pwóʔ ɲ-gə̀sáŋ
 3s.G_FUT harvest 9-maize
 ‘He is going to harvest maize.’

3.4.12 General Future Progressive (G_FUT PROG) yè kú nè N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The General Future Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of four pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the general future marker **yè**, the marker **kú**, which specifies the degree of remoteness in the future, the progressive marker **nè**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The General Future Progressive describes situations which will be in progress on the day the utterance is made.

(27) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tonight? (What activity will he be engaged in?)

à yè kú nè mbwóʔɔ̃ ɲgə̀sáŋ
 à yè kú nè N₁-pwóʔ-ɔ̃ ɲ-gə̀sáŋ
 3s G_FUT H_FUT PROG N₁-harvest-IPFV 9-maize
 ‘He is going to be harvesting maize.’

It appears from the discussion in this sub-section that although the general future marker has a basic function that corresponds to a specific time domain, namely, today future, it may be immediately followed by a marker which specifies that the situation described is going to take

place today. It will be shown below that all future tense markers in Ngiemboon obligatory co-occur with the general future marker. In other words, the general future marker either appears alone or co-occurs with another future tense marker. This explains why it has been analysed as a ‘general future marker’ (instead of a hodiernal future marker as should be expected based on that it basically has a today’s future tense interpretation when occurring alone). It is interesting to note that this distinctive characteristic of the future tense is also observed in Ghomala? (see section 5.4), Ngombale (see section 6.4) and Medumba (see section 7.4).

3.4.13 Near Future (N_FUT) $\gamma\epsilon$ $\gamma\chi\upsilon\phi\grave{o}$ /tó/lù vb

The Near Future is expressed by the marker $\gamma\chi\upsilon\phi\grave{o}$, **tó**, or **lù** which must co-occur with the general future marker $\gamma\epsilon$. According to my language consultants, the markers $\gamma\chi\upsilon\phi\grave{o}$, **tó**, and **lù** are freely interchangeable. However, the marker **lù** seems to be the least commonly used. It was found strange by most of the speakers of the younger generation with whom I worked. This suggests that the near future marker **lù** might probably become lost with time or receive a new function. The Near Future describes future perfective situations that will occur in the near future. This refers to either the day after the time of speaking or any time before a year as from the day after the time of speaking.

(28) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is planning to do tomorrow.

màŋ	ŋgè	tó	zùó	γhà	mètùá	ésuŋ	ŋgèsán	jò
màŋ	N ₂ -γè	tó	zùó	γhà	mètùá	N ₃ -suŋ	ŋ-gèsán	jò
1s	N ₂ -N_FUT	N_FUT	tomorrow	go	1.market	N ₃ -sell	9-maize	my

‘I am going to go to the market tomorrow and sell my maize.’

3.4.14 Near Future Progressive (N_FUT PROG) $\gamma\epsilon$ $\gamma\chi\upsilon\phi\grave{o}$ /tó/lù nè N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L

The Near Future Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of four pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the general future marker $\gamma\epsilon$, the near future marker $\gamma\chi\upsilon\phi\grave{o}$, **tó**, or **lù**, the progressive marker **nè**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Near Future Progressive describes situations which will be in progress in the near future, that is, either the day after the time of speaking or any time before a year as from the day after the time of speaking.

(29) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tomorrow? (What activity will he be engaged in?)

à	γè	tó	nè	mbwóʔò	ŋgèsán
à	γè	tó	nè	N ₁ -pwóʔ-ò	ŋ-gèsán
3s	G_FUT	N_FUT	PROG	N ₁ -harvest-IPFV	9-maize

‘He is going to be harvesting maize.’

3.4.15 Remote Future (R_FUT) $\gamma\epsilon$ láʔ vb

The Remote Future is expressed by the marker **láʔ** which must co-occur with the general future marker $\gamma\epsilon$. It describes future perfective situations that will take place in the remote future, that is, either within a year or any time thereafter.

(30) Context: The speaker is talking about his/her plans for next year.

məŋ	ŋgè	láʔ	kwé	nda	jò	fùʔpáʔ
məŋ	N ₂ -yè	láʔ	kwé	n-dá	jò	fùʔpáʔ
1s	N ₂ -R_FUT	R_FUT	build	9-house	my	next.year

‘I am going to build my house next year.’

In Chapter Two above, it has been pointed out that mood and modality are not treated in this study. However, it is interesting to note that the remote future marker in Ngiemboon differs from the other future tense markers in the language as it may be used in certain circumstances to convey a modal function (judgement modality). In fact, the marker **láʔ** in Ngiemboon may clearly signal the speaker’s degree of confidence (based on facts about what is usually the case) in the reality of the proposition expressed by his or her utterance. This is shown in the following sentence.

(31) Context: The speaker is talking to someone who is very lazy and does not do anything to change this habit.

ò	yè	láʔ	záq	ŋkàndì	kúnò:
ò	yè	láʔ	záq	ŋ-kàndì	kúnò:
2s	G_FUT	R_FUT	miss	3-banana	1.pig

‘You are going to miss ŋkàndì kúnò:.’⁴¹ (one day)

The marker ‘**láʔ**’ in example (31) indicates the speaker’s degree of confidence, which is based on known facts, in the reality of the proposition expressed by his or her utterance, whereas in (30) it has a future tense interpretation. A question which may arise is why consider the form ‘**láʔ**’ as a future tense marker which may often convey a modal function and not the reverse? That is, considering it as a mood that may be used as a future tense marker. The answer is that the marker ‘**láʔ**’ has the same shape (a free-standing marker) and distribution (immediately before the verb) as future tense markers in Ngiemboon. Moreover, just like future tense markers, it always co-occurs with the general future marker **yè**. Also, like all future tense markers in Ngiemboon, the marker **láʔ** is formally related to a verb which has full lexical meaning, namely, the verb **láʔ** ‘spend the night’.

3.4.16 Remote Future Progressive (R_FUT PROG) **yè láʔ nè N-vb-VL^L, -VC^L**

The Remote Future Progressive is expressed by a construction consisting of four pre-verbal elements and the underlying low tone imperfective verb suffix (VL^L, -VC^L). The pre-verbal elements are the general future marker **yè**, the remote future marker **láʔ**, the progressive marker **nè**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Remote Future Progressive describes situations which will be in progress in the remote future, that is, in a year’s time or later.

⁴¹ A type of banana not appreciated by human beings and usually used to feed pigs.

(32) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next year during the Christmas holidays? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?)

à yè lá? nè ndzú?ù ñgèsán
à yè lá? nè N1-3ú?-ù ñ-gèsán
3s G_FUT R_FUT PROG N1-cultivate-IPFV 9-maize

‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

3.4.17 Perfect (PRF) vb LH tone, -VC^H, H tone

Three strategies are used to indicate the Perfect. One involves the use of a tone alternation on the verb. That is, a lexical high or low tone verb root is realised as a low-high tone verb. This neutralises the distinction between lexical high and low tone verbs. This manner of indicating the Perfect is by far the one most commonly encountered in Ngiemboon. Another strategy to indicate the Perfect in Ngiemboon involves the addition of an underlying high tone perfect verb suffix (-VC^H) to the verb root. This way of encoding the Perfect is only used when the verb root has a closed syllable structure (CVC) and is followed by an object which belongs to the noun class 1, for example, Ø-**niŋ** ‘someone’, **màn-dzɔŋ** ‘woman’ **ñ-dúm** ‘husband’ or 7, for example, (à)-**siká:** ‘cigarette’, (à)-**tɔwó** ‘head’, (à)-**ŋú?tè** ‘meeting’. The third strategy for indicating the Perfect in Ngiemboon involves the alternation of the tone of the verbal extension into a high tone. Recall that verbal extensions in Ngiemboon have no inherent tone, but take their tone from the vowel of the preceding syllable by tone spreading. This means that the tone alternation that indicates the Perfect occurs after the spreading of the tone of the verb root to the verbal extension. This way of encoding the Perfect is exclusively used when the verb has a verb root and a verbal extension. The Perfect may describe a past action whose end is interpreted as having just occurred or present a current state as being the result of some past situation. Also, in Ngiemboon (as well as the other languages analysed) the perfect marker does not co-occur with adverbials of time, such as today, yesterday, last year or in 1950.

(33) Context: The speaker (male speaker) is talking about something his wife has done.

à kǎŋ ndzàp
à kǎŋ ñ-dzàp (lexical tone of the verb: kǎŋ)
3s fry.PRF 9-vegetable

‘She has fried vegetable.’ (the smell of fried vegetable is everywhere in the kitchen)

(34) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her sister has just done.

à yàpté fúm lézfuó
à yàp-té (à)-fúm lé-3fuó (lexical tone of the verb: yàptè)
3s distribute-EXT.PRF 7-food NMLZ-eat

‘She has distributed the food.’

(35) Context: The speaker is giving an advice to a friend.

ná?á ntsuqété fúm zú ò fǎŋ tɛ?
ná?á N1-**tsuqété** (à)-fúm (à)-zú ò fǎŋ tɛ? (lexical tone of the verb: fǎŋ)
a.bit N1-diminish 7-food 7-your 2s be.big.PRF many

‘Diminish your food a bit, you have put on too much weight.’

(36) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened yesterday.

ńgǵǵǵ m̀bà m̀ìṅ wè à p̀wóʔó k̀xwò jé
 N₃-yǵǵǵ m̀bà m̀ìṅ wè à p̀wóʔ-ó (à)-k̀xwò jé
 N₃-see that 1.child her SM break-PRF 7-leg his
 ‘(...) and saw that her child has broken his leg.’

Examples (33) and (34) describe a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred, whereas examples (35) and (36) present a state as being the result of some past situation.

3.4.18 Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA) Ø vb

Unmarked Tense-Aspect is, as its name implies, marked for neither tense nor aspect. It is signalled in the transcription by the empty set symbol ‘Ø’ before the verb. Two basic functions of the Unmarked Tense-Aspect in Ngiemboon have been identified in this study. It describes a present state without any implication of how this state came about. Unmarked Tense-Aspect may also be used in discourse (narration, description, exposition, etc.) to replace a tense-aspect marking already employed either explicitly, that is, using an explicit tense-aspect marking, or implicitly, that is, without any tense-aspect marking, since the speech-act participants already know the context.

(37) Context: The speaker is talking about the house in which s/he lives.

è Ø fǵṅ
 it⁴² UTA be.big
 ‘It is big.’

(38) Context: The speaker (male speaker) is talking about what he is going to do when he receives his end-of-month salary.

m̀àṅ ńgè tó pí ńkáp sàṅ wò é Ø zú
 m̀àṅ N₂-yè tó pí ń-káp sàṅ wò é Ø zú
 1s N₂-G_FUT N_FUT take 9-money 1.moon my SS UTA buy
 ‘I am going to take my (end-of-month) salary. I am going to buy (...)

m̀àlǵ s̀àkú m̀ìṅ wò é Ø ná ńkáp fúm lé-zfuyó né
 m̀àlǵ (à)-s̀àkú m̀ìṅ wò é Ø ná ń-káp (à)-fúm lé-zfuyó né
 6a.shoes 7-school 1.child my SS UTA give 9-money 7-thing NMLZ-eat to
 school shoes for my child. I am going to give money for food to (...)

⁴² Non-human subject pronouns, that is, pronouns that stand for non-human nouns functioning as the subject of the clause are simply glossed as ‘it’ in Ngiemboon and the other languages analysed. This is because as noted in section 3.1 above, it has not been possible to make a clear analysis of these pronouns on the basis of the data collected.

ñdzwě wò é pìŋ Ø yuà fwò?sàp é Ø yjé mìn jũ wò
 ñ-dzwě wò é pìŋ Ø yuà (à)-fwò?sàp é Ø yjé mìn jũ wò
 1-female my SS after UTA go 7-Bafoussam SS UTA see 1.child 1.friend my
 my wife. Then, I am going to go to Bafoussam. I am going to see (=visit) the baby of my friend.'

(39) Context: An excerpt from the text 'A motorbike accident'

mé là kà: jé nná lóqtà à Ø ké tè yuqé wó
 mé là kà: jé N₃-ná lóqtà à Ø ké tè yuqé wó
 one N_FUT carry him N₃-give 1.hospital 3s UTA all.the.same NEG₁ die NEG₂
 'One carried him and gave (=took) him to the hospital, he did not die, all the same.'

Unmarked Tense-Aspect has a present state interpretation in example (37). In (38) and (39), it replaces a tense-aspect marking already employed by the speaker, that is, the construction *yè tó* in (38) and the marker *là* in (39).

3.5 Final Remarks on the Description of the Tense-Aspect Categories

Before proceeding with the discussion of standard negation, some final remarks on the analysis of the tense-aspect categories in Ngiemboon need to be made.

3.5.1 Structure of Tense-Aspect Categories

On the basis of the analysis in 3.4, one can distinguish eight types of structure for the tense-aspect categories in Ngiemboon illustrated in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Tense-aspect structures in Ngiemboon

		<i>Structure</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
1	Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA)	Ø vb	Ø pwó? UTA break
2	Near Past (N-PST)	T vb	kà pwó? N-PST break
3	Near Future (N-FUT)	T T vb	yè tó pwó? G-FUT N-FUT break
4	Hodiernal Past (H-PST)	T N- vb	ně m-bwó? H-PST N ₁ -break
5	Progressive (PROG)	A N-vb-A	nè m-bwó?-ò PROG N ₁ -break-IPFV
6	Near Past Progressive (N-PST PROG)	T A N-vb-A	kà nè m-bwó?-ò N-PST PROG N ₁ -break-IPFV
7	Near Future Progressive (N-FUT PROG)	T T A N-vb-A	yè tó nè m-bwó?-ò G-FUT N-FUT PROG N ₁ -break- IPFV
8	Perfect (PRF)	vb-PRF	pwó?-ó break-PRF

3.5.2 About the Semantic Combination of the Notions of Tense and Aspect

It has been shown in section 3.4 that Ngiemboon distinguishes both tense and aspect markers that are used either separately (the clause contains any one of the two markers) or in combination (tense and aspect markers co-occur in the same clause) to express tense-aspect values. Following the analyses presented in 3.4, one may want to know whether all the aspectual values described (perfective, habitual, progressive) can be associated with each of the tense values discussed (hodiernal past, near past, remote past, present, hodiernal future, near future, remote future). In other words, are there restrictions on the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Ngiemboon? An overview of the possible combinations between the notions of tense and aspect in Ngiemboon is provided in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Overview of the combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Ngiemboon

	<i>perfective (pfv)</i>	<i>habitual (hab)</i>	<i>progressive (prog)</i>
hodiernal past (h-pst)	h-pst pfv		h-pst prog
near past (n-pst)	n-pst pfv	n-pst hab	n-pst prog
remote past (r-pst)	r-pst pfv	r-pst hab	r-pst prog
present (prs)		prs hab	prs prog
hodiernal future (h-fut)	h-fut pfv		h-fut prog
near future (n-fut)	n-fut pfv		n-fut prog
remote future (r-fut)	r-fut pfv		r-fut prog

As suggested by Table 11, there are gaps in the combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Ngiemboon. When one considers the combinations of the past tenses with the habitual, one notices that the habitual only combines with the near past and the remote past. In other words, a hodiernal/today past habitual interpretation is not possible in Ngiemboon. This is certainly because an event occurring over a very short period of time, that is, today, is not long enough to be considered a habitual event. The present tense also appears to be incompatible with the perfective. This is likely because situations which refer to the present time have an inherent imperfective component (they are either ongoing now or hold true for the moment of speech). Table 11 also shows that the habitual is only compatible with the non-future tenses. In other words, the Ngiemboon language does not allow the association of the habitual with future tenses. This might be because a given event is readily perceived as habitual if it has occurred regularly over a certain period of time (a future event has not yet taken place).

3.5.3 About the Similarity in Form of Tense-Aspect Markers to Lexical Verbs

As shown in 3.4 above, the future tense in Ngiemboon may be indicated by one segmental marker, that is, the general future marker **yè** or two segmental markers which are adjacent to each other, for example, the general future marker and the remote future marker (**yè láʔ**).

It emerged from discussions with language consultants that each of the segmental markers that express the future tense in Ngiemboon can be formally related to a verb which has full lexical meaning in the language. The general future marker **yè** is formally closely similar to the verb **yùà** ‘go’, the hodiernal future marker **kú** is formally identical to the verb **kú** ‘enter’, the near future markers **yxuò/tó/lù** are identical in form or formally closely similar to the verbs

yɛuò ‘do’, **tó** ‘come’, and **lùsé** ‘stand up’, respectively, the remote future marker **láʔ** is identical in form to the verb **láʔ** ‘spend the night’. This explains why I have opted to write down each of these markers as separate markers in the transcriptions.

The fact that each of the future tense markers in Ngiemboon can be formally related to a verb which has full lexical meaning, and most importantly, that some of these verbs are movement verbs, might suggest that future tense markers in Ngiemboon are cases of grammaticalization of verbs.⁴³ However, the developmental pathways leading to future tense markers remain to be traced. This explains why I have opted for the term ‘marker’ instead of ‘auxiliary/verbal auxiliary’ to refer to them, keeping in mind that they might be cases of grammaticalization of verbs.

The clear similarity in form of Ngiemboon’s future tense markers to lexical verbs might also suggest that what I have analysed in this study as future tense markers could also be analysed as serial verb constructions. However, in my opinion, future tense markers in Ngiemboon are not instances of serial verb constructions. This is explained by the fact that in all the examples cited from 3.4.11 to 3.4.16 above, the markers **yɛuò**, **tó**, **láʔ**, etc. do not function as verbs. In other words, they do not describe an action, an event or a state of being, but rather provide temporal specifications. This is clearly explained through the following example.

- (40) à yè tó tó
 3s G_FUT N_FUT come

‘She is going to come.’ (tomorrow or any time before a year as from tomorrow)

As shown in the interlinear glossing in example (40), the form **tó** is used either as a future tense marker, that is, to locate a situation in the future in relation to a reference time or as a verb, that is, to describe an action. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine the combination ‘**tó tó**’ in (40) as an instance of a serial verb construction. It will be seen in the following chapters that in most of the investigated languages, future tense markers are formally related to verbs with full lexical meaning. Therefore, the above-mentioned assumptions about the similarity in form of future tense markers to verbs could also be made in other languages analysed in this study.

3.6 Standard Negation

This section examines standard negation in Ngiemboon. As indicated in Chapter Two above, standard negation can be defined as the various means languages use to negate declarative verbal main clauses. Attention is paid here to the strategies used to indicate standard negation, as well as the interaction between tense-aspect marking and standard negation. The strategies used to indicate standard negation in Ngiemboon are shown in the overview in Table 12 below.

⁴³ According to Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 253), the most frequent sources of grammatical morphemes expressing the future meaning cross-linguistically are movement verb constructions.

Table 12: Affirmative and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Ngiemboon

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Hodiernal Past	Aff Neg	ně N-vb ně tè ---vb wó
Hodiernal Past Progressive	Aff Neg	kò nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L kò tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Near Past	Aff Neg	kà vb kà tè vb wó
Near Past Habitual	Aff Neg	kǒ: N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L kǒ: tẽ: N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Near Past Progressive	Aff Neg	kà nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L kà tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Remote Past	Aff Neg	là vb là tè vb wó
Remote Past Habitual	Aff Neg	lǒ: N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L lǒ: tẽ: N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Remote Past Progressive	Aff Neg	là nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L là tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Habitual	Aff Neg	-VL ^{LH} , -VC ^{LH} N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L -VL ^{LH} , -VC ^{LH} tẽ: N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Progressive	Aff Neg	nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
General Future	Aff Neg	ɣè vb tè N-gè N-vb wó
General Future Progressive	Aff Neg	ɣè kú nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L tè N-gè kú nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Near Future	Aff Neg	ɣè ɣxuqò/tó/lù vb tè N-gè ɣxuqò/tó/lù vb wó
Near Future Progressive	Aff Neg	ɣè ɣxuqò/tó/lù nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L tè N-gè ɣxuqò/tó/lù nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Remote Future	Aff Neg	ɣè lá? vb tè N-gè lá? vb wó
Remote Future Progressive	Aff Neg	ɣè lá? nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L tè N-gè lá? nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L wó
Perfect	Aff Neg	vb LH tone, -VC ^H , H tone kà: vb (wó)
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	Aff Neg	Ø vb Ø tè vb wó

As shown in Table 12, Ngiemboon distinguishes three standard negation patterns. One, ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’, involves the use of the double negative marker **tè...wó** or **tẽ:...wó**. The double negative **tè...wó** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain any of the tense-aspect markings described in section 3.4 above, except declarative verbal main clauses

which contain the habitual marker, a future tense marker, or the marker of the Perfect. The double negative **tè...wó** is also used to negate declarative verbal main clauses marked for neither tense nor aspect. The double negative marker **tě:...wó** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the habitual marker. The first and second particles (‘NEG₁’ and ‘NEG₂’, respectively) of the double negative markers **tè...wó** and **tě:...wó** are all obligatory in the negative clause.⁴⁴ Also, ‘NEG₁’ always follows the tense marker and precedes the verb, while ‘NEG₂’ either immediately follows the verb or is separated from it by a post-verbal element, for example, an object noun. The following examples provide illustrations of the use of the double negative markers **tè...wó**; see examples (41), (42), (43) and **tě:...wó**; see examples (44) and (45).

- (41) à ně tè pwó? ñgəsán wó
à ně tè pwó? ñ-gəsán wó
3s H_PST NEG₁ harvest 9-maize NEG₂
‘S/he did not harvest maize.’ (today)

- (42) à tè nè mbwó? ñgəsán wó
à tè nè N₁-pwó?-ò ñ-gəsán wó
3s NEG₁ PROG N₁-harvest-IPFV 9-maize NEG₂
‘S/he is not harvesting maize.’ (now)

- (43) è Ø tè fàn wó
it UTA NEG₁ be.big NEG₂
‘It is not big.’ (The speaker is talking about a house.)

- (44) à lǎ: tě: ñdʒú? ñgəsán wó
à lǎ: tě: N₁-ʒú?-ù ñ-gəsán wó
3s R_PST.HAB NEG₁.HAB N₁-cultivate-IPFV 9-maize NEG₂
‘S/he used not to cultivate maize.’ (in the remote past)

- (45) ǎ: tě: ñgàbà ñkáp wó
ǎ: tě: N₁-yàb-à ñ-káp wó
3s.HAB NEG₁.HAB N₁-distribute-IPFV 9-money NEG₂
‘S/he does not distribute money.’ (usually)

The interlinear glossing in examples (44) and (45) reveals that the first particle of the double negative marker **tě:...wó** is analysed as a portmanteau marker which arose from the fusion of a negative marker and a habitual marker. It will be shown in the following chapters that Ngiemboon is not the only language analysed which has a marker that can be analysed as a marker resulting from the fusion of a negative particle and an aspect marker.

Another standard negation pattern in Ngiemboon, namely, ‘NEG₁ N-...(N-)...NEG₂’, involves the use of the double negative **tè...wó** and a nasal prefix. This other strategy for standard negation is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain at least one future tense marker. The first particle of the double negative **tè...wó**, always precedes the

⁴⁴ Although the first and the second particles of double negative markers in Ngiemboon are normally all obligatory in the negative clause, in colloquial conversations among native speakers, the second negative particle is often dropped. This phenomenon is also observed in Feʔfeʔ and Ghomalaʔ.

general future marker and the verb, while its second particle either follows the verb immediately or is separated from it by a post-verbal element. Also, the nasal prefix, which is attached to the general future marker, seems to get duplicated. This means that it occurs twice in the clause (before the general future marker and before the verb) when the general future marker is immediately followed by the verb. The argument justifying the analysis of the duplication of the nasal prefix attached to the general future marker is that as shown in 3.4.11 above, a nasal prefix does not ‘normally’ occur before the verb when the verb is immediately preceded by the general future marker. ‘NEG₁N-...(N)...NEG₂’ is illustrated in examples (46) and (47) below.

- (46) à tè ńgè tó pwó? ńgəsán wó
à tè N₁-yè tó pwó? ń-gəsán wó
3s NEG₁ N₁-G_FUT N_FUT harvest 9-maize NEG₂
‘S/he is not going to harvest maize.’ (tomorrow, or any before a year as from tomorrow)

- (47) à tè ńgè mbwó? ńgəsán wó
à tè N₁-yè N₁-pwó? ń-gəsán wó
3s NEG₁ N₁-G_FUT N₁-harvest 9-maize NEG₂
‘S/he is not going to harvest maize.’ (today)

The third standard negation pattern in Ngiemboon, namely, ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’, involves the use of the pre-verbal negative particle **kà:** and an optional post-verbal negative particle (**wó**).⁴⁵ The negative marker **kà:...(wó)** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain any of the variants of the perfect marker. The pre-verbal negative particle occurs after the subject of the clause and before the verb, while the optional post-verbal negative particle occurs immediately after the verb or is separated from it by a post-verbal element.

(48) Context: question: What has your brother just done?

(48a) Reply

à kǎŋ ńgəsán
à kǎŋ ń-gəsán
3s fry.PRF 9-maize

‘He has fried maize.’

(48b) Negative form of the reply

à kà: kǎŋ ńgəsán (wó)
à kà: kǎŋ ń-gəsán (wó)
3s NEG₁ fry 9-maize (NEG₂)

‘He has not fried maize.’

Interestingly, ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’ allows the fronting of the object of the clause to a position before the verb. This triggers the complete deletion of the optional post-verbal negative particle **wó**. The optional post-verbal negative marker is, therefore, not always optional. This is illustrated in the following pair of clauses contrasting a negative clause where the object is not fronted before the verb; see example (49) with a negative clause showing the fronting of the object before the verb; see example (50).

⁴⁵ The occurrence of the negative particle **wó** in brackets means that it is optional or may be left out without changing the meaning of the negative clause.

- (49) à kà: káŋ ñgəsán (wó)
à kà: káŋ ñ-gəsán (wó)
3s NEG₁ fry 9-maize NEG₂
‘He has not fried maize.’

- (50) à kà: ñgəsán káŋ
à kà: ñ-gəsán káŋ
3s NEG₁ 9-maize fry
‘He has not fried maize.’

When comparing positive and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Table 12, it appears that cases of asymmetry in construction occur in the expression of standard negation in Ngiemboon. This means that in addition to the presence of the negative marker in negative clauses, further differences are observed between positive and corresponding negative clauses. These asymmetries relate to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses which contain the hodiernal past marker, the perfect marker, or the general future marker.

In addition to the presence of the double negative marker **tè...wó**, a positive declarative verbal main clause that contains the hodiernal past marker **ñě** differs from its negative counterpart in that the nasal consonant prefix which is always attached to the verb in the positive clause, is completely deleted in the negative clause. This is shown in (51) below.

(51) Context: Q: What has your brother done today?

(51a) Reply

à ñě mbwó? ñgəsán
à ñě N₁-pwó? ñ-gəsán
3s H_PST N₁-harvest 9-maize
‘He harvested maize.’

(51b) Negative form of the reply

à ñě tè pwó? ñgəsán wó
à ñě tè pwó? ñ-gəsán wó
3s H_PST NEG₁ harvest 9-maize NEG₂
‘He did not harvest maize.’

The asymmetry concerning the negation of declarative verbal main clauses which contain the general future marker is explained as follows: in addition to the presence of the double negative marker **tè...wó**, a positive declarative verbal main clause which contains the general future marker **yè** differs from its negative counterpart in that a nasal consonant prefix is always attached to the general future marker in the negative clause, but never in the affirmative one. Moreover, the nasal consonant prefix occurring before the general future marker seems to get duplicated, that is, occurs before the general future marker and the verb when no element is inserted between these two elements. This is shown in examples (52) and (53) below.

(52) Context: Q: What is your brother planning to do tomorrow?

(52a) Reply

à yè tó pwó? ñgəsán
à yè tó pwó? ñ-gəsán
3s G_FUT N_FUT harvest 9-maize
‘He is going to harvest maize.’

(52b) Negative form of the reply

à	tè	ńgè	tó	pwó?	ńgèsán	wó
à	tè	N ₁ -yè	tó	pwó?	ń-gèsán	wó
3s	NEG ₁	N ₁ -G_FUT	N_FUT	harvest	9-maize	NEG ₂

‘He is not going to harvest maize.’

(53) Context: Q: What is your brother planning to do today?

(53a) Reply

(53b) Negative form of the reply

(the nasal occurs twice)

à	yè	pwó?	ńgèsán	à	tè	ńgè	mbwó?	ńgèsán	wó
à	yè	pwó?	ń-gèsán	à	tè	N ₁ -yè	N ₁ -pwó?	ń-gèsán	wó
3s	G_FUT	harvest	9-maize	3s	NEG ₁	N ₁ -G_FUT	N ₁ -harvest	9-maize	NEG ₂

‘He is going to harvest maize.’

‘He is not going to harvest maize.’

The asymmetry dealing with the negation of declarative verbal main clauses which contain the perfect marker is manifested by the complete loss of the perfect marker (a tone alternation on the verb root, a verb suffix, or a tone alternation on the verbal extension) in the negative clause. This is shown in example (48) above which is repeated here for convenience.

(54) Context: question: What has your sister just done?

(54a) Reply

(54b) Negative form of the reply

à	kǎŋ	ńgèsán
à	kǎŋ	ń-gèsán
3s	fry.PRF	9-maize

‘She has fried maize.’

à	kà:	kǎŋ	ńgèsán	(wó)
à	kà:	kǎŋ	ń-gèsán	(wó)
3s	NEG ₁	fry	9-maize	(NEG ₂)

‘She has not fried maize.’

Example (54) suggests that the negative marker **kà:...(wó)** prevents the occurrence of the perfect marker in the negative clause. The negative marker **kà:...(wó)** might, thus, be analysed as a negative variant of the perfect marker.

This chapter has focused on the description of the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ngiemboon. The chapter’s main arguments are:

- tense and aspect connect to give eighteen tense-aspect categories in Ngiemboon indicated by a single marker (a free-standing marker, a tonal modification, or a verb suffix), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking,
- Ngiemboon distinguishes three standard negation patterns: ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ which involves the use of the double negative marker **tè...wó** or **tě:...wó**, ‘NEG₁ N-...(N-)...NEG₂’ which involves the use of the double negative **tè...wó** and a nasal prefix that may get duplicated, and ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’ which involves the use of the pre-verbal negative particle **kà:** and the optional post-verbal negative particle **wó**,
- there are cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation in Ngiemboon.

CHAPTER IV

4 Tense-Aspect and Standard Negation in Feʔfeʔ

This chapter discusses the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Feʔfeʔ. It comprises six sections which are parallel to the six sections of the preceding chapter in terms of the objective pursued in each section.

4.1 Structure of the Main Clause

The linear ordering of elements within the main clause in Feʔfeʔ may be schematised as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
SBJ	N-	NEG ₁	T	NEG ₁	N-	AA	T	A	N-	Root	-EXT	OBJ	ADV	NEG ₂

Position 1. This position is occupied by a noun in subject position or a subject pronoun. The subject pronouns of Feʔfeʔ that have been clearly identified in this study (simple human subject pronouns) are listed in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Subject pronouns in Feʔfeʔ

Person/number	Form	Gloss
1s	ṅgə̀/N	I
2s	ò	you
3s	à	he/she
1p	pə̀	we
2p	pè	you
3p	pō	they

It will be shown in section 4.4 that the hodiernal past marker in Feʔfeʔ surfaces on the element occurring in this position. The imperfective marker may also surface on the element occurring in this position.

Position 2. This position may be occupied by the first-person-singular pronoun nasal prefix (see section 4.2). This nasal may be attached to the verb and to verb-related elements that are immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun /N/ (see Table 13). More will be said about the nasal consonant prefix in Feʔfeʔ in section 4.2.

Position 3. Position 3 may be filled by the first particle of the negative marking **sī...b^hǎ** or **kǎʔ...(b^hǎ)**.

Position 4. This slot may be occupied by a tense marker that locates situations in the past. For example, the near past marker **kǎ**.

Position 5. Position 5 may be occupied by the first particle of the negative marking **sī...b^hǎ**, **sī...b^hǎ** or **sīʔ...b^hǎ**. The elements which may occur in this position are mutually exclusive with the elements mentioned in position 3 above. In other words, positions 3 and 5 cannot be filled simultaneously.

Position 6. This position may be occupied by the linking nasal prefix (see section 4.2). This nasal prefix is attached to the verb and to verb-related elements.

Position 7. This position may be occupied by any of the adverbial auxiliaries found in Feʔfeʔ. The following items represent examples of adverbial auxiliaries in Feʔfeʔ: **já** ‘still’, **hā:** ‘quickly, fast’, **pá** ‘again’.

Position 8. Position 8 may be occupied by the future tense marker **kó**.

Position 9. This position may be filled by the imperfective marker or the progressive marker. Note it is possible to have both the imperfective marker and the progressive marker here. That is, the progressive marker immediately follows the imperfective marker.

Position 10. This is another slot for the linking nasal prefix. Position 10 may be filled only when position 7 and/or 9 is/are filled.

Position 11. Position 11 is occupied by the verb root. According to Hyman (1972: 15-16), most lexical roots are mono-syllabic in Feʔfeʔ and the various syllable structures of lexical roots can be represented by means of the formula in (55) below:

(55) C1(W) V1 (V2) (C2)

As reported by Hyman, this formula means that lexical roots in Feʔfeʔ always begin with a consonant (C1), which can be followed by one vowel (V1), two vowels (V1 V2), one vowel (V1) followed by a consonant (C2), or two vowels (V1 V2) followed by a consonant (C2). Moreover, the root-initial consonant, (C1) may be followed by an optional semi-vowel which is symbolised in Hyman’s study by the phoneme /w/. This produces eight possible syllable structures of lexical roots,⁴⁶ namely: CV **to** ‘punch’, CVV **miɛ** ‘finish’, CVC **ʈat** ‘break’, CVVC **viat** ‘burst’, CwV **ʃuɪ** ‘grow’, CwVV **ʒuɪɛ** ‘laugh’, CwVC **kwat** ‘attach’ and CwVVC **ʃuiat** ‘beat’ (Hyman 1972: 15-16). Nda’kayii (1974: 68) distinguishes two classes of verb roots in Feʔfeʔ on the basis of their lexical tones: mid tone and low tone verb roots. Irrespective of their lexical tones, verb roots in Feʔfeʔ may take a nasal consonant prefix.

Position 12. This position may be occupied by a verbal extension. Two verbal extensions can be distinguished in Feʔfeʔ, namely, **-si** and **-ni**. The extension **-si** appears to be associated with the plural or iterative meaning. For example, the verb **ʈwē** ‘cut’ becomes **ʈwēsɪ** ‘cut into several pieces’, the verb **lāk** ‘jump’ becomes **lāksɪ** ‘hop’. The extension **-ni** yields the meaning of reciprocity. For example, the verb **kwɛʔ** ‘love’ becomes **kwɛʔni** ‘love each other’. The two verbal extensions in Feʔfeʔ seem to take their tone from the vowel of the preceding syllable by tone spreading. Moreover, only one verbal extension may occur on a single verb.

Position 13. This position may be filled by the object of the clause. This might be a nominal object or a pronominal object.

Position 14. Position 14 may be occupied by items such as adverbs, prepositional phrases or indirect objects.

⁴⁶ The verbs cited here bear no tone. This is because they are left unmarked for tone in the source material from where they were retrieved.

Position 15. The main clause may close with the second particle of the negative markings mentioned in positions 3 and 5.

4.2 General Comments

This section includes a discussion on the nasal consonant prefix and the imperfective marker in Feʔfeʔ.

4.2.1 The Nasal Consonant Prefix

The nasal consonant prefix that may precede the verb and some verb-related elements in Feʔfeʔ's main clauses always bears a mid-tone. It may be attached to all verbs. Also, it may be deleted when followed by the plosive sound [b]. This is shown in (56) below:

(56)

Underlying form	Voicing rule	Homorganic nasal assimilation	Nasal prefix deletion	Surface form	Gloss
/N̄-pá/	N̄+bá	m̄+bá	Ø+bá	[bá]	'be'

Four types of nasal consonant prefix in Feʔfeʔ are discussed in this research:

- (N₁-): this nasal is prefixed to the verb or to adverbial auxiliaries. It links the verb or the adverbial auxiliary to a preceding verb-related element.

(57)

à	sĩʔ	ñdʒá	mā	ŋgè	ɣwàʔnì	bʰó
à	sĩʔ	N ₁ -já	mā	N ₁ -yè	ɣwàʔnì	bʰó
3s	NEG ₁ IPFV	N ₁ -still	PROG	N ₁ -go	school	NEG ₂

'S/he no longer goes to school.'

The nasal consonant prefix that appears before the verb *yè* 'go' in example (57) links the verb to a preceding verb-related element (the progressive marker *mā*). Similarly, the nasal consonant prefix that appears before the adverbial auxiliary *já* 'still' links the adverbial auxiliary to a previous verb-related element, namely, the imperfective marker.

- (N₂-): this nasal occurs before verb-related elements that are immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun /N/. It repeats the first-person-singular pronoun.

(58)

ñ	ñsĩ	mā	ñdʒúʔ	bʰó
ñ	N ₂ -sĩ	mā	N ₁ -ʒúʔ	bʰó
1s	N ₂ -NEG ₁ IPFV	PROG	N ₁ -understand	NEG ₂

'I am not understanding.'

The nasal consonant prefix that occurs before the marker *sĩ* in example (58) repeats the subject pronoun *ñ* 'I'.

- (N₃-): this nasal is prefixed to the verb. It ties a series of clauses into a coherent whole.

(59)

mətwā	ló	lā	kwē	ñdʒə	ñʧɔ̃n	ñfi
mətwā	ló	lā	kwē	ñdʒə	N ₃ -ʧɔ̃n	ñfi
car	DEM2	R_PST	arrive	Bandja	N ₃ -fall	river

'That car arrived (at) Bandja and fell (into) a river.'

The nasal consonant prefix that appears before the verb **ʔɪn** ‘fall’ in example (59) ties two clauses into a coherent whole.

- (N₄-): this nasal is attached to the imperfective marker. Therefore, it is considered the imperfective nasal prefix.

(60)	á	bá	mā	ndē	wūzā
	á	N₄.pá	mā	N₁-lē	wūzā
	3s.H_PST	N ₄ .IPFV	PROG	N ₁ -cook	food
	‘S/he was cooking food.’				

4.2.2 About the Imperfective Marker

The marker **bá** is analysed in this study as the imperfective marker in Feʔfeʔ. Remarkable about this marker is that it may merge with a neighbouring element to the left. This might be a tense marker, a subject pronoun/noun, or the first particle of the double negative marker **sī...b^há**. When this occurs, its presence is only reflected in the modification of the phonetic content of the element with which it merges. This is explained as follows:

- The merging of the near past marker **kā** with the imperfective marker **bá**, produces the marker **kǎʔ**. Similarly, the merging of the remote past marker **lā** with the imperfective marker **bá**, gives the marker **lǎʔ**. Therefore, the markers **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ** represent fusions of two markers, namely, a past tense marker and the imperfective marker. The claim that the markers **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ** each arose from the merging of two markers comes from the fact that according to my language consultants, the following combinations: **kā bá** (the near past marker **kā** followed by the imperfective marker **bá**) and **lā bá** (the remote past marker **lā** followed by the imperfective marker **bá**) may be used to replace the markers **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ**, respectively. However, these combinations sound odd and, thus, will generally not occur in the speech of an experienced speaker. Therefore, one can assume that **kā bá** and **lā bá** merged into **kābá** and **lābá**, respectively over time. Following this reduction process, other processes, namely, debuccalization; an oral consonant [b], loses its original place of articulation and moves it to the glottis [ʔ] intervocally (O’Brien 2012: 2) and vowel elision have applied successively to the second syllable of the markers **kābá** and **lābá**. This led to the forms **kāʔ’** and **lāʔ’** which further became **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ** following the merging of the tone of the syllables **kāʔ** and **lāʔ**, with the floating high tone which survived from the elision of the vowel /á/. This can be summarised by the formula in (61) and (62) below.

(61) **kā bá** > **kābá** > **kāʔá** > **kāʔ’** > **kǎʔ**

(62) **lā bá** > **lābá** > **lāʔá** > **lāʔ’** > **lǎʔ**

- The merging of pronominal or nominal subjects, as well as the first particle of the double negative **sī...b^há** with the imperfective marker **bá**, is revealed through a tonal alternation. More precisely, the lexical tone of the only or the last vowel of the pronominal/nominal subject, or the first particle of the double negative **sī...b^há**, is realised as a low-high tone at the level of the surface structure. Evidence for this analysis can be derived from the phonetic content of the first particle of the double negative **sīʔ...b^há**, which may be used in free

variation with the particle **sĩ**. That is, when one compares the negative particle **sĩʔ** to the markers **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ** discussed in the preceding point, one notices that all three elements share the same syllable structure, namely, CVC. Moreover, they all have the same final consonant, namely, [ʔ]. Therefore, one can posit that just as the markers **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ** were obtained from the merging of the markers **kā bǎ** and **lā bǎ**, the negative particle **sĩʔ** was obtained from the merging of the negative particle **sĩ** with the imperfective marker **bǎ**, and that the negative particle **sĩ** which is used in free variation with the negative particle **sĩʔ** came as a result of a final consonant deletion process. This is shown in the formula in (63) below.

(63) **sĩ bǎ > sībǎ > sǐʔǎ > sǐʔ' > sǐʔ > sǐ**

The imperfective marker may co-occur with the progressive marker to express a progressive or a habitual situation. However, the co-occurrence of the imperfective marker with the progressive marker is never allowed when the clause is negated and the verb of the clause describes a situation specifically associated with the progressive meaning. This results in asymmetries between positive and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings. More will be said about this in section 4.6.

4.3 Overview of the Tense-Aspect System and Standard Negation in Feʔfeʔ

Feʔfeʔ distinguishes three degrees of past tense (hodiernal past, near past, remote past), a present tense, and a future tense. Except for the present tense, which is not marked, tense in Feʔfeʔ is encoded by a tone alternation on the subject of the clause or a free-standing tense marker. Also, all tense markings in Feʔfeʔ appear in pre-verbal position. A three-way aspectual division is observed in Feʔfeʔ: perfective, imperfective, and progressive. The imperfective is indicated by an imperfective marker which may be attached to a pre-verbal element (the subject of the clause, a negative marker), may merge with a preceding tense marker, or may appear as a free-standing marker before the verb. The progressive is indicated by a combination of the marker of the imperfective and a free-standing progressive marker that occurs before the verb and after the imperfective marker. No perfective marking is identified in Feʔfeʔ.

In addition to the above-mentioned tenses and aspects, Feʔfeʔ distinguishes an Unmarked Tense-Aspect, which is marked for neither tense nor aspect, but has a basic function.

Also, some aspect markers in Feʔfeʔ must be accompanied by a nasal prefix that typically occurs before the verb.

To negate declarative verbal main clauses, two standard negation patterns are used in Feʔfeʔ: ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ and ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’. Remarkable about standard negation in Feʔfeʔ is that the first particle of the negative marker, namely, NEG₁, occurs immediately after the tense marker if the tense marker is a past tense marker, and before the tense marker if the tense marker is a future tense marker. However, it may precede the remote past marker if the verb of the clause in which it occurs describes a past habitual situation. The second particle of negative markings always occurs in the clause final position.

4.4 Tense-Aspect Categories in Feʔfeʔ

Tense and aspect connect to give eleven tense-aspect categories in Feʔfeʔ. This refers to grammatical units that may be manifested by any of the following: a single marker (a free-standing marker or a tonal modification), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking. Also, Feʔfeʔ's tense-aspect categories may have one or more basic uses. The tense-aspect system of Feʔfeʔ can, thus, be analysed as operating according to eleven tense-aspect categories, namely: Hodiernal Past (H_PST), Hodiernal Past Progressive (H_PST PROG), Near Past (N_PST), Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG), Remote Past (R_PST), Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG), Imperfective (IPFV), Progressive (PROG), Future (FUT), Future Progressive (FUT PROG), and Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA). The markings employed to encode the tense-aspect categories in Feʔfeʔ are shown in the overview in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Tense-aspect markings in Feʔfeʔ

<i>T</i> \ <i>A</i>	<i>Perfective</i>	<i>Imperfective</i>	<i>Progressive</i>
Hodiernal past	H tone		H tone b́ m̃ N-
Near past	k̃		k̃ʔ m̃ N-
Remote past	l̃		l̃ʔ m̃ N-
Present		LH tone N-	LH tone m̃ N-
Future	ḱ		ḱ m̃ N-

4.4.1 Hodiernal Past (H_PST) H tone vb

The Hodiernal Past is expressed by a tone alternation on the subject pronoun or the noun in subject position. More precisely, the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or noun preceding the verb is realised as a high tone at the level of the surface structure.⁴⁷ Compared to the other tense-aspect categories identified in Feʔfeʔ, the Hodiernal Past is noteworthy for having a variety of basic functions. It may describe a past perfective situation that occurred on the day the utterance is made. It may be employed to present a current state without any implication of how this state came about. The Hodiernal Past may also describe a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred.

It is apparent that one of the basic functions of the Hodiernal Past, namely, ‘description of a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred’, is commonly associated with the Perfect in cross-linguistic studies on tense and/or aspect (Botne 2013: 33). Thus, a pertinent question is what made me decide to analyse Feʔfeʔ as a language which distinguishes a Hodiernal Past that may be used to refer to situations commonly described using the Perfect and not the reverse. That is, analysing it as a language which has a Perfect category that is often used to refer to past perfective situations that occurred on the day of speaking.

The answer lies in the fact that just like the forms that are clearly past tense markers in Feʔfeʔ, the marker analysed in this study as the hodiernal past marker in Feʔfeʔ may co-occur

⁴⁷ According to Hyman (1972: 129), the morphemes of Feʔfeʔ have any of four distinct level tones (low, raised low, mid, high), or a contour tone (either rising or falling) when occurring in isolation or in their citation form.

with adverbs or adverbial phrases, such as *today* or *this morning*, which specify the time of the past situation described (note that the investigated languages that are analysed as having a Perfect category do not allow the co-occurrence of the perfect marker with adverbs of time). Another element which made me decide to analyse Feʔfeʔ as a language which has a Hodiernal Past, rather than a Perfect is that the hodiernal past marker in Feʔfeʔ co-occurs with the imperfective marker and the progressive marker to express today past progressive situations. Below are examples that show the use of the Hodiernal Past in Feʔfeʔ.

(64) Context: The speaker is talking about something s/he has done earlier this morning.

ɲgǎ ʔɛ ʔʒsi (lexical tone of the subject pronoun: ɲgǎ)
1s.H_PST go church
'I went to church.'

(65) Context: The speaker is talking about the house in which s/he lives.

á jǎ (lexical tone of the subject pronoun: à)
it.H_PST be.big
'It is big.'

(66) Context: The speaker is talking to a man who has just said something full of wisdom.

ó ʔɛ pǎpǎ (lexical tone of the subject pronoun: ò)
2s.H_PST speak well
'You have spoken well.'

In example (64), the Hodiernal Past describes a past perfective situation that occurred on the day of speaking. In (65), it has a present state interpretation. In (66), the Hodiernal Past describes a past action whose end is interpreted as having just occurred. When the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or the noun in subject position is a high tone, it does not undergo a tonal modification or surfaces normally as high.

4.4.2 Hodiernal Past Progressive (H_PST PROG) H tone bá mǎ N-vb

The Hodiernal Past Progressive is expressed by a tonal modification. The lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or the noun in subject position is realised as a high tone at the level of the surface structure. In addition, the imperfective marker **bá**, the progressive marker **mǎ**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order, occur before the verb. The Hodiernal Past Progressive is used to describe situations which were ongoing on the day the utterance is made, but before the time of speaking.

(67) Context: Q: What was your sister doing when I phoned her this morning? (What activity was she engaged in? She did not answer my call).

á bá mǎ ñdē wūzǎ
á N₄.pǎ mǎ N₁-lē wūzǎ (lexical tone of the subject: à)
3s.H_PST N₄.IPFV PROG N₁-cook food
'She was cooking food.'

4.4.3 Near Past (N_PST) kō vb

The Near Past is indicated by the marker **kō** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations that took place less than one month before the moment of speech, except situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(68) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he did yesterday.

ḡgə̌ kō yè fà?
1s N_PST go work
'I went to work.'

4.4.4 Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG) kǎʔ mō N-vb

The Near Past Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the marker **kǎʔ** which is regarded as a marker that arose from the fusion of the near past marker **kō** and the imperfective marker **bá** (see 4.2.2 above), the progressive marker **mō**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Near Past Progressive describes situations which were ongoing in the near past, that is, less than one month before the moment of speech, except on the day the utterance is made.

(69) Context: Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last week at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?)

à kǎʔ mō n̄sē fū
à kǎʔ mō N₁-sē fū
3s N_PST.IPFV PROG N₁-split wood
'He was splitting wood.'

4.4.5 Remote Past (R_PST) lō vb

The Remote Past is expressed by the marker **lō** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations which took place either a month ago or any time before that.

(70) Context: An excerpt from the text 'A car accident'

ḡgə̌ mō n̄fūpsī tǎʔ lǃ mōtwā mē ā lō tūm ṇdʒə̌
ḡgə̌ mō N₁-fūpsī tǎʔ lǃ mōtwā mē ā lō tūm ṇdʒə̌
1s.IPFV PROG N₁-remember one accident car that it R_PST occur Bandja
'I remember (about) a car accident that occurred (at) Bandja.'

4.4.6 Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG) lǎʔ mō N-vb

The Remote Past Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the marker **lǎʔ** which is regarded as a marker that arose from the fusion of the remote past marker **lō** and the imperfective marker **bá** (see 4.2.2 above), the progressive marker **mō**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Remote Past Progressive describes situations which were ongoing in the remote past (one month ago or any time before that), as well as past habitual situations.

(71) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘A car accident’

tə? mətwa lə? mə ŋfū mə mbālmājō
 tə? mətwa lə? mə N₁-fū mə mbālmājō
 one car R_PST.IPFV PROG N₁-come from Mbalmayo
 ‘A car was coming from Mbalmayo.’

(72) Context: Q: What did your brother used to do when he was still a rich businessman?

à lə? mə ŋgō ñkó:
 à lə? mə N₁-yō ñkó:
 3s R_PST.IPFV PROG N₁-distribute money
 ‘He used to distribute money.’

It appears from the preceding that the same construction (lə? mə N-) is used in Fe?fe? to describe a remote past progressive situation or a past habitual situation. However, as will be shown in section 4.6 below, there are two formally distinct remote past progressive constructions in Fe?fe? negative clauses. One is specifically used to express remote past progressive situations that are negated, while the other is used to express past habitual situations that are negated.

The fact that the past habitual meaning in Fe?fe? is expressed using a construction which contains the remote past marker (as opposed to the hodiernal past marker or the near past marker), suggests that only remote past situations can be conceived of as habitual in Fe?fe?. As explained in 4.5.2 below, the habitual meaning is actually incompatible with the hodiernal past meaning and the near past meaning in Fe?fe?.

4.4.7 Imperfective (IPFV) LH tone N-vb

The Imperfective is indicated by a tone alternation on the subject of the clause. More concretely, the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or the noun in subject position is realised as a low-high tone at the level of the surface structure. In addition, the nasal prefix N₁- is attached to the verb. The Imperfective describes situations performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time. Also, it implies that the situation described still holds true at the moment of speech.

(73) Context: Q: What does your sister usually do when she is happy?

ǎ ŋgō ñkó:
 ǎ N₁-yō ñkó: (lexical tone of the subject: ǎ)
 3s.ipfv n₁-distribute money
 ‘She distributes money.’

When the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or noun preceding the verb is a low-high tone, no tonal alternation is observed; the vowel surfaces normally as low-high.

4.4.8 Progressive (PROG) LH tone mə N-vb

The Progressive is expressed by a tone alternation on the subject of the clause: the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or the noun preceding the verb is realised

as a low-high tone at the level of the surface structure. Furthermore, the progressive marker **m̄** and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order, occur before the verb. The Progressive describes present progressive situations, that is, situations ongoing at the moment of speech.

(74) Context: Q: What is your sister doing right now?

ǎ	m̄	ndē	wūzā	
ǎ	m̄	N₁-lē	wūzā	(lexical tone of the subject: à)
3s.IPFV	PROG	N ₁ -cook	food	

‘She is cooking food.’

4.4.9 Future (FUT) **kó** vb

The Future is expressed by the marker **kó** which occurs before the verb. It describes any future perfective situation. This means that Feʔfeʔ does not use graded tenses (for example, hodiernal future versus near future) to describe future situations. Where necessary, time adverbials are used to pinpoint the event location in time.

(75) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is planning to do this evening, tomorrow, etc.

ṅgò	kó	lē	wūzā
1s	FUT	cook	food

‘I am going to cook food.’

There is a short form of the future marker in Feʔfeʔ which frequently appears in daily conversations amongst native speakers. This involves the substitution of the marker **kó** by a process of vowel lengthening or copying that affects the last vowel of the subject of the clause. This is shown in the following example.

(76) Context: Q: What is your sister planning to do this afternoon?

à:	lē	wūzā
3s.FUT	cook	food

‘She is going to cook food.’

4.4.10 Future Progressive (FUT PROG) **kó m̄** N-vb

The Future Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the future marker **kó**, the progressive marker **m̄**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Future Progressive is used, on the one hand, to describe situations which will be in progress at a time later than now and, on the other hand, to describe future habitual situations, that is, situations expected to occur on a regular basis.

(77) Context: Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working tomorrow. Q: What will be the occupation of your brother at his work place?

à	kó	m̄	nzū	ṅgāfā
à	kó	m̄	N₁-zū?	ṅgāfā
3s	FUT	PROG	N ₁ -cultivate	maize

‘He is going to cultivate maize.’ (routinely)

(78) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tonight?
(What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?)

à kó mō n̄zū ñgōfā

à kó mō N₁-zū? ñgōfā

3s FUT PROG N₁-cultivate maize

‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

4.4.11 Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA) Ø vb

Unmarked Tense-Aspect is marked for neither tense nor aspect. It is used in discourse (narration, description, exposition, etc.) to replace a tense-aspect marking already employed either explicitly, that is, using an explicit tense-aspect marking, or implicitly, that is, without any tense-aspect marking, since the speech-act participants already know the context.

(79) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother a few months ago.

à lě? mō n̄nā? t̄ap ndí?í t̄jō kwā í n̄ô

à lě? mō N₁-nā? t̄ap ndí?jí Ø t̄jō kwā í n̄ô

3s R_PST.IPFV PROG N₁-walk forest suddenly UTA put leg his on

‘He was walking (in the) forest, suddenly, (he) put his leg (=stepped) on (...)’

nó já Ø l̄b í ā Ø pī lò?

snake it UTA bite him 3s UTA take stone

a snake, the snake bit him, he took (=picked up) a stone (...)’

In example (79) above, Unmarked Tense-Aspect replaces the remote past marker l̄b.

4.5 Final Remarks on the Description of the Tense-Aspect Categories

This section provides some final comments on the analysis of the tense-aspect categories in Fe?fe?. It includes a discussion on the structure of tense-aspect categories and the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect.

4.5.1 Structure of Tense-Aspect Categories

Based on the analysis presented in section 4.4 above, one can distinguish six types of structure for the tense-aspect categories in Fe?fe? illustrated in Table 15 below.

Table 15: Tense-aspect structures in Feʔfeʔ

		<i>Structure</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
1	Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA)	Ø vb	Ø yè UTA go
2	Near Past (N_PST)	T vb	kā yè N_PST go
3	Imperfective (IPFV)	A N-vb	ǎ ⁴⁸ ŋ-gè SBJ.IPFV N ₁ -go
4	Progressive (PROG)	A A N-vb	ǎ mō ŋ-gè SBJ.IPFV PROG N ₁ -go
5	Future Progressive (FUT PROG)	T A N-vb	ká mō ŋ-gè FUT PROG N ₁ -go
6	Hodiernal Past Progressive (H_PST PROG)	T A A N-vb	á ⁴⁹ bō mō ŋ-gè SBJ.H_PST IPFV PROG N ₁ -go

4.5.2 About the Semantic Combination of the Notions of Tense and Aspect

The analysis in 4.4 reveals that there are some restrictions on the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Feʔfeʔ. This is shown in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Overview of the combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Feʔfeʔ

	<i>perfective (pfv)</i>	<i>habitual (hab)</i>	<i>progressive (prog)</i>
hodiernal past (h-pst)	h-pst pfv		h-pst prog
near past (n-pst)	n-pst pfv		h-pst prog
remote past (r-pst)	r-pst pfv	r-pst hab	r-pst prog
present (prs)		prs hab	prs prog
future (fut)	fut-pfv	fut hab	fut prog

As apparent from Table 16, the present tense is not compatible with the perfective in Feʔfeʔ. A possible explanation can be found in 3.5.2 above. It also appears from Table 16 that there are gaps in the combination of past tenses with the habitual in Feʔfeʔ. In fact, it emerged from my discussions with the language consultants that only remote past situations are conceived of as habitual in Feʔfeʔ. Therefore, one can argue that the degrees of remoteness in the past (hodiernal past, near past, remote past) are neutralised when associated with the habitual in Feʔfeʔ, which focuses on the remote past. This is certainly because an event which has occurred over a short period of time (today or a few weeks ago), cannot easily be seen as habitual. It will be shown in Chapters Six and Seven below that the neutralisation of the degrees of past tense described here is also observed in Ngombale and Medumba.

⁴⁸ The aspect marker (a low-high tone modification) is indicated as portmanteau with the subject of the clause.

⁴⁹ The tense marker (a high tone modification) is indicated as portmanteau with the subject of the clause.

4.6 Standard Negation

This section examines standard negation in Feʔfeʔ. It focuses on the description of the means used to indicate standard negation and the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation. The means used to indicate standard negation in Feʔfeʔ are shown in the overview in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Affirmative and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Feʔfeʔ

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Hodiernal Past	Aff Neg	H tone vb kəʔ vb (bʰə)
Hodiernal Past Progressive	Aff Neg	H tone b́ə m̄ə N-vb kəʔ b́ə m̄ə N-vb (bʰə)
Near Past	Aff Neg	kə vb kə sī vb bʰə
Near Past Progressive	Aff Neg	kəʔ m̄ə N-vb kə sī m̄ə N-vb bʰə
Remote Past	Aff Neg	lə vb lə sī vb bʰə
Remote Past Progressive	Aff Neg ₁ Neg ₂	ləʔ m̄ə N-vb lə sī m̄ə N-vb bʰə (R_PST PROG) sī ləʔ m̄ə N-vb bʰə (PST HAB)
Imperfective	Aff Neg	LH tone N-vb sī/sīʔ N-vb bʰə
Progressive	Aff Neg	LH tone m̄ə N-vb sī m̄ə N-vb bʰə
Future	Aff Neg	kə vb sī kə vb bʰə
Future Progressive	Aff Neg	kə m̄ə N-vb sī kə m̄ə N-vb bʰə
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	Aff Neg	Ø vb ---

As shown in Table 17, Feʔfeʔ distinguishes two standard negation patterns. One of the standard negation patterns found in Feʔfeʔ, namely, ‘**NEG**₁...**NEG**₂’, involves the use of the double negative marker **sī...bʰə**, **sīʔ...bʰə**, or **sīʔ...bʰə**. The double negative marker **sī...bʰə** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain any of the tense-aspect markings discussed in section 4.4, except declarative verbal main clauses which contain the marker used to indicate the Hodiernal Past or the constructions used to indicate the Hodiernal Past Progressive, the Imperfective, and the Progressive. Remarkable about the double negative **sī...bʰə** is that it does not have the same distribution in all clauses. The distribution of the double negative marker **sī...bʰə** can be described as follows:

- when occurring in clauses which contain: (1) the marker used to indicate the Near Past, (2) the marker used to indicate the Remote past, (3) the construction used to encode the Near

Past Progressive, or (4) the construction used to indicate the Remote Past Progressive (the Remote Past Progressive should be specifically used to describe a remote past progressive situation), its first particle, that is, **sī** occurs after the tense marker and before the verb, while its second particle, that is, **bʰó** occurs in the clause final position.

- when occurring in clauses which contain: (1) the marker used to indicate the Future, (2) the construction used to indicate the Future Progressive, or (3) the construction used to indicate the Remote Past Progressive (the Remote Past Progressive should be specifically used to describe a past habitual situation), its first particle occurs before the tense marker and the verb, while its second particle occurs in the clause final position. This is illustrated in examples (80), (81), (82), and (83) below.

(80) à kō sī yō ŋkó: bʰó
 3s N_PST NEG₁ distribute money NEG₂
 ‘S/he did not distribute money.’ (yesterday or some time before yesterday)

(81) à lō sī mō ŋgè ŋwàʔnì bʰó
 à lō sī mō N₁-yè ŋwàʔnì bʰó
 3s R_PST NEG₁ PROG N₁-go school NEG₂
 ‘S/he was not going to school.’ (a month ago or any time after that)

(82) à sī kó zū ŋgōfā bʰó
 3s NEG₁ FUT cultivate maize NEG₂
 ‘S/he is not going to cultivate maize.’

(83) à sī lǎʔ mō ŋgè ŋwàʔnì bʰó
 à sī lǎʔ mō N₁-yè ŋwàʔnì bʰó
 3s NEG₁ R_PST.IPFV PROG N₁-go school NEG₂
 ‘S/he used not to go to school.’

Example (80) contains the marker used to indicate the Near Past and example (81) contains the construction used to indicate the Remote Past Progressive (the Remote Past Progressive in example (81) is specifically used to describe a remote past progressive situation). Therefore, the first particle of the double negative **sī...bʰó** occurs after the tense marker and before the verb in (80) and (81). Example (82) contains the marker used to indicate the Future and example (83) contains the construction used to indicate the Remote Past Progressive (the Remote Past Progressive in example (83) is specifically used to describe a past habitual situation). Thus, the first particle of the double negative **sī...bʰó** occurs before the tense marker and the verb in (82) and (83).

The double negative marker **sī...bʰó** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the construction used to indicate the Imperfective or the construction used to indicate Progressive. This is shown in (84) and (85) below.

- (84) à sǐ ĩgō ñkó: bʰó
à sǐ N1-γō ñkó: bʰó
3s NEG₁.IPFV N1-distribute money NEG₂
‘S/he does not distribute money.’ (habitually)

- (85) à sǐ mō ñdē wūzō bʰó
à sǐ mō N1-lē wūzō bʰó
3s NEG₁.IPFV PROG N1-cook food NEG₂
‘S/he is not cooking food.’ (right now)

The glossing of examples (84) and (85) shows that the first particle of the double negative marker **sǐ...bʰó** is analysed as a marker which arose from the fusion of a negative marker and the imperfective marker. The argument justifying this analysis has been provided in section 4.2.2 above.

The double negative marker **sǐ?...bʰó** on its part is exclusively used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the construction used to indicate the Imperfective. Thus, the negative markers **sǐ...bʰó** and **sǐ?...bʰó** can be used interchangeably to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the imperfective construction.

Another standard negation pattern in Feʔfeʔ, namely, ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’, involves the use of the pre-verbal negative particle **kōʔ** and the optional post-verbal negative particle (**bʰó**).⁵⁰ The negative marker **kōʔ... (bʰó)** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the marker used to indicate the Hodiernal Past, as well as main clauses which contain the construction used to encode the Hodiernal Past Progressive. The pre-verbal negative particle occurs after the subject of the clause and before the verb, while the optional post-verbal negative particle occurs in the clause final position. This is illustrated in (86) and (87) below.

(86) Context: question: What has your sister done early this morning?

(86a) Reply

á γē ʔʔsì
3s.H_PST go church

‘She went to church.’ (today)

(86b) Negative form of the reply

à kōʔ γē ʔʔsì (bʰó)
3s NEG₁ go church (NEG₂)

‘She did not go to church.’ (today)

(87) Context: question: Where was your sister going when you ran into her on your way to school this morning?

(87a) Reply

á bʰó mō ĩgē ʔʔsì
á N4.pʰó mō N1-γē ʔʔsì
3s.H_PST N4.IPFV PROG N1-go church

‘She was going to church.’ (today)

⁵⁰ The occurrence of the negative particle **bʰó** in brackets means that it is optional or may be left out without changing the meaning of the negative clause.

(87b) Negative form of the reply

à	kāʔ	bá	mā	ŋgè	ʔʂsi	(bʰá)
à	kāʔ	N4.pá	mā	N1-γè	ʔʂsi	(bʰá)
3s	NEG ₁	N4.IPFV	PROG	N1-go	church	(NEG ₂)

‘She was not going to church.’ (today)

When one considers positive and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Table 17 above, one notices that cases of asymmetry in construction and paradigm occur in the expression of standard negation in Feʔfeʔ. The asymmetries in construction relate to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses which contain: the marker used to indicate the Hodiernal Past, the construction used to indicate the Near Past Progressive, or the construction used to indicate the Remote Past Progressive.

The hodiernal past marker (a high tone alternation on the subject of the clause, see 4.4.1 above) is completely deleted in negative clauses. This has been illustrated in examples (86) and (87) above. As suggested by examples (86) and (87), the negative marker **kāʔ**...(bʰá) prevents the occurrence of the hodiernal past marker in the negative clause. Therefore, the negative marker **kāʔ**...(bʰá) might be analysed as a negative variant of the hodiernal past marker.

In addition to the presence of the double negative marker **sī**...bʰá, affirmative clauses which contain the near past progressive construction or the remote past progressive construction (the latter should be used to describe a situation specifically associated with the progressive, as opposed to habitual meaning, see Table 17) differ from their negative counterparts in that the markers **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ** found in affirmative clauses, are realised as **kā** and **lā**, respectively, in negative clauses (recall that the markers **kǎʔ** and **lǎʔ** are analysed in this study as markers resulting from the fusion of a past tense marker and the imperfective marker **bá**. Also, **kā** and **lā** are the markers of the Near Past and the Remote Past, respectively).

(88) Context: The speaker is talking about what happened to his/her brother yesterday.

(88a) Affirmative form

à	kǎʔ	mā	ŋgè	ʔʂsi
à	kǎʔ	mā	N1-γè	ʔʂsi
3s	N_PST.IPFV	PROG	N1-go	church

‘He was going to church (...)’

(88b) Negative form of the speaker’s statement

à	kā	sī	mā	ŋgè	ʔʂsi	bʰá
à	kā	sī	mā	N1-γè	ʔʂsi	bʰá
3s	N_PST	neg ₁	PROG	N1-go	church	NEG ₂

‘He was not going to church.’

An observation that can be made in relation to the asymmetry in construction involving the Near Past Progressive and the Remote Past Progressive is that in contradistinction to what is observed in affirmative clauses which contain the near past progressive construction or the remote past progressive construction, that is, the progressive marker **mā** must co-occur with the imperfective marker to express the progressive meaning, the progressive marker **mā**, is in itself sufficient to express the progressive meaning in the negative counterparts on Feʔfeʔ’s main

clauses which contain the near past progressive construction or the remote past progressive construction.

As shown in Table 17, two cases of asymmetry in paradigm are observed in the expression of standard negation in Feʔfeʔ. A division is made between the Remote Past Progressive and the Past Habitual in the paradigms used in negative clauses, but not in the ones used in affirmative clauses. Also, there appears to be no negative counterpart of the Unmarked Tense-Aspect in Feʔfeʔ.

This chapter has focused on the description of the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Feʔfeʔ. The chapter's main arguments are:

- tense and aspect connect to give eleven tense-aspect categories in Feʔfeʔ indicated by a single marker (a free-standing marker or a tonal modification), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking,
- Feʔfeʔ distinguishes two standard negation patterns: 'NEG₁...NEG₂' which involves the use of the double negative marker **sī...b^hǎ**, **sǐ...b^hǎ**, or **sǐʔ...b^hǎ** and 'NEG₁...(NEG₂)' which involves the use of the pre-verbal negative particle **kǎʔ** and the optional post-verbal negative particle **b^hǎ**,
- there are cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation in Feʔfeʔ.

CHAPTER V

5 Tense-Aspect and Standard Negation in Ghomala?

This chapter discusses the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ghomala?. It comprises six sections which are parallel to the six sections of the preceding chapter in terms of the objective pursued in each section.

5.1 Structure of the Main Clause

The linear ordering of elements within the main clause in Ghomala? may be schematised as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
SBJ	N-	T	NEG ₁	N-	AA	T	A	N-	Root	-EXT	-SUFF	OBJ	ADV	NEG ₂

Position 1. This position is occupied by a pronominal or a nominal subject. The subject pronouns of Ghomala? that have been clearly identified in this study (simple human subject pronouns) are listed in Table 18 below.

Table 18: Subject pronouns in Ghomala?

<i>Person/number</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
1s	gã, N	I
2s	ō	you
3s	ē	he/she
1p	pjã	we
2p	pō	you
3p	wáp	they

It will be shown in section 5.4 that the perfect marker in Ghomala? surfaces on the element occurring in this position. The imperfective marker may also surface on the element occurring in this position.

Position 2. Position 2 may be filled by the first-person-singular pronoun nasal prefix (see section 5.2). This nasal may be attached to the verb and to verb-related elements immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun /N/ (see Table 18). More will be said about the nasal consonant prefix in Ghomala? in section 5.2.

Position 3. This slot may be occupied by a tense marker that locates situations in the past. For example, the hodiernal past marker ê.

Position 4. Position 4 may be occupied by the first particle of the negative marking tã...pó, tã...pó, or kã...(pó).

Position 5. Here, one may find the linking nasal prefix (see section 5.2). This nasal prefix is attached to the verb and to verb-related elements.

Position 6. This position may be occupied by any of the adverbial auxiliaries found in Ghomala?. The following items represent examples of adverbial auxiliaries in Ghomala?: **jǎ** ‘still’, **ná?** ‘a bit’, **píŋ** ‘again’.

Position 7. This slot may be occupied by the general future marker **gǎ** or the general future marker **gǎ** followed by another future tense marker.

Position 8. position 8 may be occupied by the imperfective marker **pǎ~bǎ** or the imperfective marker **pǎ~bǎ** followed by the progressive marker **wǎ**.

Position 9. This is another slot for the linking nasal prefix. Note this position may be filled only when position 6 and/or 8 is/are filled.

Position 10. This position contains the verb root. Verb roots in Ghomala? are basically mono-syllabic with one of the following two major syllable structures: CV, for example, **sǎ** ‘cut’, **há** ‘give’ and CVC, for example, **pàp** ‘warm’, **tǎŋ** ‘dig’. Mba (1997: 78) classifies verb roots in Ghomala? into two groups on the basis of their lexical tones, namely, high and low tone verb roots. Irrespective of their lexical tones, verb roots in Ghomala? may take a nasal consonant prefix.

Position 11. Position 11 may be filled by a verbal extension. According to Mba (1997: 81-87), two verbal extensions are distinguished in Ghomala?, namely, **-tǎ**, which is roughly associated with the plural meaning, for example, the verb **kám** ‘scratch’ becomes **kámtǎ** ‘scratch several times’, and **-pǎ** which basically yields the following meanings: reflexivity, stativity, reciprocity, valency change, or prolongation of the action. For instance, the verb **tùm** ‘hide’ becomes **tùmpǎ** ‘hide oneself’; the extension **-pǎ** adds the meaning of reflexivity to the verb. The verbal extensions **-te** and **-pǎ** have no inherent tone, but take their tone from the vowel of the preceding syllable by tone spreading. Moreover, only one extension may occur on a single verb.

Position 12. This position may be occupied by the verbal suffix. A detailed discussion of the verbal suffix in Ghomala? is provided in section 5.2 below.

Position 13. Position 13 may be filled by the object of the clause. This might be a nominal or a pronominal object.

Position 14. This position may be occupied by items such as adverbs, prepositional phrases, or indirect objects.

Position 15. The main clause may close with the second particle of the negative markings mentioned in position 4.

5.2 General Comments

This section includes a discussion of the nasal consonant prefix, the verbal suffix, and the imperfective marker in Ghomala?.

5.2.1 The Nasal Consonant Prefix

The nasal consonant prefix that may precede the verb and some verb-related elements in Ghomala?'s main clauses bears a low tone. Remarkable about this nasal is that it is deleted when followed by a voiced plosive sound (for example, [b, d, g]) or a voiced affricate sound (for example, [bv, dʒ, dz]). This suggests that after having modified the initial consonant of the word it precedes, the nasal consonant deletes in Ghomala?. This is illustrated in (89) below:

(89)

Underlying form	Voicing rule	Homorganic nasal assimilation	Nasal prefix deletion	Surface form	Gloss
/N-púʔ/	N+búʔ	m+búʔ	Ø+búʔ	[búʔ]	'lift'
/N-tsúʔ/	N+dzúʔ	n+dzúʔ	Ø+dzúʔ	[dzúʔ]	'cultivate'

A similar observation on the nasal consonant prefix in Ghomala? was made by Nissim (1981). According to Nissim, the nasal prefix is frequently silent in Ghomala? when it occurs before voiced occlusive sounds. A sequence such as 'm+b', that is, a nasal consonant prefix followed by the consonant [b] may, therefore, surface as [b] or [mb] in free variation (Nissim 1981: 89).

Also noteworthy about the nasal consonant prefix in Ghomala? is that it does not appear before words beginning with a voiceless fricative ([f, s, ʃ]) or a nasal consonant. Therefore, it is necessary to posit a rule of the form in (90) that deletes the nasal prefix /N-/ before fricative and nasal consonant sounds in Ghomala?:

(90) /N-/ → Ø / _ [f, s, ʃ] or [N].

Four types of nasal consonant prefix in Ghomala? are described in this study:

- (N₁-): this nasal is attached to the verb. It links the verb to a preceding verb-related element.

(91) ê ñtóm pû jóq
 ê N₁-tóm pû jóq
 3s.IPFV N₁-hold hands our
 'S/he holds our hand.' (permanently)

The nasal prefix that occurs before the verb **tóm** 'hold' in example (91) links the verb to a preceding verb-related element, namely, the imperfective marker.

- (N₂-): this nasal occurs before verb-related elements that are immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun /N/ (see Table 23). It repeats the first-person-singular pronoun.

(92) ñ dā t̄ tsúʔ gəf̄ə pó
 ñ N₂.lā t̄ tsúʔ gəf̄ə pó
 1s N₂-R_PST NEG₁ cultivate maize NEG₂
 'I did not cultivate maize.' (in the remote past)

The nasal prefix that occurs before the remote past tense marker (R_PST) in example (92) repeats the subject of pronoun /N/.

- (N₃-): this nasal is attached to the verb. It ties a series of clauses into a coherent whole.

- (93) **gā ê dā má ǎ gō m lóʔtà**
gā ê N₁.lā má ǎ N₃.yō m lóʔtà
 1s H_PST N₁.take mother my N₃.go to hospital
 ‘I took my mother and went (with her) to the hospital.’ (today)

The nasal consonant prefix that occurs before the verb **yō** ‘go’ in example (93) ties two clauses together into a coherent whole.

- (N₄-): this nasal always appears before the general future marker. Therefore, it is considered the general future marker nasal prefix. The N₄- prefix is displayed in example (94) below.

- (94) **ē gō yō ʔūtà**
ē N₄.yō yō ʔūtà
 3s N₄.G_FUT go meeting
 ‘S/he is going to go to a meeting.’ (today)

5.2.2 The Verbal Suffix

The Ghomala? language seems to have a verbal suffix, namely, a copy of the vowel of any verb root with a CVC syllable structure. This verbal suffix may occur when the verb is preceded by the imperfective marker or the imperfective marker and the progressive marker simultaneously. The use of the words *seems* and *may* in the preceding sentences is justified because it emerged from working sessions with language consultants that the occurrence of the verbal suffix in the conversations of Ghomala?’s speakers varies between speakers. Some native speakers regularly made it clearly audible in their speech and claimed that its occurrence following CVC verb roots is dependent on two factors: (1) that the verb takes the imperfective marker or the imperfective maker and the progressive marker simultaneously, and (2) that the verb occupies the last position of the clause, that is, does not take a complement. However, other speakers completely ignored it insisting that the addition of a verbal suffix to CVC verb roots is optional. In other words, the speaker deliberately chooses whether to add it.

An idea which can be drawn from this brief discussion of the verbal suffix in Ghomala? is that the verbal suffix in Ghomala? is either limited in its distribution, for example, it never occurs when the verb is followed by a complement or it is optional; its occurrence depends on the free will of the speaker. Based on my data analysis, I decided to follow the view that the verbal suffix is optional in Ghomala?. This is because I have found many instances in my data which cast doubt on the view that the addition of a verbal suffix to a CVC verb root is conditioned by (1) the occurrence of the imperfective marker or both the imperfective maker and the progressive marker before the verb and (2) the fact that the verb occupies the last position of the clause.

The verbal suffix in Ghomala? has no inherent tone, but takes its tone from the vowel of the preceding syllable by tone spreading. Moreover, it disappears when immediately preceded by a verbal extension.

5.2.3 About the Imperfective Marker

The marker **pǎ** which alternates with **bǎ** has been analysed in this study as the imperfective marker in Ghomala?. A peculiarity about this marker is that it is in itself sufficient to express the habitual meaning, but must co-occur with another marker, namely, the progressive marker, to express the progressive meaning. In other words, Ghomala? distinguishes a special progressive form and the use of the imperfective marker without that special progressive form excludes progressive meaning.

5.3 Overview of the Tense-Aspect System and Standard Negation in Ghomala?

Ghomala? distinguishes three degrees of past tense (hodiernal past, near past, remote past), a present tense, and three degrees of future tense (general future, near future, remote future). Except for the present tense, which is not marked, tense in Ghomala? is encoded by free-standing markers which all appear in pre-verbal position. A three-way aspectual division is observed in Ghomala?: perfective, imperfective, and progressive. The imperfective is indicated by an imperfective marker which appears before the verb and has three variants, namely, [bǎ], [pǎ] or a high-low tone alternation on the subject of the clause or a negative marker. The progressive is indicated by a combination of the free-standing imperfective marker **bǎ** or **pǎ** and the progressive marker **wǎ**. No perfective marking is identified in Ghomala?.

In addition, Ghomala? distinguishes a Perfect category expressed by means of a low-high tone alternation on the subject of the clause and an Unmarked Tense-Aspect which is marked for neither tense nor aspect, but has one basic function.

Also, some tense or aspect markers in Ghomala? must be accompanied by a nasal prefix that typically occurs before the verb.

To negate declarative verbal main clauses, Ghomala? uses two standard negation patterns: ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ and ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’. Noteworthy is that the first particle of the negative marker, namely, NEG₁, occurs immediately after the tense marker if the tense marker is a past tense marker, and before the tense marker if the tense marker is a future tense marker. The second particle of negative markers always occurs in the clause final position.

5.4 Tense-Aspect Categories in Ghomala?

Tense and aspect connect to give twenty tense-aspect categories in Ghomala?. This refers to grammatical units that may be manifested by any of the following: a single marker (a free-standing marker or a tonal modification), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking. Also, Ghomala?’s tense-aspect categories may have one or more basic uses. The tense-aspect system of Ghomala? can, thus, be analysed as operating according to twenty tense-aspect categories, namely: Hodiernal Past (H_PST), Near Past (N_PST), Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV), Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG), Remote Past (R_PST), Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV), Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG), Imperfective (IPFV), Progressive (PROG), General Future (G_FUT), General Future Imperfective (G_FUT IPFV), General Future Progressive (G_FUT PROG), Near Future (N_FUT), Near Future Imperfective (N_FUT IPFV), Near Future Progressive

(N_FUT PROG), Remote Future (R_FUT), Remote Future Imperfective (R_FUT IPFV), Remote Future Progressive (R_FUT PROG), Perfect (PRF), and Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA). The markings used to encode the tense-aspect categories in Ghomala? are shown in the overview in Table 19 below.

Table 19: Tense-aspect markings in Ghomala?

<i>T</i> \ <i>A</i>	<i>Perfective</i>	<i>Imperfective</i>	<i>Progressive</i>	<i>Perfect</i>
Hodiernal Past	ê N-			
Near Past	kā	kā b́á N-	kā b́á ẃá N-	
Remote Past	lā	lā b́á N-	lā b́á ẃá N-	
Present		HL tone N-	b́á ẃá N-	
General Future	gō	gō ṕá	gō ṕá ẃá	
Near Future	gō tí	gō tí ṕá	gō tí ṕá ẃá	
Remote Future	gō ʃẃá	gō ʃẃá ṕá	gō ʃẃá ṕá ẃá	
Perfect				LH tone

5.4.1 Hodiernal Past (H_PST) ê N-vb

The Hodiernal Past is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the hodiernal past marker **ê** and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Hodiernal Past describes past perfective situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(95) Context: The speaker is talking about something s/he has done earlier this morning.

gā ê dō má ǎ gō m lóʔtà
gā ê N₁.lō má ǎ N₃.yō m lóʔtà
1s H_PST N₁.take mother my N₃.go to hospital
‘I took my mother and went (with her) to the hospital.’

5.4.2 Near Past (N_PST) kā vb

The Near Past is indicated by the marker **kā** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations which took place less than one month before the moment of speech, except situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(96) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened a week ago.

tá ǎ kā vū ʃʃō
father my N_PST fall water
‘My father fell into the (river) water.’

5.4.3 Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV) kā b́á N-vb

The Near Past Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the near past marker **kā**, the imperfective marker **b́á**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Near Past Imperfective describes a habitual situation which stopped in the near past (approximately less than one month ago).

(97) Context: The speaker is talking about the profession of his/her brother when he (the brother of the speaker) was still living in the village (it is known that the brother of the speaker left the village not long ago).

ē kā b́ dzú? gəfə
 ē kā N₂.ṕ N₁.tsú? gəfə
 3s N_PST N₂.IPFV N₁.cultivate maize
 ‘He used to cultivate maize.’

5.4.4 Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG) kā b́ ẃ N-vb

The Near Past Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of four pre-verbal elements, namely, the near past marker **kā**, the imperfective marker **b́**, the progressive marker **ẃ**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Near Past Progressive describes situations which were ongoing in the near past, that is, less than one month ago.

(98) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother yesterday.

ē kā b́ ẃ gíŋ túm yé nājû?b̄ ē Ø tú kwā ē
 ē kā N₂.ṕ ẃ N₁.yíŋ túm yé nājû?b̄ ē Ø tú kwā ē
 3s N_PST N₂.IPFV PROG N₁.walk in forest suddenly 3s UTA put foot his
 ‘He was walking in the forest, suddenly, he put his leg (=stepped) (...)’

ń ńq
 on snake
 on a snake.’

5.4.5 Remote Past (R_PST) l̄ vb

The Remote Past is expressed by the marker **l̄** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations which took place either a month ago or any time before that.

(99) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘A car accident’

pj̄ l̄ ṕ mú? t̄j̄?dzú b́ ẃ f̄ m̄
 pj̄ l̄ ṕ mú? t̄j̄?dzú N₂.ṕ ẃ f̄ m̄
 1p R_PST be one day N₂.IPFV PROG come.back from
 ‘We were one day coming back from (...)’

l̄?tà ńŋf̄?t̄ gēȳ
 l̄?tà ń-ŋf̄?t̄ gēȳ
 hospital NMLZ-greet sick.person
 a visit to the hospital.’

5.4.6 Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV) l̄ b́ N-vb

The Remote Past Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the remote past marker **l̄**, the imperfective marker **b́**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Remote Past Imperfective describes a habitual situation which stopped in the remote past (a month ago or any time before that).

(100) Context: The speaker is talking about the profession of his/her brother when he (the brother of the speaker) was still living in the village (it is known that the brother of the speaker left the village long ago).

ē lā b́ dzú? gəfə
 ē lā N?ṕ N1.tsú? gəfə
 3s R_PST N?.IPFV N1.cultivate maize
 ‘He used to cultivate maize.’

5.4.7 Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG) lā b́ ẃ N-vb

The Remote Past Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of four pre-verbal elements, namely, the remote past marker **lā**, the imperfective marker **b́**, the progressive marker **ẃ**, and the nasal prefix **N1-**, in that order. The Remote Past Progressive describes situations which were ongoing in the remote past, that is, one month ago or any time before that.

(101) Context: Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last year at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?)

ē lā b́ ẃ dzú? gəfə
 ē lā N?ṕ ẃ N1.tsú? gəfə
 3s R_PST N?.IPFV PROG N1.cultivate maize
 ‘He was cultivating maize.’

5.4.8 Imperfective (IPFV) HL tone N-vb

The Imperfective is expressed by a tone alternation on the subject of the clause. The only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or the noun in subject position is realised as a high-low tone at the level of the surface structure.⁵¹ In addition, the nasal prefix **N1-** is attached to the verb. The Imperfective describes situations performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time. Also, it implies that the situation described still holds true at the moment of speech.

(102) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘New Year’s celebration’

nápá? ê ntóm pû j́q
 nápá? ê N1-tóm pû j́q (lexical tone of the subject: ē)
 because 3s.IPFV N1-hold hands our
 ‘(...) because he holds our hands.’ (permanently)

When the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or noun preceding the verb is a high-low tone, no tonal alternation is observed; the tone of the vowel surfaces normally as high-low.

⁵¹ According to Sofo (1979: 5), the Ghomala? language distinguishes five phonemic tones, namely, three level tones (high, low, mid) and two contour tones (low-high and high-low).

5.4.9 Progressive (PROG) **bá wá N-vb**

The Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the imperfective marker **bá**, the progressive marker **wá**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Progressive describes present progressive situations, that is, situations ongoing at the moment of speaking.

(103) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he can see through the window (right now).

tā? bē pū tā? dʒuĩ bá wá nèn
tā? bē pū tā? dʒuĩ N₁.pá wá nèn
 one boy and one girl N₁.IPFV PROG dance
 ‘A boy and a girl are dancing.’

It emerged from my discussions with language consultants that the markers **bá** and **wá**, may be replaced by a single marker, namely, **bó**. This suggests that the marker **bó** is a short form of the fusion of the imperfective marker **bá** with the progressive marker **wá**.

5.4.10 General Future (G_FUT) **gā vb**

The General Future is expressed by the marker **gā** which occurs before the verb. It describes future perfective situations that are expected to take place on the day the utterance is made.

(104) Context: The speaker is talking about something s/he is planning to do today.

gā gā yō ʔūtà
gā N₄.yō yō ʔūtà
 1s N₄.G_FUT go meeting
 ‘I am going to go to a meeting.’

5.4.11 General Future Imperfective (G_FUT IPFV) **gā pá vb**

The General Future Imperfective is expressed by means of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker **gā** and the imperfective marker **pá**, in that order. It is used to express that an action will be performed on a regular basis from the day of the utterance.

(105) Context: Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working today.
 Q: What will be the occupation of your brother at his work place?

ē gā pá tsú? gəfə
ē N₄.yō pá tsú? gəfə
 3s N₄.G_FUT IPFV cultivate maize
 ‘He is going to cultivate maize.’ (routinely)

5.4.12 General Future Progressive (G_FUT PROG) **gā pá wá vb**

The General Future Progressive is expressed by means of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker **gā**, the imperfective marker **pá**, and the progressive marker **wá**, in that order. It describes situations which will be in progress on the day the utterance is made.

(106) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tonight?
(What activity will he be engaged in?)

ē gō pǎ wǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 ē N4.yō pǎ wǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 3s N4.G_FUT IPFV PROG cultivate maize
 ‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

5.4.13 Near Future (N_FUT) gō tí vb

The Near Future is expressed by the marker **tí** which must co-occur with the general future marker **gō**. It describes future perfective situations which will take place either the day after the speech moment or any time before a year as from the day after the speech moment.

(107) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her son is going to do tomorrow.

ē gō tí yō sǎkú
 ē N4.yō tí yō sǎkú
 3s N4.G_FUT N_FUT go school
 ‘He is going to go to school.’

5.4.14 Near Future Imperfective (N_FUT IPFV) gō tí pǎ vb

The Near Future Imperfective is expressed by means of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker **gō**, the near future marker **tí**, and the imperfective marker **pǎ**, in that order. It is used to express that an action will be performed on a regular basis from the day after the time of speaking.

(108) Context: Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working tomorrow. Q: What will be the occupation of your brother at his work place?

ē gō tí pǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 ē N4.yō tí pǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 3s N4.G_FUT N_FUT IPFV cultivate maize
 ‘He is going to cultivate maize.’ (routinely)

5.4.15 Near Future Progressive (N_FUT PROG) gō tí pǎ wǎ vb

The Near Future progressive is expressed by means of four pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker **gō**, the near future marker **tí**, the imperfective marker **pǎ**, and the progressive marker **wǎ**, in that order. It describes situations which will be in progress in the near future. That is, either the day after the time of speaking or any time before a year as from the day after the time of speaking.

(109) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tomorrow? (What activity will he be engaged in?)

ē gō tí pǎ wǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 ē N4.g_FUT tí pǎ wǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 3s N4.G_FUT N_FUT IPFV PROG cultivate maize
 ‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

5.4.16 Remote Future (R_FUT) gō ʔwǎ vb

The Remote Future is expressed by the marker ʔwǎ which must co-occur with the general future marker gō. It describes future perfective situations which will take place either within a year or any time thereafter.

(110) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her son is going to do in two years’ time.

ē gō ʔwǎ yō gwūŋ á dǎkǎ
 ē N4.g_FUT ʔwǎ yō gwūŋ á dǎkǎ
 3s N4.G_FUT R_FUT go kingdom of white.men
 ‘He is going to go to Europe.’

5.4.17 Remote Future Imperfective (R_FUT IPFV) gō ʔwǎ pǎ vb

The Remote Future Imperfective is expressed by means of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker gō, the remote future marker ʔwǎ, and the imperfective marker pǎ, in that order. It is used to express that an action will be performed on a regular basis from one year or later after the time of speaking.

(111) Context: Your brother has got a work contract and he is going to start working next year.
 Q: What will be the occupation of your brother at his work place?

ē gō ʔwǎ pǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 ē N4.g_FUT ʔwǎ pǎ tsú? gǎfǎ
 3s N4.G_FUT R_FUT IPFV cultivate maize
 ‘He is going to cultivate maize.’ (routinely)

5.4.18 Remote Future Progressive (R_FUT PROG) gō ʔwǎ pǎ wǎ vb

The Remote Future Progressive is expressed by means of four pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker gō, the remote future marker ʔwǎ, the imperfective marker pǎ, and the progressive marker wǎ, in that order. It describes situations which will be in progress in the remote future, that is, within a year or any time thereafter.

(112) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next year during the Christmas holidays? (What activity will he be engaged in?)

ē gō ʔwá pǎ wá tsú? gǎfǎ
ē N4.yō ʔwá pǎ wá tsú? gǎfǎ
 3s N4.G_FUT R_FUT IPFV PROG cultivate maize

‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

5.4.19 Perfect (PRF) LH tone vb

The Perfect is indicated by a tone alternation on the subject of the clause. The only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or the noun in subject position is realised as a low-high tone at the level of the surface structure. It describes a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred. The Perfect may also present a current state without any implication of how this state came about.

(113) Context: The speaker is talking about someone who has just ended to read a passage from the bible.

kāmdǒm ké pǎpúŋ (lexical tone of the subject: **kāmdǒm**)
 kamdom.PRf read well
 ‘Kamdom has read well.’

(114) Context: A father is talking to his son.

ǒ ʒǐ tá kǒmpǎ ā (lexical tone of the subject: **ǒ**)
 2s.PRf know father komgne QPTCL
 ‘Do you know Mr. Komgne?’

In example (113), the Perfect describes a past action whose end is interpreted as having just occurred, whereas in (114) it has a present state interpretation. When the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or noun preceding the verb is a low-high tone, no tonal alternation is observed; the tone of the vowel surfaces normally as low-high.

5.4.20 Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA) Ø vb

Unmarked Tense-Aspect is marked for neither tense nor aspect. It is used in discourse (narrations, descriptions, expositions, etc.) to replace a tense-aspect marking already employed either explicitly, that is, using an explicit tense-aspect marking, or implicitly, that is, without any tense-aspect marking, since the speech-act participants already know the context.

(115) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘A car accident’

pǐ lǎ kwà mǎtwá dǒʔpǎ fǐ? ā Ø pǎ
 1p R_PST carry car quickly go.down it UTA be
 ‘We quickly carried (=took) the car and went down. It was (...)’

mǎdzǎ jǒm pǎ?è pǐ Ø jǐ mǎtwá bǎ ā Ø tǎtǎ
 road Yom like.that 1p UTA see car REL it UTA be.parked
 (somewhere around) the road of Yom like that, we saw a car which was parked.’

(116) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is going to do when s/he receives her/his first salary.

gā	gō	ɸwó	lāŋdzā	jó	màtwā	pīŋ	Ø	yō	dwǎlā
gā	N4.yō	ɸwó	lāŋdzā	jó	màtwā	pīŋ	Ø	yō	dwǎlā
1s	N4.G_FUT	R_FUT	first	buy	car	then	UTA	go	Douala

‘I am going to buy a car first, then (I) am going to go to Douala.’

In example (115), Unmarked Tense-Aspect is used to replace the remote past marker **lā**, whereas in (116), it replaces the remote future construction **gō ɸwó**.

5.5 Final Remarks on the Description of the Tense-Aspect Categories

This section includes a discussion on the structure of tense-aspect categories, the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect, and the similarity in form of tense-aspect markers to lexical verbs.

5.5.1 Structure of Tense-Aspect Categories

On the basis of the analysis in section 5.4 above, one can distinguish thirteen types of structure for the tense-aspect categories in Ghomala? illustrated in table 20 below.

Table 20: Tense-aspect structures in Ghomala?

		<i>Structure</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
1	Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA)	Ø vb	Ø tóm UTA hold
2	Remote Past (R_PST)	T vb	lā tóm R_PST hold
3	Near Future (N_FUT)	T T vb	gō tí tóm G_FUT N_FUT hold
4	Hodiernal Past (H_PST)	T N- vb	ê ñ-tóm H_PST N ₁ -hold
5	Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV)	T A N-vb	kā bá ñ-tóm N_PST IPFV N ₁ -hold
6	Imperfective (IPFV)	A N-vb	ô ⁵² ñ-tóm SBJ.IPFV N ₁ -hold
7	General Future Progressive (G_FUT PROG)	T A vb	gō pá tóm G_FUT IPFV hold
8	Near Future Imperfective (N_FUT IPFV)	T T A vb	gō tí pá tóm G_FUT N_FUT IPFV hold
9	Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG)	T A A N-vb	kā bá wá ñ-tóm N_PST IPFV PROG N ₁ -hold
10	Progressive (PROG)	A A N-vb	bá wá ñ-tóm IPFV PROG N ₁ -hold
11	General Future Progressive (G_FUT PROG)	T A A vb	gō pá wá tóm G_FUT IPFV PROG hold
12	Near Future Progressive (N_FUT PROG)	T T A A vb	gō tí pá wá tóm G_FUT N_FUT IPFV PROG hold
13	Perfect (PRF) LH tone vb	-PRF vb	ǒ ⁵³ tóm SBJ.PRF hold

5.5.2 About the Semantic Combination of the Notions of Tense and Aspect

The analysis in section 5.4 above reveals that there are some restrictions on the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Ghomala?. This is shown in Table 21 below.

⁵² The imperfective aspect marker (a high-low tone alternation) is indicated as portmanteau with the subject of the clause.

⁵³ The perfect marker (a low-high tone alternation) is indicated as portmanteau with the subject of the clause.

Table 21: Overview of the combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Ghomala?

	<i>perfective (pfv)</i>	<i>habitual (hab)</i>	<i>progressive (prog)</i>
hodiernal past (h-pst)	h-pst pfv		h-pst prog
near past (n-pst)	n-pst pfv	n-pst hab	n-pst prog
remote past (r-pst)	r-pst pfv	r-pst hab	r-pst prog
present (prs)		prs hab	prs prog
hodiernal future (h-fut)	h-fut pfv	h-fut hab	h-fut prog
near future (n-fut)	n-fut pfv	n-fut hab	n-fut prog
remote future (r-fut)	r-fut pfv	r-fut hab	r-fut prog

As evident from Table 21, the hodiernal past tense is incompatible with the habitual in Ghomla?. In other words, it is not possible to have a hodiernal past habitual interpretation in Ghomala?. In 3.5.2 above, I posited a hypothesis to explain the incompatibility between the hodiernal past and the habitual in Ngiemboon. That hypothesis also holds for the Ghomala? language. The present tense also appears to be incompatible with the perfective in Ghomala?. An explanation can be found in 3.5.2 above.

5.5.3 About the Similarity in Form of Tense-Aspect Markers to Lexical Verbs

Many of Ghomala?'s tense or aspect markers show a clear similarity in form to lexical verbs frequently used in Ghomala?. The general future marker **gō** is formally similar to the verb **yò** 'go', the near future marker **tí** is identical in form to the verb **tí** 'sleep', the remote future marker **ɬwá** is identical in form to the verb **ɬwá** 'stay', and the imperfective marker **pá~bá** is identical in form to the verb **pá** 'be'.

5.6 Standard Negation

This section examines standard negation in Ghomala?. It focuses on the discussion of the means used to indicate standard negation and the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation. The means used to indicate standard negation in Ghomala? are shown in the overview in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Affirmative and corresponding negative tense-aspect makings in Ghomala?

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Hodiernal Past	Aff Neg	ê N-vb (k)ê tã---vb pá
Near Past	Aff Neg	kā vb kā tã vb pá
Near Past Imperfective	Aff Neg	kā bá N-vb kā tã bá N-vb pá
Near Past Progressive	Aff Neg	kā bá wá N-vb kā tã bá wá N-vb pá
Remote Past	Aff Neg	lā vb lā tã vb pá
Remote Past Imperfective	Aff Neg	lā bá N-vb lā tã bá N-vb pá

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Remote Past Progressive	Aff Neg	<i>lā</i> <i>bá wá</i> N-vb <i>lā tā</i> <i>bá wá</i> N-vb pá
Imperfective	Aff Neg	HL tone N-vb tā N-vb pá
Progressive	Aff Neg	<i>bá wá</i> N-vb tā <i>bá wá</i> N-vb pá
General Future	Aff Neg	<i>gō</i> vb tā <i>gō</i> vb pá
General Future Imperfective	Aff Neg	<i>gō pá</i> vb tā <i>gō pá</i> vb pá
General Future Progressive	Aff Neg	<i>gō pá wá</i> vb tā <i>gō pá wá</i> vb pá
Near Future	Aff Neg	<i>gō tí</i> vb tā <i>gō tí</i> vb pá
Near Future Imperfective	Aff Neg	<i>gō tí pá</i> vb tā <i>gō tí pá</i> vb pá
Near Future Progressive	Aff Neg	<i>gō tí pá wá</i> vb tā <i>gō tí pá wá</i> vb pá
Remote Future	Aff Neg	<i>gō ɣwá</i> vb tā <i>gō ɣwá</i> vb pá
Remote Future Imperfective	Aff Neg	<i>gō ɣwá pá</i> vb tā <i>gō ɣwá pá</i> vb pá
Remote Future Progressive	Aff Neg	<i>gō ɣwá pá wá</i> vb tā <i>gō ɣwá pá wá</i> vb pá
Perfect	Aff Neg	LH tone vb kā vb (pá)
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	Aff Neg	Ø vb ---

Table 22 shows that Ghomala? distinguishes two standard negation patterns. One of the two standard negation patterns in Ghomala?, namely, ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’, involves the use of the double negative marker **tā...pá** or **tā...pá**. The double negative marker **tā...pá** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain any of the tense-aspect markings discussed in section 5.4, except declarative verbal main clauses which contain the marker used to indicate the Perfect or the construction used to indicate the Imperfective. Noteworthy is that the double negative **tā...pá** does not have the same distribution in all clauses. The distribution of the double negative **tā...pá** is described as follows:

- when occurring in main clauses which contain a past tense marker, its first particle, that is, **tā** occurs after the past tense marker and before the verb, while its second particle, that is, **pá** occurs in the clause final position (see 117 below).
- when occurring in main clauses which contain a future tense marker, its first particle occurs before the general future marker and the verb, while its second particle occurs in the clause final position (see 118 below).

- in main clauses which do not contain a tense marker, but have at least one aspect marker, the first particle of the double negative **tā...pá** occurs before the aspect marker and the verb, while its second particle appears in the clause final position (see 119 below).

(117) **ē kā tā bá wá gō sākú pá**
ē kā tā N₇.pá wá N₁.yō sākú pá
3s N_PST NEG₁ N₇.IPFV PROG N₁.go school NEG₂
‘S/he was not going to school.’ (yesterday or some time before yesterday)

(118) **ē tā gō tí pá wá yō sākú pá**
ē tā N₄.yō tí pá wá yō sākú pá
3s NEG₁ N₄.G_FUT N_FUT IPFV PROG go school NEG₂
‘S/he is not going to be going to school.’ (tomorrow or any time before a year as from the day after the speech moment)

(119) **ē tā bá wá gwá? gəfə pá**
ē tā N₇.pá wá N₁.wá? gəfə pá
3s NEG₁ N₇.IPFV PROG N₁.grind maize NEG₂
‘S/he is not grinding maize.’ (now)

The double negative marker **tā...pá** is exclusively used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the construction used to indicate the Imperfective. This is illustrated in 120 below.

(120) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘New Year’s celebration’

<p>(120a) Affirmative form</p> <p>ê ñtóm pû jóq ê N₁-tóm pû jóq 3s.IPFV N₁-hold hands our</p> <p>‘He holds our hands.’ (permanently)</p>	<p>(120b) Negative form of the speaker’s statement</p> <p>ē tâ ñtóm pû jóq pá ē tâ N₁-tóm pû jóq pá 3s NEG₁.IPFV N₁-hold hands our NEG₂</p> <p>‘He does not hold our hands.’ (permanently)</p>
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Another standard negation pattern in Ghomala?, namely, ‘**NEG₁...(NEG₂)**’, involves the use of the pre-verbal negative particle **kā** and the optional post-verbal negative particle (**pá**).⁵⁴ The negative marker **kā...(pá)** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the marker of the Perfect. The pre-verbal negative particle occurs after the subject of the clause and before the verb, while the optional post-verbal negative particle occurs in the clause final position. This is illustrated in (121) below.

⁵⁴ The occurrence of the negative particle **pá** in brackets means that it is optional or may be left out without changing the meaning of the negative clause.

(121) Context: question: How did you find his reading? (the speaker is talking about a man who has just ended to read a passage)

(121.a) Reply

ě kέ pàpùṅ
3s.PRF read well

‘He has read well.’

(121.b) Negative form of the reply

ē kā kέ pàpùṅ (pó)
3s NEG₁ read well NEG₂

‘He has not read well.’

A comparison of positive and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Table 22 above indicates that cases of asymmetry in construction and paradigm occur in the expression of standard negation in Ghomala?. The asymmetries in construction relate to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses which contain the construction used to indicate the Hodiernal Past, as well as declarative verbal main clauses which contain the markers used to indicate the Perfect, the Near Past, and the Remote past.

Negating a declarative verbal main clause which contains the near past marker **kā** or the remote past marker **lā**, triggers the obligatory alternation of the near past marker and the remote past marker into **kā** and **lā**, respectively. This is illustrated in example (122) below.

(122) Context: question: What did your brother do yesterday?

(122.a) Reply

ē kā wó? gǎfǎ
3s N_PST grind maize

‘He ground maize.’

(122.b) Negative form of the reply

ē kā tǎ wó? gǎfǎ pǎ
3s N_PST NEG₁ grind maize NEG₂

‘He did not grind maize.’

As shown in example (122), the vowel **ǎ** of the near past marker (N_PST) becomes **ā** when the near past marker is immediately followed by the first particle of the double negative **tǎ...pǎ**. The motivation for this vowel modification has not been identified in this study.

The asymmetry involving the negation of declarative verbal main clauses that contain the construction used to indicate the Hodiernal Past is manifested by the failure of the nasal consonant prefix to appear before the verb in negative clauses (recall that a nasal consonant prefix is always attached to the verb following the hodiernal past marker in affirmative clauses). Furthermore, the consonant [k-] may be freely prefixed to the hodiernal past marker in negative clauses, but never in affirmative ones. Thus, the markers **ê** and **kê** may be used interchangeably as the hodiernal past marker in Ghomala’s negative clauses.

(123) Context: question: What have your brothers done today?

(123.a) Reply

wáp ê gò gó
wáp ê N₁.yò gó
3p H_PST N₁.go farm

‘They went to the farm.’

(123.b) Negative form of the reply

wáp (k)ê tǎ yò gó pǎ
3p H_PST NEG₁ go farm NEG₂

‘They did not go to the farm.’

The asymmetry related to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses that contain the perfect marker is revealed through the complete loss of the perfect marker (a tone alternation on the subject of the clause, see 5.4.19 above) in negative clauses. This is shown in the example in (121) above which is repeated here for convenience.

(124) Context: question: How did you find his reading? (the speaker is talking about a man who has just ended to read a passage)

(124.a) Reply

ě kέ pəpùŋ
3s.PRF read well

‘He has read well.’

(124.b) Negative form of the reply

ē kā kέ pəpùŋ (pə)
3s NEG₁ read well NEG₂

‘He has not read well.’

As suggested by the example (124), the negative marker **kā... (pə)** prevents the occurrence of the perfect marker in the negative clause. Therefore, it might be analysed as a negative variant of the perfect marker.

An asymmetry in paradigm appears in the expression of standard negation in Ghomala?: the absence of the negative counterpart of Unmarked Tense-Aspect (see Table 22 above).

This chapter has focused on the description of the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ghomala?. The chapter’s major arguments are:

- tense and aspect connect to give twenty tense-aspect categories in Ghomala? indicated by a single marker (a free-standing marker or a tonal modification), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking,
- Ghomala? distinguishes two standard negation patterns: ‘**NEG₁...NEG₂**’ which involves the use of the double negative marker **tā...pə** or **tā...pə** and ‘**NEG₁...(NEG₂)**’ which involves the use of the pre-verbal negative particle **kā** and the optional post-verbal negative particle **pə**,
- there are cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation in Ghomala?.

CHAPTER VI

6 Tense-Aspect and Standard Negation in Ngombale

This chapter discusses the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ngombale. It comprises six sections which are parallel to the six sections of the preceding chapter in terms of the objective pursued in each section.

6.1 Structure of the Main Clause

The linear ordering of elements within the main clause in Ngombale may be schematised as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
NEG	SBJ	N-	T	AA	NEG	N-	T	EMP	T	A	N-	Root	-EXT	EMP	OBJ	ADV	NEG

Position 1. This position may be occupied by the negative marker **kā**. The negative marker **kā** is discussed in detail in section 6.6 below.

Position 2. Position 2 is occupied by a noun in subject position or a subject pronoun. The subject pronouns of Ngombale that have been clearly identified in this study (simple human subject pronouns) are listed in Table 23 below.

Table 23: Subject pronouns in Ngombale

Person/number	Form	Gloss
1s	məŋ, N	I
2s	ò	you
3s	à	he/she
3s	ə	it
1p	pwəʔ	we
2p	pè	you
3p	yáp	they

Position 3. This position may be filled by the first-person-singular pronoun nasal prefix (see section 6.2). This nasal prefix may be attached to the verb and to verb-related elements that are immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun. More will be said about the nasal consonant prefix in Ngombale in section 6.2.

Position 4. This slot may be occupied by a tense marker which locates situations in the past. For example, the hodiernal past marker **jă/tě**.

Position 5. This position may be filled by any of the adverbial auxiliaries found in Ngombale. The following items represent examples of adverbial auxiliaries in Ngombale: **pjé** ‘still’, **náʔ** ‘a bit’, **tʃúʔ** ‘after’.

Position 6. Position 6 may be occupied by the negative particle **pó**. The negative particle **pó** may function either as the second particle or the first particle of a double negative marker. When co-occurring with the negative marker mentioned in position 1 above, it functions as the second

particle of the double negative **kā...pá**, whereas when co-occurring with the negative marker **pá**, (see position 18) it acts as the first particle of the double negative marker **pá...pá**.

Position 7. This position may be occupied by a linking nasal prefix (see section 6.2). This nasal prefix is attached to the general future marker.

Position 8. Position 8 may be filled by the general future marker **ywò**.

Position 9. This position may be occupied by an emphatic pronoun. Emphatic pronouns are used in Ngombale to refer back to the subject of the clause. Also, they only occur in negative clauses. It will be shown in section 6.6 that there are various emphatic pronouns in Ngombale which are selected depending on the subject of the clause.

Position 10. This slot may be occupied by the remote future marker **yū**.

Position 11. This slot may be occupied by the imperfective marker **pá~má**.

Position 12. This is another slot for the linking nasal prefix. Note this position is filled in the following two cases:

- position 8 is filled, position 10 is empty, and the sentence is in the negative form as in example (146) below.
- position 11 is filled and the situation denoted by the verb is associated with the present or the past tense meaning as in example (135) below.

Position 13. Position 13 contains the verb root. Verb roots in Ngombale are basically monosyllabic with one of the following two major syllable structures: CV, for example, **nó** ‘drink’, **ŋá** ‘give’ and CVC, for example, **nóŋ** ‘inhale’, **fùŋ** ‘pull’. Two classes of verb roots can be distinguished in Ngombale on the basis of their lexical tones: high and low tone verb roots. Also, irrespective of their lexical tones, verb roots in Ngombale may take a nasal consonant prefix.

Position 14. This position may be occupied by a verbal extension. Two verbal extensions can be distinguished in Ngombale, namely, **-tə** which is roughly associated with the plural meaning: the verb **kwú** ‘die’ becomes **kwútə** ‘die in great numbers’, and vowel lengthening or copying which basically yields the meaning of reciprocity or reflexivity: the verb **bú?** ‘hit’, becomes **bú?ú** ‘fight’; the copied-vowel (**-ú**) adds the meaning of reciprocity to the verb. Verbal extensions in Ngombale appear to take their tone from the vowel of the preceding syllable by tone spreading. Moreover, only one extension may occur on a single verb.

Position 15. This is a second slot for the emphatic pronoun. Note positions 9 and 15 cannot be filled simultaneously.

Position 16. Position 16 may contain the object of the clause. This might be a nominal or a pronominal object.

Position 17. Position 17 may be filled by items, such as adverbs, prepositional phrases or indirect objects.

Position 18. This position may be occupied by the negative marker **pá**. Positions 18 and 1 are mutually exclusive.

6.2 General Comments

This section provides information about the nasal prefix and a case of grammatically versus lexically conditioned allomorphy observed in Ngombale.

6.2.1 The Nasal Consonant Prefix

The nasal consonant prefix which may precede the verb and some verb-related elements in Ngombale's main clauses bears a high tone. Ngombale does not allow the prefixing of a nasal consonant before words which begin with a voiceless fricative; [f, s, ʃ]. In this case, the nasal consonant is realised as [ǎ-]. In other words, /N-/ becomes [ǎ-] before words which begin with a voiceless fricative in Ngombale. Three types of nasal consonant prefix in Ngombale are described in this study:

- (N₁-): this nasal is attached to the verb. It links the verb to a preceding verb-related element.

(125)	à	pó	ǎgāptǎ	ǎkáp
	à	pó	N ₁ -ǎptǎ	ǎkáp
	3s	IPFV	N ₁ -distribute	money
	'S/he distributes money.' (as a habit)			

The nasal consonant that occurs before the verb **ǎptǎ** 'distribute' in example (125) links the verb to a preceding verb-related element, namely, the imperfective marker (IPFV) **pó**.

- (N₂-): this nasal occurs before verbs or before verb-related elements that are immediately preceded by the first-person-singular pronoun. It repeats the first-person-singular pronoun.

(126)	mǎǎ	ǎǎǎ	ǎbǎ	mǎǎǎǎǎǎǎ	léǎ	wó	mǎǎ	ǎǎǎǎ	kù
	mǎǎ	N ₂ -ǎǎ	N ₁ -pǎ	mǎǎǎǎǎǎǎ	léǎ	wó	mǎǎ	N ₂ -lǎǎǎ	kù
	1s	N ₂ -H_PST	N ₁ -be	morning	day	this	1s	N ₂ -wake.up	bed
	'I woke up from bed this morning (...)'								

The nasal prefix that appears before the hodiernal past marker **ǎǎ** and the verb **lǎǎǎ** 'wake up' in example (126) repeats the subject pronoun **mǎǎ** 'I'.

- (N₃-): this nasal is prefixed to the verb. It ties a series of clauses into a coherent whole.

(127)	mǎǎ	ǎǎǎ	pǎ	sǎkwǎ	ǎgwǎ	jé	fǎǎ	mǎ	wó
	mǎǎ	N ₂ -lǎ	pǎ	sǎkwǎ	N ₃ -ǎgwǎ	jé	fǎǎ	mǎ	wó
	1s	N ₂ -R_PST	leave	school	N ₃ -go	to	work.place	mother	my
	'I left school (on that day) and went to my mother's work place.'								

The nasal prefix that appears before the verb **ǎgwǎ** 'go' in example (127) ties two clauses into a coherent whole.

6.2.2 Grammatically versus Lexically Conditioned Allomorphy

The marker **pǎ** which alternates with **mǎ** has been analysed in this study as the imperfective marker in Ngombale. This means there are two variants of the imperfective marker in Ngombale. The selection of either variant is conditioned by the grammatical context or the lexical context in which the imperfective marker appears. Concerning the grammatical context, the imperfective marker in Ngombale is realised as [mǎ] after the hodiernal past marker **ǎǎ/tǎ**

and [pǎ] after all other tense markers, for example, the near past marker kǎ, the general future marker ywǎ. As for the lexical context, the imperfective marker in Ngombale is realised as [pǎ] after all nouns and all subject pronouns, except the first-person-singular subject pronoun (see Table 31) and [mǎ] after the first-person-singular subject pronoun.

6.3 Overview of the Tense-Aspect System and Standard Negation in Ngombale

Ngombale distinguishes three degrees of past tense (hodiernal past, near past, remote past), a present tense, and two degrees of future tense (general future, remote future). Except for the present tense, which is not marked, tense in Ngombale is encoded by free-standing markers which all appear in pre-verbal position. A two-way aspectual division is observed in Ngombale: perfective and imperfective. The imperfective is indicated by a free-standing imperfective marker that occurs before the verb and has two variants, namely, [mǎ] or [pǎ]. The perfective is unmarked.

In addition to the above-mentioned tenses and aspects, Ngombale has an Unmarked Tense-Aspect marked for neither tense nor aspect, but which has three basic functions.

Also, some tense or aspect markers in Ngombale must be accompanied by a nasal prefix that typically occurs before the verb.

To negate declarative verbal main clauses, four standard negations patterns are used in Ngombale: (1) ‘NEG...E’, (2) ‘E...NEG’, (3) ‘NEG₁...NEG₂ N-...E (N-)’, and (4) ‘NEG₁ N-...E (N-) ...NEG₂’. Noteworthy is that each declarative verbal main clause in Ngombale may be negated using two freely interchangeable standard negation patterns.

6.4 Tense-Aspect Categories in Ngombale

Tense and aspect connect to give twelve tense-aspect categories in Ngombale. This refers to grammatical units that may be manifested by any of the following: a single marker (a free-standing marker), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect makers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking. Also, Ngombale’s tense-aspect categories may have one or more basic uses. The tense-aspect system of Ngombale can, thus, be analysed as operating according to twelve tense-aspect categories, namely: Hodiernal Past (H_PST), Hodiernal Past Imperfective (H_PST IPFV), Near Past (N_PST), Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV), Remote Past (R_PST), Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV), Imperfective (IPFV), General Future (G_FUT), General Future Imperfective (G_FUT IPFV), Remote Future (R_FUT), Remote Future Imperfective (R_FUT IPFV), and Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA). The markings used to encode the tense-aspect categories in Ngombale are shown in the overview in Table 24 below.

Table 24: Tense-aspect markings in Ngombale

<i>T</i> \ <i>A</i>	<i>Perfective</i>	<i>Imperfective</i>
Hodiernal Past	jǎ/tě N-	jǎ/tě mó N-
Near Past	kò	kò pó N-
Remote Past	lò	lò pó N-
Present		mó, pó N-
General Future	ɣwò	ɣwò pó
Remote Future	ɣwò ɣũ	ɣwò ɣũ pó

6.4.1 Hodiernal Past (H_PST) jǎ/tě N-vb

The Hodiernal Past is indicated by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the marker **jǎ** or **tě** and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Hodiernal Past describes past perfective situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made. The markers **jǎ** and **tě** are used interchangeably.

(128) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he has done this morning.

mòŋ jǎ mbó mbà?ám-bà? lé? wó mòŋ ndòsé kù
 mòŋ N₂-jǎ N₁-pó mbà?ám-bà? lé? wó mòŋ N₂-lòsé kù
 1s N₂-H_PST N₁-be morning day this 1s N₂-wake.up bed
 ‘I woke up from bed this morning (...)’

6.4.2 Hodiernal Past Imperfective (H_PST IPFV) jǎ/tě mó N-vb

The Hodiernal Past Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the hodiernal past marker **jǎ** or **tě**, the imperfective marker **mó**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Hodiernal Past Imperfective describes situations which were ongoing on the day of the utterance, but before the time of speaking.

(129) Context: Q: What were you doing? (I am knocking at the door since about 30 min).

mòŋ jǎ mó ndé
 mòŋ N₂-jǎ mó N₁-lé
 1s N₂-H_PST IPFV N₁-sleep
 ‘I was sleeping.’

6.4.3 Near Past (N_PST) kò vb

The Near Past is indicated by the marker **kò** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations that took place less than one month before the moment of speech, except situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(130) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her brother did yesterday.

à kə pá zə́ ɣ́gwə́ mətá: ndzú mambí
 à kə pá zə́ N₃-ɣwə́ mətá: N₃-zú mambí
 3s N_PST be yesterday N₃-go market N₃-buy goat
 ‘He went to the market yesterday and bought a goat.’

6.4.4 Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV) kə pá N-vb

The Near Past Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the near past marker **kə**, the imperfective marker **pá**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Near Past Imperfective describes situations which were ongoing in the near past, that is, less than one month before the moment of speech, except on the day the utterance is made.

(131) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother yesterday.

à kə pá ɣ́ɣé ʔə́ mə́ndò
 à kə pá N₁-ɣé ʔə́ mə́ndò
 3s N_PST IPFV N₁-walk in forest
 ‘He was walking in the forest (...)’

6.4.5 Remote Past (R_PST) lə vb

The Remote Past is expressed by the marker **lə** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations which took place either a month ago or any time before that.

(132) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘a motorbike accident’

ə́ lə pá lə ɣ́gù tósè pwó lə sə́bwó lé? jé 20 mē mən
 it R_PST be on year thousand two with seven day of 20 May 1s
 ‘It was in the year 2007, (on) the day of 20th May (Cameroon’s national day). I (...)’

ndə́ pə́ səkʷá ɣ́gwə́ jé fà? mə́ wó
 N₂-lə́ pə́ səkʷá N₃-ɣwə́ jé fà? mə́ wó
 N₂-r_pst leave school N₃-go to work.place mother my
 left school (on that day) and went to my mother’s work place.’

6.4.6 Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV) lə pá N-vb

The Remote Past Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the remote past marker **lə**, the imperfective marker **pá**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Remote Past Imperfective describes situations which were ongoing in the remote past (one month ago or any time before that). The Remote Past Imperfective also describes past habitual situations.

(133) Context: Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last year at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?)

à lǎ pǎ mbí ñgǎsǎŋ
à lǎ pǎ N₁-pí ñgǎsǎŋ
3s R_PST IPFV N₁-sow maize
‘He was sowing maize.’

(134) Context: Q: What was your brother doing as a profession when he was still living in the village?

à lǎ pǎ ndzú? ñgǎsǎŋ
à lǎ pǎ N₁-zú? ñgǎsǎŋ
3s R_PST IPFV N₁-cultivate maize
‘He used to cultivate maize.’

6.4.7 Imperfective (IPFV) pǎ~mǎ N-vb

The Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the imperfective marker **pǎ~mǎ** and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Imperfective describes situations performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time. It implies that the situation described still holds true at the moment of speech. The Imperfective may also be used to describe situations ongoing at the moment of speech.

(135) Context: Q: What does your sister usually do when she is happy?

à pǎ ñgǎptǎ ñkǎp
à pǎ N₁-ǎptǎ ñkǎp
3s IPFV N₁-distribute money
‘She distributes money.’

(136) Context: Tell me about what you can see through the window (right now).

mǎ mbíŋé yǎp mǎ mǎŋjé pǎ ntám bǎlŋ
mǎ mbíŋé yǎp mǎ mǎŋjé pǎ N₁-tám bǎlŋ
child male and child female IPFV N₁-play football
‘A boy and a girl are playing football.’

6.4.8 General Future (G_FUT) ywǎ vb

The General Future is expressed by the marker **ywǎ** which precedes the verb. It describes future perfective situations that are expected to occur on the day the utterance is made.

(137) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is planning to do later today.

pǎ ywǎ mjáq fǎ? jǎp mǎŋ ñgwǎ ntǎ mǎlú?
pǎ ywǎ mjáq fǎ? jǎp mǎŋ N₂-ywǎ N₃-tǎ mǎlú?
1p G_FUT finish work our 1s N₂-go N₃-harvest wine
‘We are going to finish our work, (then) I am going to go and harvest wine.’

6.4.9 General Future Imperfective (G_FUT IPFV) $\gamma w\grave{o}$ $p\acute{o}$ vb

The General Future Imperfective is expressed by means of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker $\gamma w\grave{o}$ followed by the imperfective marker $p\acute{o}$. It describes situations which will be in progress on the day of speaking.

(138) Context: Q: What do you think your sister is going to be doing when we arrive tonight? (What activity will she be engaged in?)

\grave{a} $\gamma w\grave{o}$ $p\acute{o}$ $p\acute{a}?$ $t^h w\acute{o}$ $m\hat{o}$ $j\acute{e}$
3s G_FUT IPFV plait head child her

‘She is going to be plaiting the head (=hair) of her child.’

6.4.10 Remote Future (R_FUT) $\gamma w\grave{o}$ $\gamma\bar{u}$ vb

The Remote Future is expressed by the marker $\gamma\bar{u}$ which must co-occur with the general future marker $\gamma w\grave{o}$. It describes future perfective situations which will take place in the remote future (either the day after the speech moment or any time thereafter).

(139) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her brother is going to do next week.

\grave{a} $\gamma w\grave{o}$ $\gamma\bar{u}$ $p\acute{i}$ $\eta g\bar{a}s\acute{a}\eta$
3s G_FUT R_FUT sow maize

‘He is going to sow maize.’

6.4.11 Remote Future Imperfective (R_FUT IPFV) $\gamma w\grave{o}$ $\gamma\bar{u}$ $p\acute{o}$ vb

The Remote Future Imperfective is expressed by means of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker $\gamma w\grave{o}$, the remote future marker $\gamma\bar{u}$, and the imperfective marker $p\acute{o}$, in that order. It describes situations which will be in progress in the remote future, that is, either the day after the time of speaking or any time thereafter.

(140) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next Sunday? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive)?

\grave{a} $\gamma w\grave{o}$ $\gamma\bar{u}$ $p\acute{o}$ $p\acute{i}$ $\eta g\bar{a}s\acute{a}\eta$
3s G_FUT R_FUT IPFV sow maize

‘He is going to be sowing maize.’

6.4.12 Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA) \emptyset vb

Unmarked Tense-Aspect is marked for neither tense nor aspect. It may express a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred. Unmarked Tense-Aspect may also be used to present a current state without any implication of how this state came about. When used in discourse (narration, description, exposition, etc.), it replaces a tense-aspect marking already employed either explicitly, that is, using an explicit tense-aspect marking, or implicitly, that is, without any tense-aspect marking, since the speech-act participants already know the context.

(141) Context: The speaker is talking about a baby who looks hungry.

ò Ø ɲó mǎzû mbō mǎ
 2s UTA give food to baby
 ‘Have you fed the baby?’

(142) Context: The speaker is talking about the house in which s/he lives.

ò Ø yú?
 it UTA be.big
 ‘It is big.’

(143) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother as a child.

à lǎ pǎ ɲɲé ʈǎ mǎndò nděʔzwómí ā Ø tǎ? kù jé
 à lǎ pǎ N₁-ɲé ʈǎ mǎndò nděʔzwómí ā Ø tǎ? kù jé
 3s R_PST IPFV N₁-walk in forest suddenly 3s UTA put foot his
 ‘He was walking in the forest, suddenly, he put his foot (=stepped) (...)’

ndù nó ā Ø tsó jé ā Ø pjé lǎyǒ mmà? ndù zú
 ndù nó ā Ø tsó jé ā Ø pjé lǎyǒ N₃-mà? ndù zú
 on snake it UTA bite him 3s UTA take stone N₃-throw on it
 on a snake, the snake bit him, he took (=picked up) a stone and threw (it) at the snake.’

In example (141), Unmarked Tense-Aspect describes a past action whose end is interpreted as having just occurred. Example (142) has a present state interpretation. In (143), Unmarked Tense-Aspect replaces a marker already employed, namely, the remote past marker *lǎ*.

6.5 Final Remarks on the Description of the Tense-Aspect Categories

This section includes a discussion on the structure of tense-aspect categories, the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect, and the similarity in form of tense-aspect markers to lexical verbs.

6.5.1 Structure of Tense-Aspect Categories

On the basis of the analysis in section 6.4, one can distinguish eight types of structure for the tense-aspect categories in Ngombale illustrated in Table 25 below.

Table 25: Tense-aspect structures in Ngombale

		<i>Structure</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
1	Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA)	Ø vb	Ø lé UTA sleep
2	General Future (G_FUT)	T vb	ɣwò lé G_FUT sleep
3	Hodiernal Past (H_PST)	T N-vb	jǎ́ n-dé H_PST N ₁ -sleep
4	Remote Future (R_FUT)	T T vb	ɣwò yū lé G_FUT R_FUT sleep
5	Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV)	T A N-vb	kò pó n-dé N_PST IPFV N ₁ -sleep
6	Imperfective (IPFV)	A N-vb	pó n-dé IPFV N ₁ -sleep
7	General Future Imperfective (G_FUT IPFV)	T A vb	ɣwò pó lé G_FUT IPFV sleep
8	Remote Future Imperfective (R_FUT IPFV)	T T A vb	ɣwò yū pó lé G_FUT R_FUT IPFV sleep

6.5.2 About the Semantic Combination of the Notions of Tense and Aspect

It has been shown in the discussion in section 6.4 that there are certain restrictions on the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Ngombale. This is illustrated in Table 26 below.

Table 26: Overview of the combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Ngombale

	<i>perfective (pfv)</i>	<i>habitual (hab)</i>	<i>progressive (prog)</i>
hodiernal past (h-pst)	h-pst pfv		h-pst prog
near past (n-pst)	n-pst pfv		n-pst prog
remote past (r-pst)	r-pst pfv	r-pst hab	r-pst prog
present (prs)		prs hab	prs prog
hodiernal future (h-fut)	h-fut pfv		h-fut prog
remote future (r-fut)	r-fut pfv		r-fut prog

As shown in Table 26, the present tense is not compatible with the perfective in Ngombale. A possible explanation can be found in 3.5.2 above. Table 26 also shows that Ngombale does not allow the combination of future tenses with the habitual. In 3.5.2, a hypothesis has been posited to explain the incompatibility observed in Ngiemboon as regards the combination of future tenses with the habitual. That hypothesis also holds for Ngombale. It also appears from Table 26 that the combination of the habitual with the hodiernal past tense, as well as the near past tense is not allowed in Ngombale. Thus, one can argue that the degrees of past tense (hodiernal past, near past, remote past) are neutralised with the habitual in Ngombale, which focuses on the remote past.

6.5.3 About the Similarity in Form of Tense-Aspect Markers to Lexical Verbs

Just like Ngiemboon and Ghomala? (see Chapters Three and Five above), Ngombale shows a similarity in form between tense-aspect markers and verbs which have full lexical meaning. The general future marker **ɣwò** is identical in form to the verb **ɣwò** ‘go’, the remote future marker **ɣū** is formally closely similar to the verb **ɣū** ‘do’, and the imperfective marker **pó~mó** is identical in form to the verb **pó** ‘be’.

6.6 Standard Negation

This section examines standard negation in Ngombale. It concentrates on the description of the means used to indicate standard negation and the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation. The means used to indicate standard negation in Ngombale are shown in the overview in Table 27 below.

Table 27: Affirmative and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Ngombale.

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Hodiernal Past	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	jǎ/tě N-vb kā... jǎ/tě N-vb E jǎ/tě N-vb E Pó
Hodiernal Past Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	jǎ/tě mó N-vb kā... jǎ/tě mó N-vb E jǎ/tě mó N-vb E Pó
Near Past	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	kè vb kā... kè vb E kè vb E Pó
Near Past Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	kè pó N-vb kā... kè pó N-vb E kè pó N-vb E Pó
Remote Past	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	lè vb kā... lè vb E lè vb E Pó
Remote Past Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	lè pó N-vb kā... lè pó N-vb E lè pó N-vb E Pó
Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	mó, pó N-vb kā... mó, pó N-vb E mó, pó N-vb E Pó
General Future	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	ɣwò vb kā... pó N-gwò E (N-) vb pó N-gwò E (N-) vb Pó
General Future Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	ɣwò pó vb kā... pó N-gwò E pó vb pó N-gwò E pó vb Pó

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Remote Future	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	γwò γū vb kā...pó N-gwò E γū vb pó N-gwò E γū vb Pó
Remote Future Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	γwò γū pó vb kā...pó N-gwò E γū pó vb pó N-gwò E γū pó vb Pó
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	Aff Neg₁ Neg₂	Ø kā...Ø vb E Ø vb E Pó

As shown in Table 27, Ngombale distinguishes four standard negation patterns: (1) ‘**NEG...E**’, (2) ‘**E...NEG**’, (3) ‘**NEG₁...NEG₂ N-...E (N-)**’, and (4) ‘**NEG₁ N-...E (N-) ...NEG₂**’. Table 27 also reveals that negating declarative verbal main clauses in Ngombale always involves an emphatic pronoun (**E**).

The emphatic pronoun in Ngombale refers back to the subject of the clause and, thus, is considered as a marker of subject emphasis. Also, it changes depending on the subject of the clause. It is, for instance, always **jé** when the subject of the clause is the third-person-singular pronoun. Table 28 below shows the various forms of the emphatic pronoun in Ngombale.

Table 28: Subject pronouns with their corresponding emphatic pronouns in Ngombale

<i>Person/number</i>	<i>Subject pronoun</i>	<i>Emphatic pronoun</i>
1s	mə̀ŋ, N	γâ
2s	ò	γô
3s	à	jé
1p	pwò?	wô
2p	pè	wé
3p	γáp	γáp

‘**NEG...E**’ involves the use of the negative marker **kā** that precedes the verb and an emphatic pronoun (**E**) which immediately follows the verb. ‘**E...NEG**’ involves the use of two post-verbal elements: an emphatic pronoun and the negative marker **pó**. These standard negation patterns are used interchangeably to negate all declarative verbal main clauses in Ngombale, except declarative verbal main clauses which contain a future tense marker. It is important to note that the negative marker **kā** always occurs at the clause initial position, whereas the negative marker **pó** is always found at the end of the clause.

(144) Context: Q: What did your brother do yesterday?

Reply

- (144a) à kò pí ñgāsán
3s N_PST sow maize
‘He sowed maize.’

Negative form of the reply

- (144b) **kā à kò pí jé ñgāsáŋ**
 NEG 3s N_PST sow EMP maize
 ‘He did not sow maize.’

- (144c) **à kò pí jé ñgāsáŋ pó**
 3s N_PST sow EMP maize NEG
 ‘He did not sow maize.’

(145) Context: Q: What is your brother doing right now?

Reply

- (145a) **à pó mbí ñgāsáŋ**
à pó N₁-pí ñgāsáŋ
 3s IPFV N₁-sow maize
 ‘He is sowing maize.’

Negative form of the reply

- (145b) **kā à pó mbí jé ñgāsáŋ**
kā à pó N₁-pí jé ñgāsáŋ
 NEG 3s IPFV N₁-sow EMP maize
 ‘He is not sowing maize.’

- (145c) **à pó mbí jé ñgāsáŋ pó**
à pó N₁-pí jé ñgāsáŋ pó
 3s IPFV N₁-sow EMP maize NEG
 ‘He is not sowing maize.’

The clauses in (144a) and (145a) do not contain a future tense marker. Therefore, they are negated using the marker ‘**kā...E**’ or ‘**E...pó**’.

‘**NEG₁...NEG₂ N-...E (N-)**’ consists of three obligatory pre-verbal elements: the double negative marker **kā...pó**, a nasal prefix ‘**N-**’, and an emphatic pronoun. ‘**NEG₁ N-...E (N-)...NEG₂**’ consists of the double negative marker **pó...pó**, a nasal prefix, and an emphatic pronoun (note that the first particle of the double negative **pó...pó** always precedes the verb, while its second particle always occurs after the verb). These other standard negation patterns are used interchangeably to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain a future tense marker. The nasal prefix which appears in each of these two standard negation patterns is always attached to the general future marker. Furthermore, it seems to get duplicated, that is, it occurs twice in the same construction (before the general future marker and before the verb) if the verb immediately follows the emphatic pronoun. This is shown in examples (146) and (147) below.

(146) Context: Q: What is your sister going to cook today?

Reply

- (146a) **à ywò lá pà**
 3s G_FUT cook fufu.corn
 ‘She is going to cook fufu corn.’

Negative form of the reply

- (146b) **kā à pǎ́ ńgwò jé ńdà pà**
kā à pǎ́ N₁-yǔwò jé N₁-lá pà
 NEG₁ 3s NEG₂ N₁-G_FUT EMP N₁-cook fufu.corn
 ‘She is not going to cook fufu corn.’

- (146c) **à pǎ́ ńgwò jé ńdà pà pǎ́**
à pǎ́ N₁-yǔwò jé N₁-lá pà pǎ́
 3s NEG₁ N₁-G_FUT EMP N₁-cook fufu.corn NEG₂
 ‘She is not going to cook fufu corn.’

(147) Context: Q: What is your sister going to cook tomorrow?

Reply

- (147a) **à yǔwò yū lá pà**
 3s G_FUT R_FUT cook fufu.corn
 ‘She is going to cook fufu corn.’

Negative form of the reply

- (147b) **kā à pǎ́ ńgwò jé yū lá pà**
kā à pǎ́ N₁-yǔwò jé yū lá pà
 NEG₁ 3s NEG₂ N₁-G_FUT EMP R_FUT cook fufu.corn
 ‘She is not going to cook fufu corn.’

- (147c) **à pǎ́ ńgwò jé yū lá pà pǎ́**
à pǎ́ N₁-yǔwò jé yū lá pà pǎ́
 3s NEG₁ N₁-G_FUT EMP R_FUT cook fufu.corn NEG₂
 ‘She is not going to cook fufu corn.’

The following table provides a summary of the strategies used for standard negation in Ngombale.

Table 29: Standard negation in Ngombale

<i>Standard negation type</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Features</i>
I	kā...vb E	Clause initial negative marker, use to negate all declarative verbal main clauses which do not contain a future tense marker.
II	vb E pǎ́	Clause final negative marker, alternative negation strategy for declarative verbal main clauses which do not contain a future tense marker.
III	kā...pǎ́ N-...E (N-) vb	Double negative marker, the two particles of the double negative marker are obligatory and precede the verb, use to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain a future tense marker.

<i>Standard negation type</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Features</i>
IV	pǎ N-...E (N-) vb pǎ	Double negative marker, the two particles of the double negative marker are obligatory, also, the first negative particle precedes the verb, while the second negative particle occurs after the verb, alternative negation strategy for declarative verbal main clauses which contain a future tense marker.

When one considers positive and corresponding negative markings in Table 27, one notices that two cases of asymmetry in construction occur in the expression of standard negation in Ngombale. In addition to the presence of the negative marker, a positive declarative verbal main clause in Ngombale differs from its negative counterpart in that an emphatic pronoun (E) always appears in the negative clause, but never in the positive one. It should be noted that when occurring in negative clauses that do not contain a future tense marker, the emphatic pronoun immediately appears after the verb, whereas when occurring in negative clauses that contain a future tense marker, the emphatic pronoun is placed before the verb. This is illustrated in (148) and (149) below.

(148) Context: Q: What did your sister cook yesterday?

Reply

(148a) à kǎ lá pà
 3s N_PST cook fufu.corn
 ‘She cooked fufu corn.’

Negative form of the reply

(148b) kǎ à kǎ lá jé pà
 NEG 3s N_PST cook EMP fufu.corn
 ‘She did not cook fufu corn.’

(148c) à kǎ lá jé pà pǎ
 3s N_PST cook EMP fufu.corn NEG
 ‘She did not cook fufu corn.’

(149) Context: Q: What is your sister going to cook today?

Reply

(149a) à ywǎ lá pà
 3s G_FUT cook fufu.corn
 ‘She is going to cook fufu corn.’

Negative form of the reply

(149b) kǎ à pǎ ŋgwǎ jé lá pà
 kǎ à pǎ N₁-ywǎ jé lá pà
 NEG₁ 3s NEG₂ N₁-G_FUT EMP cook fufu.corn
 ‘She is not going to cook fufu corn.’

- (149c) à pǎ́ ḡgwǎ́ jé lá pà pǎ́
 à pǎ́ N₁-ḡwǎ́ jé lá pà pǎ́
 3s NEG₁ N₁-G_FUT EMP cook fufu.corn NEG₂
 ‘She is not going to cook fufu corn.’

Examples (148b) and (148c) do not contain a future tense marker. Therefore, the emphatic pronoun follows the verb in (148b) and (148c). Examples (149b) and (149c) contain the general future marker. The emphatic pronoun, thus, precedes the verb in (149b) and (149c).

Another asymmetry noted in the expression of standard negation in Ngombale is related to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses which contain the general future marker. In addition to the presence of the double negative marker **kā...pǎ́** or **pǎ́...pǎ́** and an emphatic pronoun, a positive declarative verbal main clause, which contains the general future marker, differs from its negative counterpart in that a nasal consonant prefix (N-) is always attached to the general future marker in the negative clause, but never in the positive one. Also, this nasal prefix may occur before the general future marker and before the verb in the same construction. This is illustrated in (150) below.

(150) Context: Q: What is your brother planning to do today?

Reply

- (150a) à ḡwǎ́ pǐ ḡḡǎ́sǎḡ
 3s G_FUT sow maize
 ‘He is going to sow maize.’

Negative form of the reply

- (150b) kā à pǎ́ ḡgwǎ́ jé mbí ḡḡǎ́sǎḡ
 kā à pǎ́ N₁-ḡwǎ́ jé N₁-pǐ ḡḡǎ́sǎḡ
 NEG₁ 3s NEG₂ N₁-G_FUT EMP N₁-sow maize
 ‘He is not going to sow maize.’

- (150c) à pǎ́ ḡgwǎ́ jé mbí ḡḡǎ́sǎḡ pǎ́
 à pǎ́ N₁-ḡwǎ́ jé N₁-pǐ ḡḡǎ́sǎḡ pǎ́
 3s NEG₁ N₁-G_FUT EMP N₁-sow maize NEG₂
 ‘He is not going to sow maize.’

This chapter has focused on the description of the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Ngombale. The chapter’s main arguments are:

- tense and aspect connect to give twelve tense-aspect categories in Ngombale indicated by a single marker (a free-standing marker), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect makers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking,
- Ngombale distinguishes four standard negation patterns: ‘**NEG...E**’ which involves the use of the negative marker **kā** and an emphatic pronoun, ‘**E...NEG**’ which involves the use of two post-verbal elements, namely, an emphatic pronoun and the negative marker **pǎ́**, ‘**NEG₁...NEG₂ N-...E (N-)**’ consisting of three obligatory pre-verbal elements, namely, the double negative marker **kā...pǎ́**, a nasal prefix ‘N-’ that may get duplicated, and an emphatic

pronoun, and ‘**NEG₁** N-...**E** (N-)...**NEG₂**’ which consists of the double negative marker **pá...pá**, a nasal prefix that may get duplicated, and an emphatic pronoun,

- there are cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation in Ngombale.

CHAPTER VII

7 Tense-Aspect and Standard Negation in Medumba

This chapter discusses the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Medumba. It comprises six sections which are parallel to the six sections of the preceding chapter in terms of the objective pursued in each section.

7.1 Structure of the Main Clause

The linear ordering of elements within the main clause in Medumba may be schematised as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
SBJ	T	NEG	AA	A	N-	Root	-EXT	-SUFF	OBJ	ADV

Position 1. This position is occupied by a nominal subject or a pronominal subject. The subject pronouns of Medumba that have been clearly identified in this study (simple human subject pronouns) are listed in Table 30 below.

Table 30: Subject pronouns in Medumba

Person/number	Form	Gloss
1s	mè	I
2s	ù	you
3s	à	he/she
1p	bàʔ	we
2p	bìn	you
3p	bù	they

It will be shown in section 7.4 that the perfect marker in Medumba surfaces on the element occurring in this position.

Position 2. This position may be filled by any of the tense markers that occur in Medumba. For example, the near past marker **fə**, the general future marker **àʔ**.

Position 3. Position 3 may be occupied by the negative marker **kə** or **kəʔ**.

Position 4. This position may be occupied by any of the adverbial auxiliaries found in Medumba. The following items represent examples of adverbial auxiliaries in Medumba: **bèn** ‘again’, **jă** ‘already’, **bə** ‘before’.

Position 5. This position may be filled by any of the aspect markers that occur in Medumba. For example, the imperfective marker **kó**.

Position 6. This slot may be occupied by a nasal consonant prefix. This nasal prefix is attached to the verb. More will be said about the nasal consonant prefix in Medumba in section 7.2.

Position 7. Position 7 contains the verb root. Verb roots in Medumba are basically monosyllabic with one of the following two major syllable structures: CV, for example, **nú** ‘drink’,

kò ‘love’ and CVC, for example, **kób** ‘cut’. Based on their lexical tones, verb roots in Medumba can be divided into two classes: high and low tone verb roots. Also, irrespective of their lexical tones, they may take a nasal consonant prefix.

Position 8. This position may be occupied by a verbal extension. Two verbal extensions can be distinguished in Medumba, namely, **-tə** and **-ni**. The extension **-tə** is roughly associated with the plural meaning. For example, the verb **kób** ‘cut’ becomes **kóbtə** ‘cut into several pieces’. The extension **-ni** yields the meaning of reciprocity. For example, the verb **kò** ‘love’ becomes **kòni** ‘love each other’. The two verbal extensions distinguished in Medumba seem to take their tone from the vowel of the preceding syllable by tone spreading. Moreover, they are mutually exclusive, that is, only one may occur on a single verb.

Position 9. This position may be occupied by the verbal suffix **/-ə/**. The verbal suffix is discussed in detail in section 7.2 below.

Position 10. This position may contain the object of the clause. This might be a nominal or a pronominal object.

Position 11. Position 11 may be filled by items such adverbs, prepositional phrases or indirect objects.

7.2 General Comments

This section includes a discussion on the nasal consonant prefix, the verbal suffix, and the various forms of the imperfective marker.

7.2.1 The Nasal Consonant Prefix

The nasal consonant prefix which may precede the verb and some verb-related elements (adverbial auxiliaries) in Medumba’s main clauses bears a low tone. It may be attached to all verbs. Two types of nasal consonant prefix in Medumba are described in this research:

- (N₁-): this nasal is prefix to the verb. It links the verb to a preceding verb-related element.

- (151) **à kó ntám ñzwé**
à kó N₁-tám ñzwé
 3s IPFV₁ N₁-sew clothes
 ‘S/he sews clothes.’ (day after day)

The nasal prefix that appears before the verb **tám** ‘sew’ in example (151) links the verb to the imperfective marker **kó**.

- (N₂-): this nasal prefix is attached to verbs and to adverbial auxiliaries. It ties a series of clauses into a coherent whole.

- (152) **mə ʔá? ndû kxuʔundə ñzū ñzó mē ɲvê**
mə ʔá? N₁-lû kxuʔundə N₂-zū ñzó mē N₂-vê
 1s H_PST N₁-wake.up bed N₂-brush teeth my N₂-give
 ‘I woke up from bed (today), and (I) brushed my teeth, and (I) gave (...)’

ñk̄p màkàlà? bû ñk̄p? mb̄ēn mbí?tá ñsí ñdò
 ñk̄p màkàlà? bû ñk̄p? N₂-b̄ēn N₁-bí?tá ñsí ñdò
 money fritters to children N₂-again N₁-sweep ground house
 money to buy fritters for the children, and (I) also swept the floor.'

The nasal consonant prefix that occurs before the verbs **zū** 'brush', **v̄** 'give', as well as the adverbial auxiliary **b̄ēn** 'again' in example (152) ties a series of clauses together into a coherent whole.

7.2.2 The Verbal Suffix

The Medumba language distinguishes a verbal suffix, namely, the vowel /-ə/. This verbal suffix is attached to verb roots which have an open (CV) or a closed (CVC) syllable structure to form the base form of the verb. This refers to the form of the verb without additional markers indicating grammar categories, such as tense, aspect or voice. The Medumba verbal suffix mainly surfaced on the verbs I collected in isolation, using a verb list.

According to Nganmou (1991), the verbal suffix in Medumba, together with its tone, assimilates to the vowel of the verb root when attached to a verb root which has a CV syllable structure. Moreover, when a CV verb root has a lexical low tone, the low tone of the verb root and the high tone of the verbal suffix merge into a low-high tone. This is illustrated in Table 31 below which was adapted from Nganmou (1991: 90).

Table 31: The verb base in Medumba

<i>Underlying form</i>	<i>Surface form</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
tó-ə	tó	'pierce'
zwí-ə	zwí	'kill'
tò-ə	tǒ	'govern'
là-ə	lǎ	'swim'
nèn-ə	nènə	'go'
jùb-ə	jùbə	'sing'

As evident from Table 31, the verbal suffix is overtly marked at the level of the surface structure when attached to a verb root which has a CVC syllable structure. It should be noted, however, that when a CVC verb root is followed by an expansion, for example, an object complement, the verbal suffix is deleted (Nganmou 1991: 93). This provides a logical explanation for its scarcity in my text data as well as the data obtained from the questionnaire. The verbal suffix in Medumba does not co-occur with a verbal extension.

7.2.3 About the Imperfective Marker in Medumba

The markers, **ká**, **nũm**, **b̄**, and **b̄á** have been analysed in this study as the various forms of the imperfective marker in Medumba. The salient fact about these markers is that their selection is conditioned by several factors: (1) the tense of the verb with which they co-occur, (2) the subdivision of the imperfective category into the concepts of habituality and progressiveness, and (3) whether or not the clause in which they occur is negated. Table 32 below provides a broad overview of the use of the imperfective marker in Medumba.

Table 32: The imperfective marker in Medumba

<i>Marker</i>	<i>Context</i>
kó (IPFV ₁)	a) It appears in affirmative as well as negative clauses where the verb describes a past progressive or a future progressive situation.
	b) It appears in affirmative clauses where the verb describes a past habitual situation, a present habitual situation or a future habitual situation.
	c) It appears in negative clauses where the verb describes a hodiernal future habitual situation or a near future habitual situation.
nũm (IPFV ₂), bê (IPFV ₃)	It appears in affirmative clauses where the verb describes a present habitual situation.
bó (IPFV ₄)	It is found in negative clauses where the verb describes a past habitual situation, a present habitual situation or a future habitual situation, except negative clauses where the verb describes a hodiernal future habitual situation or a near future habitual situation.

An observation which can be drawn from this brief presentation of the imperfective marker in Medumba is that the markers **nũm**, **bê**, and **kó** may be used interchangeably when the situation denoted by the verb is located in the present time. However, as will be shown in section 7.4 below, there are subtle differences between these markers as far as their interpretation is concerned.

7.3 Overview of the Tense-Aspect System and Standard Negation in Medumba

Medumba distinguishes three degrees of past tense (hodiernal past, near past, remote past), a present tense, and three degrees of future tense (general future, near future, remote future). Except for the present tense, which is not marked, tense in Medumba is encoded by free-standing markers which all occur in pre-verbal position. A three-way aspectual division is observed in Medumba: perfective, imperfective, and progressive. The imperfective is indicated by a free-standing imperfective marker which appears before the verb and has four variants, namely, [**nũm**], [**bê**], [**kó**] or [**bó**]. The progressive is indicated by a free-standing progressive marker that occurs before the verb. No perfective marking is observed in Medumba.

In addition, Medumba distinguishes a Perfect category which is indicated by means of a high tone alternation on the subject of the clause and an Unmarked Tense-Aspect, which is marked for neither tense nor aspect, but has one basic function.

Also, some tense or aspect markers in Medumba must be accompanied by a nasal consonant prefix that typically occurs before the verb.

To negate declarative verbal main clauses, Medumba makes use of a single standard negation pattern, namely, the ‘NEG’ pattern. It involves the use of the clausal negator **kə** or **kəʔ** that always occurs after the tense marker, whether it is a past tense marker or a future tense marker, and before the verb.

7.4 Tense-Aspect Categories in Medumba

Tense and aspect connect to give fifteen tense-aspect categories in Medumba. This refers to grammatical units that may be manifested by any of the following: a single marker (a free-

standing marker or a tonal modification), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking. Also, Medumba's tense-aspect categories may have one or more basic uses. The tense-aspect system of Medumba can, thus, be analysed as operating according to fifteen tense-aspect categories, namely: Hodiernal Past (H_PST), Near Past (N_PST), Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV), Remote Past (R_PST), Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV), Imperfective (IPFV), Progressive (PROG), General Future (G_FUT), General Future Imperfective (G_FUT IPFV), Near Future (N_FUT), Near Future Imperfective (N_FUT IPFV), Remote Future (R_FUT), Remote Future Imperfective (R_FUT IPFV), Perfect (PRF), and Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA). The markings used to encode the tense-aspect categories in Medumba are shown in the overview in Table 33 below.

Table 33: Tense-aspect markings in Medumba.

<i>T</i> \ <i>A</i>	<i>Perfective</i>	<i>Imperfective</i>	<i>Progressive</i>	<i>Perfect</i>
Hodiernal past	ʈʂáʔ N-			
Near past	fə N-	fə kó N-		
Remote past	lû/nâʔ	lû/nâʔ kó N-		
Present		nũm, bô, kó N-	ʈʂwěʔ N-	
General future	àʔ	àʔ kó N-		
Near future	àʔ ʈʂáʔ N-	àʔ ʈʂáʔ kó N-		
Remote future	àʔ zí N-	àʔ zí kó N-		
Perfect				H tone

7.4.1 Hodiernal Past (H_PST) ʈʂáʔ N-vb

The Hodiernal Past is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the hodiernal past marker ʈʂáʔ and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Hodiernal Past describes past perfective situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(153) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he has done earlier this morning.

mə ʈʂáʔ ñdû kxuʈndə ñzū ñzó mǝ
 mə ʈʂáʔ N₁-lû kxuʈndə N₂-zū ñzó mǝ
 1s H_PST N₁-wake.up bed N₂-brush teeth my

'I woke up from bed and brushed my teeth (...)'

7.4.2 Near Past (N_PST) fə N-vb

The Near Past is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the near past marker fə and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Near Past describes past perfective situations that took place less than one month before the moment of speech, except situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made.

(154) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he did yesterday.

à fə	m̀bə	ɲkɔ?	mə	Ø	lũ	kxuɣ̀ndə	nn̩n̩	ntɔnə	nz̩n̩
à fə	N ₁ -bə	ɲkɔ?	mə	Ø	lũ	kxuɣ̀ndə	N ₂ -n̩n̩	ntɔnə	N ₂ -z̩n̩
it	N_PST	N ₁ -be	yesterday	1s	UTA	wake.up	bed	N ₂ -go	market

‘It was yesterday, I woke up from bed, and went to the market, and bought (...)’

7.4.3 Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV) fə kó N-vb

The Near Past Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the near past marker **fə**, the imperfective marker **kó**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Near Past Imperfective describes situations which were ongoing in the near past (less than one month ago).

(155) Context: The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother about a week ago.

à fə	kó	nz̩n̩	ʈũm	ɣɔʔfɛn	m̀bɔv̩kó	ntú	kũ	jí
à fə	kó	N ₁ -z̩n̩	ʈũm	ɣɔʔfɛn	m̀bɔv̩kó	N ₂ -tú	kũ	jí
3s	N_PST	IPFV ₁	N ₁ -walk	in	forest	suddenly	N ₂ -put	leg his

‘He was walking in the forest, suddenly, (he) put his leg (=stepped) (...)’

7.4.4 Remote Past (R_PST) lû/nâ? vb

The Remote Past is indicated by the marker **lû** or **nâ?** which precedes the verb. It describes past perfective situations which took place either a month ago or any time before that. According to my data analysis, the markers **lû** and **nâ?** are used interchangeably. However, it should be noted that some of the language consultants claimed that, in case they have to be organised on a timeline, the marker **lû** should be placed in a position more remote in the past than the marker **nâ?**.

(156) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘A motorbike accident’

m̩:	lû	bə	ɲgũ?	mù?	nd̩zú	bāʔəb̩b̩b̩	Ø	n̩n̩	m̩	zũ
m̩:	lû	bə	ɲgũ?	mù?	N ₂ -d̩zú	bāʔəb̩b̩b̩	Ø	n̩n̩	m̩	zũ
mother.poss	R_PST	be	year	last	N ₂ -say	we.and.her	uta	go	to	Bazou

‘My mother, last year, said we and her should go to Bazou.’

7.4.5 Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV) lû/nâ? kó N-vb

The Remote Past Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the remote past marker **lû** or **nâ?**, the imperfective marker **kó**, and the nasal prefix **N₁-**, in that order. The Remote Past Imperfective describes situations which were ongoing in the remote past (one month ago or any time before that), as well as past habitual situations.

(157) Context: Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last year at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?)

à nâ? kó ñdʒú ɲgɔ́fuló
 à nâ? kó N₁-dʒú? ɲgɔ́fuló
 3s R_PST IPFV₁ N₁-cultivate maize

‘He was cultivating maize.’

(158) Context: The speaker is talking about the profession of his/her brother when he (the brother of the speaker) was still living in the village.

à nâ? kó ñdʒú? ɲgɔ́fuló
 à nâ? kó N₁-dʒú? ɲgɔ́fuló
 3s R_PST IPFV₁ N₁-cultivate maize

‘He used to cultivate maize.’

Examples (157) and (158) above show that the same construction (**lû/nâ? kó N-**) describes a remote past progressive situation or a past habitual situation. However, as will be shown in section 7.6, there are two formally distinct remote past imperfective constructions in Medumba negative clauses. One is specifically used to express remote past progressive situations that are negated, while the other expresses past habitual situations that are negated.

7.4.6 Imperfective (IPFV) **nũm**, **bô**, **kó N-vb**

The Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the marker **nũm**, **bô** or **kó** and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Imperfective describes situations performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time. Also, it implies that the situation described still holds true at the moment of speech. My discussions with language consultants revealed that there are subtle differences between the markers **nũm**, **bô**, and **kó** as far as their interpretation is concerned. Although all three markers are broadly associated with the present habitual meaning, there seems to be a distinction between them with respect to the ‘degree of habitualness’ they convey. Based on the data analysis, I specified the meaning of these three markers as follows:

- **nũm**: habitually, more specifically, time and again,
- **bô**: habitually, but following a certain condition,
- **kó**: habitually, more specifically, day after day.

As will be shown in section 7.6 below, a single same marker, the marker **bô**, is used as the negative counterpart of the markers **nũm**, **bô**, and **kó**. Below are examples that show the use of the Imperfective in Medumba.

(159) Context: Q: Do you know whether Paul eats bananas? (I want to offer him something, but I do not know what to offer).

á nǔm ñzú kǎbû?nǵú

á nǔm N1-zú? kǎbû?nǵú

3s IPFV₂ N1-eat bananas

‘He eats bananas.’ (time and again)

(160) Context: Q: What does your sister usually do when she is happy?

à bô ñgǒbtá ñkáp

à bô N1-yǒbtá ñkáp

3s IPFV₃ N1-distribute money

‘She distributes money.’ (if she is happy)

(161) Context: Q: What does your sister do for a living?

à kó ñtám ñzwá

à kó N1-tám ñzwá

3s IPFV₁ N1-sew clothes

‘She sews clothes.’ (day after day)

7.4.7 Progressive (PROG) ɲwět N-vb

The Progressive is expressed by a construction which consists of two pre-verbal elements, namely, the progressive marker **ɲwět** and the nasal prefix **N1-**, in that order. The Progressive is used to describe situations ongoing at the moment of speech.

(162) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he can see through the window (right now).

tɕ? mén mǒndzùm bú tɕ? mén ménzwí ɲwět ñgû sá

tɕ? mén mǒndzùm bú tɕ? mén ménzwí ɲwět N1-yû sá

one child male and one child female PROG N1-do games

‘A boy and a girl are doing games (=playing).’

7.4.8 General Future (G_FUT) à? vb

The General Future is indicated by the marker **à?** which precedes the verb. It describes future perfective situations that are expected to occur on the day the utterance is made.

(163) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is planning to do today.

mò à? nêñ ñfǎ fǎkwîntâ yǎ ɲwà?ni

mò à? nêñ N2-fǎ fǎkwîntâ yǎ ɲwà?ni

1s G_FUT go N2-give report.cards people school

‘I am going to go and give report cards to the students.’

7.4.9 General Future Imperfective (G_FUT IPFV) à? kó N-vb

The General Future Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker **à?**, the imperfective marker **kó**, and the nasal prefix **N1-**, in that order. The General Future Imperfective expresses that an action will be

performed on a regular basis from the day of the utterance. It may also describe situations which will be in progress on the day of speaking.

(164) Context: Q: Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working today. Q: What will be the occupation of your brother at his work place?

à à? kó ñdʒú? ñgəfuló

à à? kó N₁-dʒú? ñgəfuló

3s G_FUT IPFV₁ N₁-cultivate maize

‘He is going to cultivate maize.’ (routinely)

(165) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tonight? (What activity will he be engaged in?)

à à? kó ñdʒú? ñgəfuló

à à? kó N₁-dʒú? ñgəfuló

3s G_FUT IPFV₁ N₁-cultivate maize

‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

7.4.10 Near Future (N_FUT) à? ʃá? N-vb

The Near Future is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the near future marker **ʃá?**, which must co-occur with the general future marker **à?**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Near Future describes future perfective situations that will take place the day after the time of speaking.

(166) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is planning to do tomorrow.

mè à? ʃá? ñnên ñtō ñtă ñdʒŭ? nêndò ʒŭ

mè à? ʃá? N₁-nên N₂-tō ñtă ñdʒŭ? nêndò ʒŭ

1s G_FUT N_FUT N₁-go N₂-play trumpet place wedding Bazou

‘I am going to go and play the trumpet at a wedding (ceremony) at Bazou.’

The use of the marker **ʃá?** to indicate the Near Future is surprising. This is because it has been analysed in 7.4.1 above as the hodiernal past marker. As far as I know it is uncommon for a language to use the same marker to indicate both the past tense and the future tense. Further research about the history of the marker **ʃá?** might help explain this peculiarity.

7.4.11 Near Future Imperfective (N_FUT IPFV) à? ʃá? kó N-vb

The Near Future Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of four pre-verbal elements, namely, the general future marker **à?**, the near future marker **ʃá?**, the imperfective marker **kó**, and the nasal prefix N₁-, in that order. The Near Future Imperfective expresses that an action will be performed on regular basis from the day after the time of speaking. It may also describe situations which will be in progress the day after the time of speaking.

(167) Context: Q: Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working today. Q: What will be the occupation of your brother at his work place?

à à? ʔá? kó ñdʒú? ɲgɔ́fuló
à à? ʔá? kó N1-dʒú? ɲgɔ́fuló
3s G_FUT N_FUT IPFV1 N1-cultivate maize

‘He is going to cultivate maize.’ (routinely)

(168) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tomorrow? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?)

à à? ʔá? kó ñdʒú? ɲgɔ́fuló
à à? ʔá? kó N1-dʒú? ɲgɔ́fuló
3s G_FUT N_FUT IPFV1 N1-cultivate maize

‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

7.4.12 Remote Future (R_FUT) à? zí N-vb

The Remote Future is expressed by a construction which consists of three pre-verbal elements, namely, the remote future marker **zí**, which must co-occur with the general future marker **à?**, and the nasal prefix **N1-**, in that order. The Remote Future describes future perfective situations which will take place either the day after tomorrow or any time thereafter.

(169) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is planning to do in two weeks’ time (on Christmas Day).

à à? zí mbè lɪ? mbūmɛjɔ? mɔ Ø nɛn ʔɔ̀sì ɲfɔ́
à à? zí N1-bè lɪ? mbūmɛjɔ? mɔ Ø nɛn ʔɔ̀sì N2-fɔ́
it G_FUT R_FUT N1-be day Christmas 1s UTA go church N2-come.back

‘(When) it is going to be Christmas Day, I am going to go to church, and am going to come back, (from church) (...)’

bâ?jôm ʔy̌ndɔ́ Ø nɛn ɲkâ?tɔ́
bâ?jôm ʔy̌ndɔ́ Ø nɛn N2-kâ?tɔ́
me.and family UTA go N2-have.fun

my family and I are going to go and have fun.’

7.4.13 Remote Future Imperfective (R_FUT IPFV) à? zí kó N-vb

The Remote Future Imperfective is expressed by a construction which consists of four pre-verbal elements. The general future marker **à?**, the remote future marker **zí**, the imperfective marker **kó**, and the nasal prefix **N1-**, in that order. The Remote Future Imperfective expresses that an action will be performed on a regular basis from the day after tomorrow. It may also describe situations which will be in progress either the day after tomorrow or any time thereafter.

(170) Context: Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working the day after tomorrow. Q: What will be the occupation of your brother at his work place?

à à? zí kó ñdʒú? ñgǽfuló
 à à? zí kó N₁-dʒú? ñgǽfuló
 3s G_FUT R_FUT IPFV₁ N₁-cultivate maize

‘He is going to cultivate maize.’ (routinely)

(171) Context: Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next Sunday? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?)

à à? zí kó ñdʒú? ñgǽfuló
 à à? zí kó N₁-dʒú? ñgǽfuló
 3s G_FUT R_FUT IPFV₁ N₁-cultivate maize

‘He is going to be cultivating maize.’

Examples (170) and (171) above show that the same construction (à? zí kó N-) expresses either a remote future habitual situation or a remote future progressive situation. It should be noted, however, that there are two formally distinct remote future imperfective constructions in Medumba’s negative clauses. One is specifically used to express remote future progressive situations that are negated, while the other expresses remote future habitual situations that are negated (see Table 36 below).

7.4.14 Perfect (PRF) H tone vb

The Perfect is expressed by a tone alternation on the subject of the clause. The lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or the noun in subject position is realised as a high tone at the level of the surface structure.⁵⁵ It describes a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred. The Perfect may also present a current state without any implication of how this state came about.

(172) Context: The speaker is talking to someone who has just said something full of wisdom.

ú ʈūb á ʒī (lexical tone of the subject: ù, à)
 2s.PRF speak it.PRF be.heavy

‘You have spoken well.’

(173) Context: The speaker is talking about the house in which s/he lives.

á zí (lexical tone of the subject: à)
 it.PRF be.big

‘It is big.’

In example (172), the Perfect describes a past action whose end is interpreted as having just occurred, whereas in (173), it has a present state interpretation. When the lexical tone of the only or last vowel of the subject pronoun or noun preceding the verb is a high tone, no tonal alternation is observed; the tone of the vowel surfaces normally as high.

⁵⁵ According to Nganmou (1991: 85), the Medumba language distinguishes two underlying tones: high and low.

7.4.15 Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA) Ø vb

Unmarked Tense-Aspect is marked for neither tense nor aspect. It is used in discourse (narration, description, exposition, etc.) to replace a tense-aspect marking already employed either explicitly, that is, using an explicit tense-aspect marking, or implicitly, that is, without any tense-aspect marking, since the speech-act participants already know the context.

(174) Context: The speaker is talking about what s/he is planning to do in two weeks' time (on Christmas Day).

à à? zí mbè lɪ? mbūmêjò? mɔ̀ Ø nɛn ʔʒsì ɲfɔ̃
à à? zí N₁-bè lɪ? mbūmêjò? mɔ̀ Ø nɛn ʔʒsì N₂-fɔ̃
it G_FUT R_FUT N₁-be day Christmas 1s UTA go church N₂-come.back
‘(when) it is going to be Christmas Day, I am going to go to church,
and am going to come back (from church) (...)’

bâʔjôm ʔjyndã Ø nɛn ɲkâʔtɔ̃
bâʔjôm ʔjyndã Ø nɛn N₂-kâʔtɔ̃
me.and family UTA go N₂-have.fun
my family and I are going to go and have fun.’

(175) Context: An excerpt from the text ‘A motorbike accident’

mɔ̃: lû bə ɲgũ? mù? ɲdʒú bāʔəbəbû Ø nɛn mɔ̃ ʒũ
mɔ̃: lû bə ɲgũ? mù? N₂-dʒú bāʔəbəbû Ø nɛn mɔ̃ ʒũ
mother.POSS R_PST be year last N₂-say we.and.her UTA go to Bazou
‘My mother, last year, said we and her should go to Bazou [...]’

bà? Ø lûsɪ ɲjɛm kxuqā ɲkâbʒù
1p UTA wake.up hour four morning
We woke up at 4 a.m (...)’

In example (174), Unmarked Tense-Aspect replaces the remote future construction **à? zí**, whereas in (175), it replaces the remote past marker **lû**.

7.5 Final Remarks on the Description of the Tense-Aspect Categories

This section includes a discussion on the structure of tense-aspect categories, the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect, and the similarity in form of tense-aspect markers to lexical verbs.

7.5.1 Structure of Tense-Aspect Categories

Based on the analysis in section 7.4, one can distinguish eight types of structure for the tense-aspect categories in Medumba illustrated in Table 34 below.

Table 34: Tense-aspect structures in Medumba

		<i>Structure</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
1	Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA)	Ø vb	Ø tám UTA sew
2	Remote Past (R_PST)	T vb	lû tám R_PST sew
3	Near Past (N_PST)	T N-vb	fò ñ-tám N_PST N ₁ -sew
4	Near Future (N_FUT)	T T N-vb	à? tfá? ñ-tám G_FUT N_FUT N ₁ -sew
5	Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV)	T A N-vb	fò kó ñ-tám N_PST IPFV N ₁ -sew
6	Near Future Imperfective (N_FUT IPFV)	T T A N-vb	à? tfá? kó ñ-tám G_FUT N_FUT IPFV N ₁ -sew
7	Progressive (PROG)	A N- vb	tfwět ñ-tám PROG N ₁ -sew
8	Perfect (PRF)	-PRF vb	ú ⁵⁶ tám SBJ.PRF sew

7.5.2 About the Semantic Combination of the Notions of Tense and Aspect

The analysis in section 7.4 above indicates that there are certain restrictions on the semantic combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Medumba. This is illustrated in Table 35 below.

Table 35: Overview of the combination of the notions of tense and aspect in Medumba

	<i>perfective (pfv)</i>	<i>habitual (hab)</i>	<i>progressive (prog)</i>
hodiernal past (h-pst)	h-pst pfv		h-pst prog
near past (n-pst)	n-pst pfv		n-pst prog
remote past (r-pst)	r-pst pfv	r-pst hab	r-pst prog
present (prs)		prs hab	prs prog
hodiernal future (h-fut)	h-fut pfv	h-fut hab	h-fut prog
near future (n-fut)	n-fut pfv	n-fut hab	n-fut prog
remote future (r-fut)	r-fut pfv	r-fut hab	r-fut prog

As shown in Table 35, the present tense is not compatible with the perfective in Medumba. Also, the combination of the habitual with the hodiernal past tense, as well as the near past tense is not allowed in Medumba. Explanations for the incompatibilities observed in Medumba as regards the combination of the notions of tense and aspect can be found in sections 3.5.2 and 4.5.2 above.

⁵⁶ The perfect marker (a high tone) is indicated as portmanteau with the subject of the clause.

7.5.3 About the Similarity in Form of Tense-Aspect Markers to Lexical Verbs

Some of the tense-aspect markers identified in Medumba show a similarity in form to lexical verbs commonly used in Medumba. This includes the near past marker **fə** which is formally closely similar to the verb **fə** ‘give, come back’, the remote past marker **lû** which is formally closely similar to the verb **lû** ‘wake up, get up’, the remote future marker **zí** which is identical in form to the verb **zí** ‘sleep’, and the imperfective marker **bə** or **bə** which is formally closely similar to the verb **bə** ‘be’.

7.6 Standard Negation

This section examines standard negation in Medumba. It focuses on the description of the means used to indicate standard negation and the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation. The means used to indicate standard negation in Medumba are shown in the overview in Table 36 below.

Table 36: Affirmative and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Medumba

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Hodiernal Past	Aff Neg	ʃá? N-vb ʃá? kə vb
Near Past	Aff Neg	fə N-vb fə kə vb
Near Past Imperfective	Aff Neg	fə kə N-vb fə kə kə N-vb
Remote Past	Aff Neg	lû/nâ? vb lû/nâ? kə vb
Remote Past Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ (prog.) Neg₂ (hab.)	lû/nâ? kə N-vb lû/nâ? kə kə N-vb lû/nâ? kə bə N-vb
Imperfective	Aff Neg	nũm, bə, kə N-vb kə? bə vb
Progressive	Aff Neg	ʃwět N-vb kə ʃwět N-vb
General Future	Aff Neg	à? vb à? kə vb
General Future Imperfective	Aff Neg	à? kə N-vb à? kə kə N-vb
Near Future	Aff Neg	à? ʃá? N-vb à? ʃá? kə vb
Near Future Imperfective	Aff Neg	à? ʃá? kə N-vb à? ʃá? kə kə N-vb
Remote Future	Aff Neg	à? zí N-vb à? zí kə vb
Remote Future Imperfective	Aff Neg₁ (prog.) Neg₂ (hab.)	à? zí kə N-vb à? zí kə kə N-vb à? zí kə bə N-vb

<i>Label</i>		<i>Tense-aspect markings</i>
Perfect	Aff Neg	H tone vb H tone kâ? vb
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	Aff Neg	Ø vb ---

As shown in Table 36, Medumba distinguishes a single standard negation pattern, namely, the ‘NEG pattern’. This standard negation pattern involves the use of the negative marker **kà** or **kâ?**. The negative marker **kà** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain any of the tense-aspect markings discussed in section 7.4, except declarative verbal main clauses which contain the marker used to indicate the Perfect or the construction used to indicate the Imperfective. When used to negate declarative verbal main clauses, which have a tense marker, the negative marker **kà** immediately follows the tense marker and precedes the verb; see examples (176), (177), (178), (179) below. In declarative verbal main clauses, which do not have a tense marker, the negative marker **kà** appears before the aspect marker and the verb; see example (180) below.

- (176) **mə lû kà tō ntă**
 1s R_PST NEG play trumpet
 ‘I did not play the trumpet.’ (in the remote past)
- (177) **mə lû kà kó ntō ntă**
mə lû kà kó N₁-tō ntă
 1s R_PST NEG IPFV₁ N₁-play trumpet
 ‘I was not playing the trumpet.’ (in the remote past)
- (178) **mə à? kà tō ntă**
 1s G_FUT NEG play trumpet
 ‘I am not going to play the trumpet.’ (today)
- (179) **mə à? kà kó ntō ntă**
mə à? kà kó N₁-tō ntă
 1s G_FUT NEG IPFV₁ N₁-play trumpet
 ‘I am not going to be playing the trumpet.’ (today)
- (180) **mə kə tʃwět ntō ntă**
mə kə tʃwět N₁-tō ntă
 1s NEG PROG N₁-play trumpet
 ‘I am not playing the trumpet.’ (now)

The standard negation marker **kâ?** is used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the construction used to indicate the Imperfective (see 7.4.6), as well as declarative verbal main clauses which contain the marker used to indicate the Perfect (see 7.4.14). When used to negate declarative verbal main clauses which contain the imperfective construction, the negative marker **kâ?** occurs before the imperfective marker and the verb, whereas when negating declarative verbal main clauses which contain the perfect marker, the marker **kâ?** immediately precedes the verb. This is illustrated in (181) and (182) below.

(181) Context: Q: What does your son usually eat?

(181a) Reply

à nǔm òzú kǎbû?nǔfú
à nǔm N1-zú kǎbû?nǔfú
3s IPFV₂ N1-eat bananas

‘He eats bananas.’

(181b) Negative form of the reply

à kâ? bǎ zú kǎbû?nǔfú
3s NEG IPFV₄ eat bananas
‘He does not eat bananas.’

(182) Context: The speaker is talking about something his/her brother has just done.

(182a) Affirmative form

á yóbtǎ ñkáp
3s.PRF distribute money

‘He has distributed money.’

(182b) Negative form of the speaker’s statement

á kâ? yóbtǎ ñkáp
3s.PRF NEG distribute money

‘He has not distributed money.’

When one considers affirmative and corresponding negative tense-aspect markings in Table 36 above, one notices that cases of asymmetry in construction and paradigm occur in the expression of standard negation in Medumba. The following can be stated with respect to the asymmetries in construction:

- In addition to the presence of the negative marker, a positive declarative verbal main clause which contains the hodiernal past marker, the near past marker, the imperfective marker, the near future construction, or the remote future construction differs from its negative counterpart in that the nasal consonant prefix which always occurs before the verb in the positive clause is deleted in the negative clause. This is illustrated in example (183) below.

(183) Context: Q: What has your sister done earlier this morning?

(183a) Reply

à ʔǎ? ñgóbtǎ ʔǎŋ
à ʔǎ? N1-yóbtǎ ʔǎŋ
3s H_PST N1-distribute food

‘She distributed the food.’

(183b) Negative form of the reply

à ʔǎ? kè yóbtǎ ʔǎŋ
3s H_PST NEG distribute food
‘She did not distribute the food.’

- In addition to the presence of the negative marker, a positive declarative verbal main clause which contains the remote past imperfective construction, the imperfective construction, or the remote future imperfective construction differs from its negative counterpart in that the imperfective marker occurring in the positive clause differs in phonetic content from the one occurring in the negative clause. More precisely, the imperfective marker **kǎ** becomes **bǎ** in the negative counterpart of a positive declarative verbal main clause which contains the remote past imperfective construction or the remote future imperfective construction. Similarly, the imperfective marker **nǔm**, **bâ**, or **kǎ** becomes **bǎ** in the negative counterpart of a positive declarative verbal main clause which contains the imperfective construction. It should be noted that the changes involving the imperfective marker described here only occur if the situation denoted by the verb is specifically associated with the habitual, as opposed to progressive meaning (see Table 36 above). The following examples provide illustrations for the asymmetries in construction related to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses which contain the remote past imperfective construction (see example 184),

the imperfective construction (see examples 185 and 186), or the remote future imperfective construction (see example 187).

(184) Context: Q: What was the occupation of your brother when he was still living in the village?

(184a) Reply

à nâ? kó ñdʒú? ñgǝfúló
 à nâ? kó N₁-dʒú? ñgǝfúló
 3s R_PST IPFV₁ N₁-cultivate maize
 ‘He used to cultivate maize.’

(184b) Negative form of the reply

à nâ? kè bó ñdʒú? ñgǝfúló
 à nâ? kè bó N₁-dʒú? ñgǝfúló
 3s R_PST NEG IPFV₄ N₁-cultivate maize
 ‘He used not to cultivate maize.’

(185) Context: Q: What does your sister do for a living?

(185a) Reply

à kó ñtám ñzwó
 à kó N₁-tám ñzwó
 3s IPFV₁ N₁-sew clothes
 ‘She sews clothes.’

(185b) Negative form of the reply

à kâ? bó tám ñzwó
 3s NEG IPFV₄ sew clothes
 ‘She does not sew clothes.’

(186) Context: Q: Do you know whether Paul eats bananas? (I want to offer him something, but I do not know what to offer him).

(186a) Reply

à nǎm ñʒú kǝbû?nǰú
 à nǎm N₁-ʒú kǝbû?nǰú
 3s IPFV₂ N₁-eat banana
 ‘He eats bananas.’

(186b) Negative form of the reply

à kâ? bó ʒú kǝbû?nǰú
 3s NEG IPFV₄ eat banana
 ‘He does not eat bananas.’

(187) Context: Your sister has got a new job and she will start the day after tomorrow. Q: What will be her occupation at her working place?

(187a) Reply

à à? zí kó ñtám ñzwó
 à à? zí kó N₁-tám ñzwó
 3s G_FUT R_FUT IPFV₁ N₁-sew clothes
 ‘She is going to sew clothes.’ (routinely)

(187b) Negative form of the reply

à à? zí kè bó ñtám ñzwó
 à à? zí kè bó N₁-tám ñzwó
 3s G_FUT R_FUT NEG IPFV₄ N₁-sew clothes
 ‘She is not going to sew clothes.’ (routinely)

As evident from Table 36, three cases of asymmetry in paradigm are identified in the expression of standard negation in Medumba. A division is made between the Remote Past Progressive and the Past Habitual in the paradigms used in negative clauses, but not in the ones used in affirmative clauses. A division is made between the Remote Future Progressive and the Remote Future Habitual in the paradigms used in negative clauses, but not in the ones used in

affirmative clauses. Also, there appears to be no negative counterpart of Unmarked Tense-Aspect in Medumba.

This chapter has focused on the description of the tense-aspect categories and standard negation in Medumba. The chapter's major arguments are:

- tense and aspect connect to give fifteen tense-aspect categories in Medumba indicated by a single marker (a free-standing marker or a tonal modification), a construction which may include tense and/or aspect markers and a nasal verb prefix, or the lack of an overt tense-aspect marking,
- Medumba distinguishes a single standard negation pattern, namely, the 'NEG pattern'. It involves the use of the negative marker **kə** or **kəʔ**,
- there are cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation in Medumba.

CHAPTER VIII

8 A Comparison of Tense-Aspect Systems and Standard Negation across the Investigated Languages

In this chapter, I undertake a primarily synchronic comparison of the tense-aspect systems and standard negation across the investigated languages. As indicated in Chapter One and Chapter Two above, the ultimate aim of the comparison carried out in this study is to test previous scholars' claims that aspects of grammar, for example, tone, noun classes, tense, aspect, etc. largely exhibit the same characteristics, from one Bamileke language to another (Nissim 1975, Sonkoue 2014). The body of the chapter is divided into four main sections. Section one provides a comparative overview of the tense-aspect systems and standard negation in the investigated languages. Section two compares the languages under investigation with respect to their tense-aspect systems. In the third section, I examine standard negation in the investigated languages from a comparative perspective. Finally, in the fourth section, I compare the languages analysed with respect to the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation.

8.1 Comparative Overview of the Tense-Aspect Systems and Standard Negation

A comparison of the investigated languages with respect to the basic facts⁵⁷ about their tense-aspect systems and standard negation shows that:

All five languages analysed distinguish three degrees of past tense (Hodiernal Past, Near Past, Remote Past). All five languages analysed distinguish a Present tense. Most of the investigated languages (four out of five) distinguish at least two degrees of future tense. For the language with two degrees of future tense, namely, Ngombale, a division is made between General Future and Remote Future, whereas languages with three degrees of future tense: Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, and Medumba, show a division between General Future, Near Future, and Remote Future. This is summarised in Table 37 below.

Table 37: Summary of tenses in the investigated languages

	<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Fe?fe?</i>	<i>Ghomala?</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
Past	Hodiernal	Hodiernal	Hodiernal	Hodiernal	Hodiernal
	Near	Near	Near	Near	Near
	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote
Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Future	General	Future	General	General	General
	Near		Near	Remote	Near
	Remote		Remote		Remote

⁵⁷ The basic facts about the tense-aspect system and standard negation in each language analysed are stated in sections 3.3, 4.3, 5.3, 6.3, and 7.3 in Ngiemboon, Fe?fe?, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba, respectively. This refers to straightforward or simple facts. They were established following the notion of complexity. In its absolute sense, the notion of complexity refers to the length of the description a phenomenon requires. For instance, following the notion of complexity, Miestamo (2006: 345) argues that "asymmetric negation under its different manifestations is generally more complex than symmetric negation".

A three-way aspectual division is observed in most of the investigated languages (three out of five). More precisely, a division between Perfective, Imperfective, and Progressive is observed in Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba. Ngiemboon shows a division between Perfective, Imperfective, Progressive, and Habitual. Ngombale on its part shows a division between Perfective and Imperfective. This is shown in Table 38 below.

Table 38: Summary of aspects in the investigated languages

<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
Perfective	Perfective	Perfective	Perfective	Perfective
Imperfective	Imperfective	Imperfective	Imperfective	Imperfective
Progressive	Progressive	Progressive		Progressive
Habitual				

In all the languages analysed, tense or aspect is mainly encoded by one or two free-standing marker(s) that occur(s) before the verb. Also, no clearly identifiable present tense or perfective marking is found in the investigated languages.

A Perfect, which is typically encoded by a tonal modification, is identified in three of the five languages analysed (Ngiemboon, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba). Also, each of the investigated languages distinguishes an Unmarked Tense-Aspect, which is marked for neither tense nor aspect, but may have one or more basic functions.

In all five languages analysed, some tense or aspect markers must be accompanied by a nasal consonant prefix that typically occurs before the verb.

Three of the five languages analysed (Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ) have in common two standard negation patterns: ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ and ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’. Furthermore, the NEG₁ particle of each of these standard negation patterns occurs before the verb, while the NEG₂ particle always appears in the clause final position. The other two languages analysed have language-specific standard negation patterns. Medumba uses a pre-verbal negative marker for standard negation, while Ngombale shows four standard negation patterns: ‘NEG...E’, ‘E...NEG’, ‘NEG₁...NEG₂ N-...E (N-)’, and ‘NEG₁ N-...E (N-) ...NEG₂’.

It appears from the preceding that the languages analysed show a high degree of similarity as regards the tense-aspect systems (especially) and standard negation. This suggests that previous claims that aspects of grammar largely exhibit the same properties from one Bamileke language to another were based on the comparison of sketchy descriptions of aspects of the grammar of Bamileke languages. Nevertheless, as will be shown below, when these languages are compared on the basis of (1) a detailed description of the mechanisms for expressing standard negation and the tense-aspect categories in each language, (2) the basic functions of tense-aspect categories, and (3) the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation, it appears that the similarities and differences between them are both considerable.

8.2 Comparing the Tense-Aspect Systems

In the following, three parameters are used to compare the investigated languages with respect to their tense-aspect systems. The first relates to the structure of tense-aspect categories.

The second concerns the form of tense-aspect markers. The third parameter deals with the basic functions of tense-aspect categories.

8.2.1 Structure of Tense-Aspect Categories

In the preceding chapters (see sections 3.5.1, 4.5.1, 5.5.1, 6.5.1, and 7.5.1), the structures of the tense-aspect categories in each language analysed have been displayed. A comparison of the languages analysed with respect to the structure of tense-aspect categories shows that the structures ‘Ø vb’ and ‘T vb’ occur in all the investigated languages. Furthermore, some structures appear in most of the investigated languages, that is, at least three or four languages, while others are observed in only a few of the investigated languages, that is, in two languages. Also, a good number of the tense-aspect structures described are language specific. In other words, they exclusively occur in one of the investigated languages. This is illustrated in Tables 39, 40, 41, and 42 below.

Table 39: Tense-aspect structures occurring in all the investigated languages

	<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
1	Ø vb	Ø vb	Ø vb	Ø vb	Ø vb
2	T vb	T vb	T vb	T vb	T vb

Table 40: Tense-aspect structures occurring in most of the investigated languages

	<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
1		A N-vb	A N-vb	A N-vb	A N-vb
2		T A N-vb	T A N-vb	T A N-vb	T A N-vb
3	T N-vb		T N-vb	T N-vb	T N-vb
4	T T vb		T T vb	T T vb	

Table 41: Tense-aspect structures occurring in some of the investigated languages

	<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
1		A A N-vb	A A N-vb		
2		T A A N-vb	T A A N-vb		
3			T A vb	T A vb	
4			T T A vb	T T A vb	
5			PRF vb		PRF vb

Table 42: Language specific tense-aspect structures

	<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
1	A N-vb-A	T A A vb	T T N-vb
2	T A N-vb-A	T T A A vb	T T A N-vb
3	T T A N-vb-A		
4	vb-PRF		

Interestingly, in all the languages analysed, the tense marker (T) always precedes the aspect marker (A) when both elements occur together.

Another interesting fact concerning the structure of tense-aspect categories is that all the languages analysed, except for Feʔfeʔ, allow the occurrence of two tense markings, following each other, in the same structure. Also, in three of the investigated languages – Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ – it is possible to have two aspect markings in the same structure.

As shown in the preceding chapters (Chapters Three, Five, Six, and Seven), the occurrence of two tense markings, following each other, is observed in the encoding of tense-aspect categories used to describe future perfective, progressive, or habitual situations. It involves the co-occurrence of the marker of the first degree of future tense, which has been analysed in this study as the general future marker (G_FUT), with another future tense marker to encode a second or third degree of future tense. This provides an explanation for the absence of this structure in Feʔfeʔ. That is, unlike all other languages analysed, which have tense-aspect categories that distinguish between the degrees of future tense, Feʔfeʔ has a single level of future tense encoded by a single marker; thus, this language cannot put together two future tense markers in the same structure.

The occurrence of two tense markings, following each other, in the same structure, appears to be rare from a cross-linguistic perspective. It is not mentioned in Comrie's (1985) book on tense, or Dahl's (1985) study on tense and aspect systems. Also, in his analysis of tense and aspect in Bantu, Nurse (2008: 14) observes that verb forms are limited to only one mark of tense in the languages of the world. Note, however, that it has been reported in a language genetically closely related to the Bamileke group, namely, the Bafut language of the Ngemba group (Tamanji 2009: 138-140).

The occurrence of two aspect markings in the same structure in Ngiemboon involves the presence of a pre-verbal progressive or habitual marker and a post-verbal imperfective marker in the same structure. Also, the occurrence of two aspect markings in the same structure in Feʔfeʔ and Ghomalaʔ involves the presence of two pre-verbal aspect markers (a progressive marker and an imperfective marker), following each other, in the same structure. This is shown in the following table.

Table 43: Co-occurrence of aspect markers in Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ

<i>Ngiemboon</i>			<i>Feʔfeʔ or Ghomalaʔ</i>		
aspect marker 1	verb	aspect marker 2	aspect marker 1	aspect marker 2	verb
PROG	verb	IPFV	IPFV	PROG	verb
HAB	verb	IPFV			

It is important to point out that the two aspect markers that co-occur in the same structure in each language, are used to express imperfectivity. Also, they are markers of two distinct categories: Progressive and Imperfective or Habitual and Imperfective in Ngiemboon, Imperfective and Progressive in Feʔfeʔ and Ghomalaʔ. This provides an explanation for the absence of structures containing two aspect markings in Ngombale. Ngombale, unlike all other languages analysed has a single Imperfective category; thus, it is not possible to have markers that express separated Imperfective categories in Ngombale. Medumba does not have a single Imperfective category. There is an Imperfective alongside a Progressive in Medumba. Therefore, the absence of structures containing two aspect markings in Medumba is unexpected.

Also worth noting is that as a rule, a nasal consonant prefix is attached to the verb when the verb is immediately preceded by an aspect marker in the investigated languages. However, as shown in Tables 41 and 42, in both Ghomala? and Ngombale, the verb may appear without a nasal when immediately preceded by an aspect marker. This is because in Ghomala? and Ngombale, the nasal consonant prefix that normally occurs before the verb when the verb is preceded by an aspect marker is systematically deleted if the aspect marker is itself preceded by a future tense marker.

As implied by Table 42, Fe?fe? and Ngombale do not have language-specific tense-aspect structures. In other words, no tense-aspect structure that exclusively occurs in Fe?fe? or Ngombale, has been identified in this study. An explanation for this has not been identified.

To sum up, the discussion in this sub-section demonstrates that the languages analysed show correspondences and differences with respect to the structure of tense-aspect categories. For example, the languages analysed correspond in that they all exhibit the structures ‘Ø vb’ and ‘T vb’. Also, the fact that the structure ‘T A vb’ (see Table 41) occurs in Ghomala? and Ngombale, but never in Ngiemboon, Fe?fe?, and Medumba indicates a variation between the investigated languages with respect to the structure of tense-aspect categories.

8.2.2 Form of Tense-Aspect Markers

In this sub-section, I compare the investigated languages with respect to the form of tense-aspect markers. The discussion in the preceding chapters (see sections 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, 6.4, and 7.4 above) has revealed that the tense-aspect markers that occur in the investigated languages may have any of the following four forms: (1) a free-standing marker, for example, the hodiernal past marker **jǎ/tě** in Ngombale; (2) a tone alternation on the verb or the subject of the clause, for example, the Perfect may be indicated by a low-high tone alternation on the verb in Ngiemboon, the Hodiernal Past is indicated by a high tone alternation on the subject of the clause in Fe?fe?; (3) a combination of vowel lengthening or copying and tonal alternation on the verb or the subject of the clause, for example, the Perfect may be indicated by a combination of vowel copying and tonal alternation on the verb in Ngiemboon, the habitual marker in Ngiemboon is a combination of vowel lengthening or copying and tonal alternation on the subject of the clause; and (4) a portmanteau realisation of a tense marker and an aspect marker, for example, the near past imperfective marker **kǎ?** in Fe?fe?. However, not all four forms are found in all the investigated languages. This is shown in Table 44 below where the tense-aspect markers in the investigated languages are grouped according to form.

Table 44: Form of tense-aspect markers in the investigated languages

1-Ngiemboon			
Free-standing marker	Tone alternation on the verb/subject	Vowel lengthening/copying + tonal alternation on the verb or subject	Portmanteau: tense + aspect
H_PST: ně, kò N_PST: kà R_PST: là G_FUT: ɣè H_FUT: kú N_FUT: ɣxuò/tó/lù R_FUT: lá? PROG: nè	PRF: LH tone alternation on the verb root PRF: H tone alternation on the verbal extension	PRF: vowel copying + H tone on the verb HAB: vowel lengthening or copying + LH tone on the subject IPFV: vowel lengthening or copying + L tone on the verb	N_PST HAB: kǎ: R_PST HAB: lǎ:
2-Feʔfeʔ			
N_PST: kǎ R_PST: lǎ FUT: ká IPFV: bá PROG: mǎ	H_PST: H tone alternation on the subject IPFV: LH tone alternation on the subject		N_PST IPFV: kǎ? R_PST IPFV: lǎ?
3-Ghomalaʔ			
H_PST: ê N_PST: kǎ R_PST: lǎ G_FUT: gǎ N_FUT: tí R_FUT: ɣwǎ IPFV: bá, pá PROG: wǎ	PRF: LH tone alternation on the subject IPFV: HL tone alternation on the subject		
4-Ngombale			
H_PST: já/tě N_PST: kǎ R_PST: lǎ G_FUT: ɣwǎ R_FUT: ɣũ IPFV: mǎ, pá			

5-Medumba			
H_PST: ʃáʔ	PRF: H tone alternation on the subject		
N_PST: fə			
R_PST: lû/nâ			
G_FUT: àʔ			
N_FUT: ʃáʔ			
R_FUT: zí			
IPFV: nũm, bâ, kó			
PROG: ʃwěť			

It appears from Table 44 that Ngiemboon deviates from the other languages analysed as it is the only one where the four forms of tense-aspect markers described are attested. Ngombale also distinguishes itself from the other languages analysed by being the only one where just free-standing tense-aspect markers are identified. Three of the investigated languages – Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba – have in common two of the four forms described: a free-standing marker and a tone alternation on the verb or subject. Also, a difference is observed between Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba with respect to the form of tense-aspect markers as portmanteau tense-aspect markers are found in Feʔfeʔ, but not in Ghomalaʔ and Medumba.

Of particular interest is that most of the tense-aspect markers in the investigated languages are free-standing markers. Therefore, one can argue that the tense-aspect markers that occur in the investigated languages are, in general, free-standing markers.

A close look at the markers in Table 44 shows that the near past marker (N_PST) and the remote past marker (R_PST) look very similar across the investigated languages, whereas the near future marker (N_FUT) and remote future marker (R_FUT) look quite different from one language to the next. The imperfective marker (IPFV) also looks very similar across the investigated languages. This state of affairs may suggest the following historical developments: (1) the near past markers in Table 44 were derived from the same source,⁵⁸ (2) the remote past markers in Table 44 were derived from the same source, (3) the imperfective markers in Table 44 were derived from the same source, (4) the near future markers in Table 44 were derived from different sources in different languages analysed, and (5) the remote future markers in Table 44 were derived from different sources in different languages analysed.

A consideration of certain languages that are related to the Bamileke group, namely, the Bafut language of the Ngemba group (Tamanji 2009) and the Isu language of the West Ring group (Kiessling 2016), suggests that the hypothesis that the near past markers currently observed in the investigated languages were derived from the same source might be extended over the whole Grassfields branch. This is justified by the near or yesterday past tense marker in these languages – the markers **kì** and **kə̀** in Bafut and Isu, respectively – looking very similar to the near past marker in most of the investigated languages.

⁵⁸ Medumba has an *f* as the initial consonant of the near past marker while the other languages analysed have *k*. Since evidence for a sound change *k* into *f* in Medumba has not been identified in the study, the Medumba near past marker is not taken into consideration here.

Also noteworthy is that the perfect marker is typically a tone alternation on the verb or a pre-verbal element in the investigated languages. As noted in Chapter Two, Dahl (1985: 129) indicates that the Perfect is frequently marked by means of periphrastic constructions; typically, constructions involving a copula or some auxiliary together with some past participle, or similar form of the verb. Therefore, the languages analysed are not consistent with most languages of the world with respect to the mechanisms for expressing the Perfect.

In sum, the discussion in this sub-section proves that the investigated languages show similarities and differences with respect to the form of tense-aspect markers.

8.2.3 Basic Function of Tense-Aspect Categories

It has been argued in the preceding chapters that the tense-aspect system of each of the investigated languages can be analysed as operating according to various tense-aspect categories. Moreover, the discussion in the preceding chapters has shown that a given tense-aspect category may have one or more basic functions. In this sub-section, an attempt is made to compare the languages under investigation with respect to the basic function of tense-aspect categories. For this purpose, the tense-aspect categories discussed in the target languages have been organised as in Table 45 below.

Table 45: Tense-aspect categories in the investigated languages⁵⁹

<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
I. Tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the past				
H_PST ₁		H_PST ₁	H_PST ₁	H_PST ₁
	H_PST ₂			
N_PST	N_PST	N_PST	N_PST	N_PST
R_PST	R_PST	R_PST	R_PST	R_PST
H_PST PROG	H_PST PROG	N_PST PROG ₂	H_PST IPFV	N_PST IPFV ₂
N_PST PROG ₁	N_PST PROG ₁		N_PST IPFV ₁	
R_PST PROG ₁		R_PST PROG ₁		
	R_PST PROG ₂		R_PST IPFV	R_PST IPFV
N_PST HAB		N_PST IPFV		
R_PST HAB		R_PST IPFV		
II. Tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the present				
HAB	IPFV ₁	IPFV ₁	IPFV ₂	IPFV ₁
PROG	PROG	PROG		PROG

⁵⁹ Each row in this table contains items which have one or more corresponding basic functions. Due to space constraints, only the glosses of the tense-aspect categories are indicated in the table.

<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
III. Tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the future				
G_FUT	FUT	G_FUT	G_FUT	G_FUT
N_FUT ₁		N_FUT ₁		
				N_FUT ₂
			R_FUT ₁	
				R_FUT ₂
R_FUT ₃		R_FUT ₃		
	FUT PROG	G_FUT IPFV ₁		
		N_FUT IPFV ₁		
		R_FUT IPFV ₁		
G_FUT PROG		G_FUT PROG	G_FUT IPFV ₂	
N_FUT PROG		N_FUT PROG	R_FUT IPFV ₂	
R_FUT PROG		R_FUT PROG		
				G_FUT IPFV ₃
				N_FUT IPFV ₂
				R_FUT IPFV ₃
IV. Perfect				
PRF ₁				
		PRF ₂		PRF ₂
V. Unmarked Tense-Aspect				
UTA ₁				
	UTA ₂	UTA ₂		UTA ₂
			UTA ₃	

As can be observed from the first group of tense-aspect categories in Table 45 (I), all five languages analysed distinguish a Hodiernal Past (H_PST), a Near Past (N_PST), and a Remote Past (R_PST). The Near Past has the same basic function across the five languages analysed: it is used in Ngiemboon, Fe?fe?, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba to describe past perfective situations that occurred less than one month before the moment of speech, except past perfective situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made. In the same vein, the Remote Past has exactly the same basic function across the investigated languages: it is used in Ngiemboon, Fe?fe?, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba to describe past perfective situations which took place either a month ago or any time before that.

The Hodiernal Past shows a certain variation with respect to its basic function(s) across the investigated languages. While in Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba it basically describes past perfective situations that occurred on the day the utterance is made, in Fe?fe?, the so-called Hodiernal Past has three basic interpretations. It may describe: (1) a past perfective situation that occurred on the day the utterance is made, (2) a present state without any implication of how this state came about, and (3) a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred. In other words, in addition to the function of the Hodiernal Past in Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba, the Hodiernal Past in Fe?fe? has two other basic functions. A close look at these two other functions reveals that they are, in general, conveyed using the Perfect in the investigated languages. The absence of the Perfect in Fe?fe?

(see Table 56, IV) may, thus, be explained by the fact that the functions typically denoted by the Perfect in the investigated languages, are expressed using the Hodiernal Past in Feʔfeʔ.

The first group of tense-aspect categories in Table 45 also shows that the Near Past Habitual (N_PST HAB) and the Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV) in Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ, respectively, have the same basic function: they are used to describe near past habitual situations. Also, the Remote Past Habitual (R_PST HAB) and the Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV) in Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ, respectively, have the same basic function: they are used to describe remote past habitual situations. This means that while in Feʔfeʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba the habitual meaning is not compatible with the near past meaning (all past habitual situations are conceived of as located in the remote past), in Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ, the habitual meaning is compatible with the near past meaning. The compatibility between the habitual meaning and the near past meaning in Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ can justify that two distinct categories are used to describe past habitual situations in these languages. Also, the incompatibility between the habitual meaning and the near past meaning in Feʔfeʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba may serve to justify that only one category (the Remote Past Progressive in Feʔfeʔ, the Remote Past Imperfective in Ngombale or Medumba) describes past habitual situations in Feʔfeʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba.

On the basis of the basic function of the tense-aspect categories used to describe past progressive situations: Hodiernal Past Progressive (H_PST PROG), Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG), and Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG) in Ngiemboon and Feʔfeʔ, Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG) and Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG) in Ghomalaʔ, Hodiernal Past Imperfective (H_PST IPFV), Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV), and Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV) in Ngombale, Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV) and Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV) in Medumba, the languages under investigation may be classified in two different ways.

In the first classification, a distinction is made between languages where the Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG) or the Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV) describes situations which were ongoing less than one month before the moment of speech, except on the day the utterance is made and languages where the Near Past Progressive (N_PST PROG) or the Near Past Imperfective (N_PST IPFV) describes situations which were ongoing less than one month before the moment of speech. Following this classification, Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ngombale fall within the first group, while Ghomalaʔ and Medumba fall within the second. The second classification makes a distinction between languages where the Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG) expresses situations which were ongoing in the remote past, that is, one month ago or any time before that, and languages where the Remote Past Progressive (R_PST PROG) or the Remote Past Imperfective (R_PST IPFV) describes, on the one hand, situations which were ongoing in the remote past, that is, one month ago or any time before that and, on the other hand, past habitual situations. Following this other classification, Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ fall within the first group, while Feʔfeʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba fall within the second.

Two main observations emerged from the comparison of the investigated languages with respect to the basic function of the tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the present (Table 45, II):

- (1) Out of the five languages analysed, four, namely, Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba, have a Progressive (PROG) which describes situations ongoing at the moment of speech.
- (2) Out of the five languages analysed, four, namely, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba have an Imperfective (IPFV) category. However, the basic function of the Imperfective shows a certain variation across the investigated languages. While in Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba the Imperfective has the same basic function: it describes events or actions performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time, in Ngombale, the Imperfective has two basic interpretations depending on the context. On the one hand, it may be used to describe situations ongoing at the moment of speech, that is, it may have the same basic function as the Progressive in Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba. On the other hand, it may be used to describe events or actions performed on multiple occasions over an extended period of time, that is, it may act as the Habitual in Ngiemboon or the Imperfective in Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba.

As Ngombale is unusual in lacking the Progressive, I postulate that this absence is a recent innovation. Also, on the basis of the Ngombale Imperfective having a general use, that is, it may be used to describe a situation ongoing at the moment of speech or it may describe a present habitual situation, I postulate that at some point of time in the past, Ngombale, just like all other languages analysed had a Progressive alongside an Imperfective or a Habitual. Over time, the generalisation of the earlier imperfective meaning (description of habitual situations) in the investigated languages triggered the loss of the Progressive in Ngombale, but not in the other languages analysed.

When comparing the languages analysed with respect to the basic function of the tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the future (Table 45, III), it is clear that Feʔfeʔ stands out from the other languages analysed. This is because it is the only language where a single category, namely, the Future (FUT), describes all future perfective situations, irrespective of the degree of remoteness in the future of the situation described. In the same vein, a single category, namely, the Future Progressive (FUT PROG), is used in Feʔfeʔ to describe all future progressive and habitual situations.

The comparison of the investigated languages with respect to the basic function of the tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the future also reveals that:

- (1) Four of the five languages analysed (Ngiemboon, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba) distinguish a General Future (G_FUT) which is basically used to describe future perfective situations that are expected to occur on the day the utterance is made.
- (2) Three of the languages analysed (Ngiemboon, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba) distinguish a Near Future (N_FUT). However, the basic function of the Near Future is not identical in these three languages. While in Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ the Near Future describes any future perfective situation expected to occur within the time interval ‘tomorrow and before a year’, in Medumba, the Near Future is used to refer to any future perfective situation expected to occur ‘tomorrow’.

- (3) Out of the five languages analysed, four, namely, Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba, have a Remote Future (R_FUT). However, the basic function of the Remote Future is not the same in these four languages. While in Ngombale the Remote Future describes any future perfective situation expected to occur as from tomorrow, in Medumba the Remote Future describes any future perfective situation expected to occur as from the day after tomorrow. Ngiemboon and Ghomala? use the Remote Future to describe any future perfective situation expected to occur in one year's time or any time thereafter.
- (4) Three of the investigated languages (Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba) have a number of tense-aspect categories that have been analysed as Future Imperfective categories, for instance, the Remote Future Imperfective in Ghomala?. However, while in Ghomala?, Future Imperfective categories are used to express future habitual situations, in Ngombale, Future Imperfective categories are employed to describe future progressive situations. Medumba uses Future Imperfective categories to express, on the one hand, future habitual situations and, on the other hand, future progressive situations. Ghomala? and Medumba, therefore, allow the combination of the future tense meaning with the habitual meaning, whereas Ngombale does not allow such combination.
- (5) Just like Ngombale, Ngiemboon does not allow the combination of the future tense meaning with the habitual meaning.

As indicated above, the Near Future does not have the same basic function across the investigated languages. Similarly, the Remote Future does not have a corresponding basic function across the investigated languages. However, it is interesting to note that when the basic function of the Near Future and that of the Remote Future are put together, the languages analysed are very similar with respect to the basic function of tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the future. For instance, the basic function of the Remote Future in Ngombale (description of future perfective situations that are expected to take place either the day after the speech moment or any time thereafter) is identical to the function of the Near Future and that of the Remote Future in Ngiemboon, when these two functions are put together.

As shown above, the languages analysed are, in general, characterised by multiple degrees of future tense. Therefore, it is striking to see that Fe?fe? has just a single future tense, whether in the perfective or the imperfective.

The fact that out of the five languages analysed, the single future tense only appears in Fe?fe? suggests that this is an innovation that was introduced at some point of time in the past. In other words, I postulate that Fe?fe? has lost its ability to describe future situations using multiple degrees of future tense over time.

The argument that the unique future tense observed in Fe?fe? is an innovation, rather than a feature inherited from the original tense-aspect system from where the tense-aspect system of Fe?fe? was probably derived is further supported by the languages genetically related to the Bamileke group seeming all to be characterised by multiple degrees of future tense (Tamanji 2009, Akumbu & Chibaka 2012, Kiessling 2016).

As indicated in Table 45 (IV), the category Perfect (PRF) has been established in three of the investigated languages: Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, and Medumba. However, while in Ngiemboon the Perfect may describe a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred or present a current state as being the result of some past situation, in both Ghomala? and Medumba, the Perfect may describe a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred or present a state without any implication of how this state came about.

Unmarked Tense-Aspect (UTA) is attested in all the languages analysed (see Table 45, V). However, some variations are observed between the investigated languages as regards its basic function(s). In Ngiemboon, Unmarked Tense-Aspect has two basic uses: describe a present state without any implication of how this state came about or replace a tense-aspect marking already employed by the speaker. In Fe?fe?, Ghomala?, and Medumba, Unmarked Tense-Aspect replaces a tense-aspect marking already employed. Ngombale basically uses the Unmarked Tense-Aspect as follows: (1) to describe a present state without any implication of how this state came about, (2) to describe a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred, and (3) to replace a tense-aspect marking already employed. Unmarked Tense-Aspect is, therefore, generally used in the investigated languages to replace a tense-aspect marking already employed. Noteworthy is that two of the basic functions of the Unmarked Tense-Aspect in Ngombale (description of a present state without any implication of how this state came about and description of a past situation whose end is interpreted as having just occurred) correspond to the basic functions of the Perfect in Ghomala? and Medumba. This might justify the absence of the category Perfect in Ngombale (see Table 45, IV). That is, Unmarked Tense-Aspect in Ngombale may act as the Perfect in Ghomala? or Medumba.

To sum up, the discussion in this sub-section demonstrates that both similarities and differences are observed between the investigated languages with respect to the basic function of tense-aspect categories. For example, it has been shown that the languages analysed are quite homogenous regarding the basic function of the tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the past, but differ greatly with respect to the basic function of the tense-aspect categories used to locate situations in the future. Another important observation is that the languages analysed are all characterised by an Unmarked Tense-Aspect that mainly serves to replace a tense-aspect marking already employed by the speaker. Some hypotheses about diachronic change relating to tense-aspect systems of the investigated languages have also been advanced in this sub-section. For example, based on the fact that Ngombale is unusual in lacking the Progressive, it has been postulated that the absence of the Progressive in Ngombale is a recent innovation.

8.3 Comparing Standard Negation Marking

This section compares the languages analysed with respect to the marking of standard negation. It is organised around two main sub-sections: (1) types of standard negation patterns and (2) form of standard negation markers.

8.3.1 Types of Standard Negation Patterns

Eight types of standard negation patterns have been described in this study. These standard negation patterns are summarised in Table 46 below.

Table 46: Types of standard negation patterns in the investigated languages

Type	Language	Example
1- NEG	Medumba	à ɸá? kə yóbtə ñkáp 3s H_PST NEG distribute money 'S/he did not distribute money.'
2- NEG ₁ ...NEG ₂	Ngiemboon	à ně tè yàptè ñkáp wó 3s H_PST NEG ₁ distribute money NEG ₂ 'S/he did not distribute money.'
	Feʔfeʔ	à kə sī yō ñkə bʰə 3s N_PST NEG ₁ distribute money NEG ₂ 'S/he did not distribute money.'
	Ghomalaʔ	ē kā t̃ wó? gəfə pə 3s N_PST NEG ₁ grind maize NEG ₂ 'S/he did not grind maize.'
3- NEG ₁ ...(NEG ₂)	Ngiemboon	à kə: yàptè ñkáp (wó) 3s NEG ₁ distribute money NEG ₂ 'S/he has not distributed money.'
	Feʔfeʔ	à kə? yō ñkə (bʰə) 3s NEG ₁ distribute money NEG ₂ 'S/he did not distribute money.'
	Ghomalaʔ	ē kā ké pəpùŋ (pə) 3s NEG ₁ read money NEG ₂ 'S/he has not read well.'
4- NEG ₁ N-...(N-) ...NEG ₂	Ngiemboon	à tè ń-gè ń-dzú? ñgəsán wó 3s NEG ₁ N ₁ -G_FUT N ₁ -cultivate maize NEG ₂ 'S/he is not going to cultivate maize.'
5- NEG...E	Ngombale	kā à kə pí jé ñgəsán neg 3s n_pst sow emp maize 'S/he did not sow maize.'
6- E...NEG	Ngombale	à kə pí jé ñgəsán pə 3s N_PST sow EMP maize NEG 'S/he did not sow maize.'
7- NEG ₁ ...NEG ₂ N-...E (N-)	Ngombale	kā à pə ń-gwə jé m-bí ñgəsán NEG ₁ 3s NEG ₂ N ₁ -G_FUT EMP N ₁ -sow maize 'S/he is not going to sow maize.'

Type	Language	Example
8- NEG ₁ N-...E (N-) ...NEG ₂	Ngombale	<p>à pǎ ń-gwǎ jé ń-bí ńgǎsán pǎ</p> <p>3s NEG₁ N₁-G_FUT EMP N₁-sow maize NEG₂</p> <p>‘S/he is not going to sow maize.’</p>

Table 46 shows that the eight types of standard negation patterns discussed in this study are not attested in all the investigated languages. Rather, the general tendency is that different languages have different standard negation patterns. More precisely, the following observations can be made in relation to the comparison of the investigated languages with respect to the types of standard negation patterns.

Three of the investigated languages (Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ) have in common two of the eight standard negation patterns described: ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ and ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’. It should be noted, however, that while in Feʔfeʔ and Ghomalaʔ the optional post-verbal negative particle of the ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’ pattern can always occur in the negative clause, in Ngiemboon the optional post-verbal negative particle ‘(NEG₂)’ is not always optional. This is explained by the fact that it never shows up when the object of the clause is fronted to a position before the verb (see section 3.6 above).

The ‘NEG’ pattern is exclusively attested in Medumba which happens to have only one standard negation pattern. Therefore, with its single standard negation pattern, Medumba clearly stands out as unique amongst the investigated languages as regards the types of standard negation patterns.

Four of the eight standard negation patterns described (‘NEG...E’, ‘E...NEG’, ‘NEG₁...NEG₂ N-...E (N-)’, and ‘NEG₁ N-...E (N-) ...NEG₂’) are exclusively attested in Ngombale. Therefore, Ngombale appears to be the investigated language which is particularly rich in standard negation patterns. Interestingly, when one considers what is commonly observed cross-linguistically with respect to the negation of declarative verbal main clauses (Dahl 1979, Payne 1985, Honda 1996, Miestamo 2000, 2003, 2005, etc.), then the standard negation patterns identified in Ngombale are unusual. This is explained by the fact that, except for Miestamo (2003) who identified in his typological classification of negation a marginal subtype where negative markers are accompanied by a marker of verbal emphasis, no other study on the typology of negation has discussed standard negation strategies, of the kind observed in Ngombale. That is, the negative marker is accompanied by a marker of emphasis (see Table 46). Also worth noting is that while in Miestamo’s study the emphatic marker lays emphasis on the verb, in Ngombale the emphatic marker appears to lay emphasis on the subject of the clause (see section 6.6 above).

The ‘NEG₁ N-...(N-)...NEG₂’ pattern is exclusively attested in Ngiemboon.

In an attempt to understand the variations observed between the investigated languages with respect to the types of standard negation patterns, I propose an examination of standard negation patterns in the investigated languages in relation to a historical process that can be described as the opposite of Jespersen’s cycle.

The expression ‘Jespersen’s cycle’ was coined by Dahl (1979: 88) when referring to the following paragraph from Jespersen (1917):

“The history of negative expressions in various languages makes us witness the following curious fluctuation: the original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of the time be subject to the same development as the original word” (Jespersen 1917: 4).

A Jespersen cycle is commonly known as a process taking a language from a single pre-verbal negative marker to a double negative marker, and then to a subsequent loss of the original pre-verbal negative marker. It has been widely exemplified in the literature with data from French “the original negator in French was **ne**. In a later stage **ne** was reinforced by **pas**, originally meaning ‘step’. In colloquial speech the original negator is falling into disuse, leaving **pas** as the only sentential negator” (Devos & van der Auwera 2013).

From the detailed discussion of standard negation marking in the five languages analysed, it is plausible that the differences observed between Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba with respect to the types of standard negation patterns have arisen from a historical process. More precisely, based on the fact that:

- only pre-verbal negative markers were identified in Medumba,
- in most of the investigated languages, there are double negative markers and a negative marking which consists of a pre-verbal negative particle and an optional post-verbal negative particle,
- in most of the investigated languages, the post-verbal negative element of double negative markers is normally obligatory in the negative clause, but in everyday conversations among native speakers, it is often dropped. Thus, only pre-verbal negative elements are used to indicate negation,
- the post-verbal negative particles **wó**, **bʰó**, and **pó** in Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ, respectively, are formally identical, or closely similar to the verb ‘be’ in these languages,

it is tempting to assume that originally, Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba all made use of a single post-verbal negative marker, initially meaning ‘be’, to negate declarative verbal main clauses. Over time, this post-verbal negator was reinforced by additional pre-verbal elements (**tè**, **tě:**, and **kà:** in Ngiemboon, **sī**, **sĩ**, **sĩʔ**, and **kōʔ** in Feʔfeʔ, **tā**, **tā**, and **kā** in Ghomalaʔ, and **kə** and **kəʔ** in Medumba) which became obligatory for the expression of negation, resulting in double negative markers. At a later stage, the original post-verbal negative marker became lost in Medumba, thus, giving rise to the ‘NEG’ pattern in Medumba. In Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ it was maintained following most pre-verbal negative particles, thus, the ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ pattern in these languages and became optional, that is, it may be left out without changing the meaning of the negative clauses, following the pre-verbal negative particles **kà:** (in Ngiemboon), **kōʔ** (in Feʔfeʔ), and **kā** (Ghomalaʔ), thus, the ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’ pattern in these three languages.

Since ‘NEG₁...(NEG₂)’ appears to fall between the ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ pattern and the ‘NEG’ pattern, it may be interpreted as a case under diachronic development from ‘NEG₁...NEG₂’ to ‘NEG’. Therefore, the standard negation pattern currently observed in Medumba looks much more advanced on a grammaticalization path than those observed in Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ.

No hypothesis about the historical development of the negative constructions observed in Ngombale has been made in this study. This is because it seems to be the case that further research on the meaning of the items contained in Ngombale negative constructions needs to be carried out before a hypothesis is advanced on that topic.

8.3.2 Form of Standard Negation Markers

Information about what negative markers look like in different languages of the world have been provided in a number of previous studies on negation. For example, Dahl (1979) makes a primary division between morphological (affixal) and syntactical means of expressing negation (see Chapter Two). In this sub-section, I compare the investigated languages with respect to the form of the standard negation markers. For this purpose, the negative markers identified in this study have been classified into pre-verbal and post-verbal negative markers.

Table 47: Standard negation markers in the investigated languages

<i>Ngiemboon</i>		<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>		<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>		<i>Ngombale</i>		<i>Medumba</i>	
pre-verbal	post-verbal	pre-verbal	post-verbal	pre-verbal	post-verbal	pre-verbal	post-verbal	pre-verbal	post-verbal
tè	wó	sī	b ^h á	tā	pó	kā	pó	kè	
tě:		sī		tâ		pó		kôʔ	
kà:		sīʔ		kā					
		kāʔ							

Table 47 shows that the markers used to negate declarative verbal main clauses in the languages analysed are all free-standing markers. In other words, they are grammatical words that occur before or after the verb. Therefore, the languages analysed are characterised by the use of free-standing markers for standard negation. Interestingly, Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ differ from Ngombale and Medumba as they have a pre-verbal negative marker, namely, **tè** in Ngiemboon, **sī** in Feʔfeʔ, and **tā** in Ghomalaʔ, which may merge with the habitual marker (in Ngiemboon) or the imperfective marker (in Feʔfeʔ and Ghomalaʔ) and appear at the level of the surface structure as **tě:**, **sī** or **sīʔ**, and **tâ** in Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ghomalaʔ, respectively. Also noteworthy is that the languages analysed are particularly poor in post-verbal standard negation markers. It emerged from discussions with language consultants that most of the post-verbal standard negation markers identified in this study, for example, **wó**, in Ngiemboon, are formally identical or closely similar to the verb ‘be’ in the investigated languages. This suggests that the verb ‘be’ is a possible source of negative markers in the languages under investigation. Note that this verb is not listed in the diachronic sources for standard negation markers proposed by (Dahl 2010: 32).

8.4 Comparing the Interaction between Tense-Aspect and Standard Negation

In Chapter Two above, it has been pointed out that previous studies have demonstrated that in some languages of the world, there are cases of interaction between tense, aspect, and standard negation. The analysis in sections 3.6, 4.6, 5.6, 6.6, and 7.6 above has revealed that cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation occur in all the five languages analysed. For instance, the imperfective marker **nũm**, **b̃** or **k̃** in Medumba alternates with **b̃** in the negative counterpart of a positive declarative verbal main clause which contains the construction used to indicate the Imperfective (see 7.6 above). In this section, I compare the investigated languages with respect to the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation. The discussion is organised around the following four points: (1) placement of negative markers in clauses with respect to tense markers, (2) occurrence of the nasal consonant prefix alongside affirmative and corresponding negative tense or aspect markers, (3) change in phonetic content of tense or aspect markers when co-occurring with negative markers, and (4) selection of standard negation markings.

8.4.1 Placement of Negative Markers in Clauses with respect to Tense Markers

The following comments can be made regarding the positioning of negative markers in clauses with respect to tense markers. Ngiemboon and Ghomala? are similar as they both have a negative particle whose place of occurrence in clauses may change depending on the tense marker with which it co-occurs. Ngombale and Medumba correspond as they do not distinguish a negative particle whose place of occurrence in clauses may change depending on the tense marker. Fe?fe? differs from Ngiemboon and Ghomala? as it has a negative particle whose place of occurrence in clauses may change depending on the tense marker with which it co-occurs, but a further restriction is observed in its use. This is shown in Table 48 below.

Table 48: Distribution of the negative particles ‘tè’, ‘sī’, and ‘t̃’

Label		Ngiemboon	Fe?fe?	Ghomala?
H_PST	Aff	ně N-vb		ê N-vb
	Neg	ně tè vb wó		(k)ê t̃ vb p̃
H_PST PROG	Aff	kò nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L		
	Neg	kò tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L wó		
N_PST	Aff	kà vb	kā vb	kā vb
	Neg	kà tè vb wó	kā sī vb b ^h á	kā t̃ vb p̃
N_PST IPFV	Aff			kā b̃ N-vb
	Neg			kā t̃ b̃ N-vb p̃
H_PST PROG ₁	Aff			kā b̃ wá N-vb
	Neg			kā t̃ b̃ wá N-vb p̃
H_PST PROG ₂	Aff	kà nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L	kǎ? m̃ N-vb	
	Neg	kà tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L wó	kā sī m̃ N-vb b ^h á	
R_PST	Aff	là vb	lā vb	lā vb
	Neg	là tè vb wó	lā sī vb b ^h á	lā t̃ vb p̃
R_PST IPFV	Aff			lā b̃ N-vb
	Neg			lā t̃ b̃ N-vb p̃

<i>Label</i>		<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>
R_PST PROG ₁	Aff Neg	là nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L là tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L wó		lā bá wá N-vb lā tā bá wá N-vb pá
R_PST PROG ₂	Aff Neg ₁ (P ₃ PROG) Neg ₂ (PST HAB)		lǎʔ mǎ N-vb lǎ sī mǎ N-vb b^há sī lǎʔ mǎ N-vb b^há	
PROG	Aff Neg	nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L tè nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L wó		bá wá N-vb tā bá wá N-vb pá
G_FUT	Aff Neg	yə vb tè N-gè (N-) vb wó		gō vb tā gō vb pá
FUT	Aff Neg		ká vb sī ká vb b^há	
G_FUT IPFV	Aff Neg			gō pá vb tā gō pá vb pá
G_FUT PROG	Aff Neg	yə kú nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L tè N-gè kú nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L wó		gō pá wá vb tā gō pá wá vb pá
FUT PROG	Aff Neg		ká mǎ N-vb sī ká mǎ N-vb b^há	
N_FUT	Aff Neg	yə ɣxuò/tó/lù vb tè N-gè ɣxuò/tó/lù vb wó		gō tí vb tā gō tí vb pá
N_FUT IPFV	Aff Neg			gō tí pá vb tā gō tí pá vb pá
N_FUT PROG	Aff Neg	yə ɣxuò/tó/lù nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L tè N-gè ɣxuò/tó/lù nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L wó		gō tí pá wá vb tā gō tí pá wá vb pá
R_FUT	Aff Neg	yə láʔ vb tè N-gè láʔ vb wó		gō ʃwá vb tā gō ʃwá vb pá
R_FUT IPFV	Aff Neg			gō ʃwá pá vb tā gō ʃwá pá vb pá
R_FUT PROG	Aff Neg	yə láʔ nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L tè N-gè láʔ nè N-vb-VL ^L , VC ^L wó		gō ʃwá pá wá vb tā gō ʃwá pá wá vb pá

As evident from Table 48, the first particle of the double negative markers **tè...wó** and **tā...pá** in Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ, respectively, occurs immediately after the tense marker if the tense marker is a past tense marker, and before the tense marker if the tense marker is a future tense marker.

Table 48 also shows that just like the particles ‘tè’ and ‘tā’, the negative particle ‘sī’ in Feʔfeʔ occupies different positions depending on the tense marker with which it co-occurs. It appears immediately after the tense marker if the tense marker is a past tense marker, and before

the tense marker if the tense marker is a future tense marker. However, unlike in Ngiemboon and Ghomala? where the particles ‘tè’ (in Ngiemboon) and ‘tɔ’ (in Ghomala?) always appear after past tense markers, in Feʔfeʔ the particle ‘sɪ’ may precede the remote past tense marker if the verb of the clause in which it occurs describes a past habitual situation (see ‘R-PST PROG₂’, Table 48).

No data on Ngombale and Medumba has been provided in Table 48. This is because, as noted above, these languages do not distinguish a negative particle whose place of occurrence in the clause may change depending on the tense marker. Rather, the negative marker in Medumba occurs after the tense marker irrespective of whether the tense marker is a past tense marker or a future tense marker (see Table 36). In Ngombale, the negative marker may precede or follow any tense marker and this is attributable to the fact that two distinct strategies are used to negate a single tense-aspect marking in Ngombale (see Table 27). Interestingly, however, Ngombale distinguishes a set of emphatic pronouns (see Table 28) which always occur in negative clauses, but never in affirmative ones, and occupy different positions in clauses with respect to the verb. That is, when co-occurring with a past tense marker, the emphatic pronoun immediately follows the verb, whereas when co-occurring with a future tense marker, it appears in pre-verbal position.

8.4.2 Occurrence of the Nasal Prefix alongside Positive and Corresponding Negative Tense or Aspect Markers

It has been indicated in the preceding chapters that in each of the five languages analysed, some tense or aspect markers must be accompanied by a nasal consonant prefix that typically occurs before the verb. The discussion in the preceding chapters has also revealed that the presence or absence of that nasal consonant prefix may be conditioned by whether the tense or aspect marker with which it co-occurs is negated or not. In this sub-section, I compare the investigated languages with respect to the occurrence of the nasal prefix alongside affirmative and corresponding negative tense or aspect markers. For this purpose, tense or aspect markers which co-occur with a nasal prefix depending on whether they are negated or not have been organised as in Table 49 below.

Table 49: The nasal consonant prefix alongside positive and corresponding negative tense/aspect markers

<i>Label</i>	<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Ghomala?</i>	<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
H_PST Aff Neg	ně N-vb ně tè vb wó	ê N-vb (k)ê tã vb pá		ʃǎ? N-vb ʃǎ? kə vb
N_PST Aff Neg				fə N-vb fə kə vb
G_FUT Aff Neg	yè vb tè N-gè (N-) vb wó		ɣwò vb kā...pá N-gwò E (N-) vb pá N-gwò E (N-) vb Pó	
N_FUT Aff Neg				à? ʃǎ? N-vb à? ʃǎ? kə vb
R_FUT Aff Neg				à? zí N-vb à? zí kə vb
IPFV Aff Neg				nũm, bâ, ké N-vb kə? bó vb

Table 49 indicates that Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, and Medumba correspond as they all distinguish a tense marker, namely, the hodiernal past marker **ně** in Ngiemboon, **ê** in Ghomala?, or **ʃǎ?** in Medumba, which is always followed by a nasal consonant prefix in positive clauses, but never in negative ones. Ngiemboon and Ngombale correspond in that they both distinguish a tense marker, namely, the general future marker **yè** in Ngiemboon or **ɣwò** in Ngombale, which is never preceded by a nasal consonant prefix in positive clauses, but always takes a nasal consonant prefix in negative clauses. Also, Medumba deviates from Ngiemboon and Ghomala? in that in addition to the hodiernal past marker, there are other tense or aspect markers in Medumba which are always followed by a nasal prefix in positive clauses, but never in negative ones (see Table 49, N_PST, N_FUT, R_FUT, IPFV).

No data on Fe?fe? has been provided in Table 49. This is explained by the fact that, contrary to all other languages analysed, Fe?fe? does not have tense or aspect markers that co-occur with a nasal prefix depending on whether they are negated or not.

8.4.3 Change in Phonetic Content of Tense or Aspect Markers when Co-occurring with Negative Markers

Two of the investigated languages, namely, Ghomala? and Medumba differ from the others analysed as some of their tense markers (in Ghomala?) or aspect markers (in Medumba) may

change in phonetic content⁶⁰ when co-occurring with a negative marker. This is illustrated in the following table.

Table 50: Change in phonetic content of tense or aspect markers

<i>Label</i>		<i>Ghomala?</i>	<i>Medumba</i>
N_PST	Aff Neg	kā vb kā tē vb pə	
N_PST IPFV	Aff Neg	kā bə N-vb kā tē bə N-vb pə	
N_PST PROG	Aff Neg	kā bə wə N-vb kā tē bə wə N-vb pə	
R_PST	Aff Neg	lā vb lā tē vb pə	
R_PST IPFV ₁	Aff Neg	lā bə N-vb lā tē bə N-vb pə	
R_PST PROG	Aff Neg	lā bə wə N-vb lā tē bə wə N-vb pə	
R_PST IPFV ₂	Aff Neg₁ (prog.) Neg₂ (hab.)		lū/nā? kə N-vb lū/nā? kə kə N-vb lū/nā? kə bə N-vb
IPFV	Aff Neg		nūm, bə, kə N-vb kə? bə vb
R_FUT IPFV	Aff Neg₁ (prog.) Neg₂ (hab.)		à? zí kə N-vb à? zí kə kə N-vb à? zí kə bə N-vb

As shown in Table 50, the near past marker **kā** and the remote past marker **lā** in Ghomala? alternate with **kā** and **lā**, respectively, when immediately followed by the first particle of the double negative marker **tē...pə**. Also, the imperfective marker **kə**,⁶¹ **nūm**, or **bə** in Medumba alternate with **bə** when immediately preceded by the negative marker **kə** or **kə?**. The motivation for these modifications has not been identified in this research.

8.4.4 Selection of Standard Negation Markings

In the preceding chapters, it has been shown that the selection of standard negation markings in the languages under investigation takes account of the tense-aspect marking that appears in the clause to be negated. This is shown in Table 51 below which provides an overview of the selection of standard negation markings in the investigated languages.

⁶⁰ By phonetic content, I mean the sounds contained within a grammatical marker, for example, consonant sounds.

⁶¹ The imperfective marker **kə** never alternates with **bə** if it is used to express a past progressive (as opposed to past habitual) situation.

Table 51: Selection of standard negation markings in the investigated languages

<i>Ngiemboon</i>	<i>Context</i>
a. tē...wó	Used to negate all tense-aspect markings that locate situations in the past, except the perfect marker and the constructions used to describe past habitual situations. Also negate Unmarked Tense-Aspect.
b. tē:...wó	Used to negate the near past habitual, the remote past habitual, or the habitual construction.
c. tē N-...(N-)...wó	Used to negate all tense-aspect markings that locate situations in the future.
d. kà...(wó)	Used to negate the perfect marker.
<i>Feʔfeʔ</i>	<i>Context</i>
a. sī...b ^h ó	Used to negate all tense-aspect markings except the hodiernal past marker, the hodiernal past progressive, the imperfective, or the progressive construction.
b. sī...b ^h ó	Used to negate the imperfective or the progressive construction.
c. sīʔ...b ^h ó	Alternative means for negating the imperfective construction.
d. kēʔ...(b ^h ó)	Used to negate the hodiernal past marker or the hodiernal past progressive construction.
<i>Ghomalaʔ</i>	<i>Context</i>
a. tō...pó	Used to negate all tense-aspect markings except the imperfective construction and the perfect marker.
b. tō...pó	Used to negate the imperfective construction.
c. kā...(pó)	Used to negate the perfect marker.
<i>Ngombale</i>	<i>Context</i>
a. kā...E/E pó	Used to negate all tense-aspect markings that locate situations in the past or the present. Also negate Unmarked Tense-Aspect.
b. kā...pó N-...E (N-)/pó N-...E (N-)...pó	Used to negate all tense-aspect markings that locate situations in the future.
<i>Medumba</i>	<i>Context</i>
a. kē	Used to negate all tense-aspect markings except the imperfective construction and the perfect marker.
b. kēʔ	Used to negate the imperfective construction or the perfect marker.

It appears from Table 51 that based on the principle used to choose between standard negation markings, the languages analysed can be divided into two groups. On the one hand, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba relate as they all have standard negation markings used to

negate one or two tense-aspect marking(s) and a standard negation marking that can be referred to as the general standard negation marking as it is used to negate most tense-aspect markings. For example, Ghomala? has a general standard negation marking, namely, **tā...pó** which is used to negate all Ghomala? tense-aspect markings, except the imperfective construction which is negated using the marker **tā...pó** and the perfect marker which is negated using the marker **kā...(pó)**.

On the other hand, Ngiemboon and Ngombale correspond as they both have a standard negation marking used to negate all tense-aspect markings that locate situations in the future and one (in Ngombale) or three (in Ngiemboon) other standard negation marking(s) with specific conditions of use. In Ngombale, for instance, the construction **kā...pó N-...E (N-)** or **pó N-...E (N-)...pó** is used to negate all tense-aspect markings that locate situations in the future, while the construction **kā...E** or **E pó** is used to negate all tense-aspect markings that locate situations in the past or the present, as well as the Unmarked Tense-Aspect.

To sum up, the comparative analysis carried out in this chapter proves that Ngiemboon, Fe?fe?, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba show a high degree of similarity as regards the basic facts about their tense-aspect systems and standard negation. Nevertheless, when these languages are compared on the basis of (1) a detailed description of the mechanisms for expressing standard negation and the tense-aspect categories in each language, (2) the basic functions of tense-aspect categories, and (3) the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation, it appears that the similarities and differences between them are both considerable and, thus, neither should be de-emphasised. Therefore, the present research departs from previous claims that aspects of grammar largely exhibit the same characteristics from one Bamileke language to another.

CHAPTER IX

9 Conclusion

9.1 Summary

The aim of the study was twofold:

- (1) Provide a detailed description of the mechanisms for expressing tense-aspect categories and standard negation in five Bamileke languages: Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba
- (2) Compare the languages analysed with respect to their tense-aspect systems and standard negation with the ultimate aim of testing previous scholars' claims that aspects of grammar, for example, tone, noun classes, tense, aspect, etc. largely exhibit the same characteristics from one Bamileke language to another (Nissim 1975, Sonkoue 2014).

The study has been designed to address the noted shortcomings in previous descriptive research on tense and/or aspect in the languages analysed. For example, the lack of clarity in the presentation of data. That is, the examples provided in most of the previous research are not glossed (see for example, Lonfo 2014, Ndaʔkayii 1974, Sofo 1979). Some of the previous research claims still await clarification. Lonfo (2014: 66), for instance, notes that the question of whether there is really a remote past tense (P5) in Ngiemboon remains open. Also, there are serious doubts about the representativeness of the language sample in Nissim (1975) and Sonkoue (2014).

Bamileke languages are spoken mainly in the West Region of Cameroon. The Bamileke group falls under the Grassfields Bantu languages and includes eleven languages: Ngombale, Megaka, Ngomba, Ngiemboon, Yemba, Ngwe, Ghomlaʔ, Feʔfeʔ, Kwaʔ, Ndaʔndaʔ, and Medumba (Watters 2003). The five investigated in this study have been selected on the basis of Hyman's (1972: 7-9) subclassification of Bamileke languages, as reformulated in Watters's (2003: 232-233) version. That is, in order to have a representative sample of Bamileke languages, I selected two languages from each of Hyman's two subgroups (West Bamileke and East Bamileke). Furthermore, the Ghomalaʔ language, classified under East Bamileke languages in Hyman's study, but whose status as a member of the East Bamileke subgroup appears problematic as one of its dialects, Ngemba, is regarded as a transitional variety between the two subgroups and thus belongs to neither (Hyman 1972: 7) was added.

To conduct this research, I held several working sessions with fluent native speakers of the investigated languages during my field trips in Bamileke villages. I worked with 9 main language consultants and about 25 occasional language consultants. The language consultants met the following criteria: (1) be available, (2) be a fluent native speaker of one of the languages under investigation and a good speaker of the intermediate language, namely, French, (3) be an adult (over eighteen years of age), and (4) they should have some basic education (this favours mental alertness). The main language consultants have been particularly active in the research during the first field trip, while the occasional language consultants mostly intervened during

the second field trip and mainly helped to check the material collected from the main language consultants.

The working sessions with the language consultants were guided by one principal tool, namely, a questionnaire. I formulated the questionnaire on the basis of one developed by Dahl (1985) for a study which aimed at investigating what tense-aspect categories are typically found in the languages of the world. I also made use of a range of information from diverse sources to elaborate the questionnaire used in this research, such as information about the various kinds of tenses or aspects described in previous studies on the investigated languages, as well as in genetically related languages outside the Bamileke group. For example, the Bafut language of the Ngemba group (Tamanji 2009), the Babanki language of the Central Ring group (Akumbu & Chibaka 2012).

The original questionnaire was written in English. However, because the Bamileke area is found in the Francophone part of Cameroon, it was translated into French. The language consultants were instructed to orally produce in their native language the appropriate sentence for each sentence of the questionnaire, taking as a basis the context or situation indicated within square brackets. Other data collection tools used in this study include a list of verbs and a list of selected topics for the collection of short oral texts, that is, data where the native speakers use their language in a as much as possible, natural way.

The analysis of the data collected involved six major steps. The first, transcription and translation of the recordings, was achieved using the IPA symbols. In other words, the data collected were transcribed phonetically. Also, the translation of the recordings into French has been carried out by the language consultants, and this mainly had to do with the translation of text data. The second, third, fourth, and fifth steps of the data analysis process were glossing of all of the transcriptions, isolation of the tense-aspect and standard negation markings, description of the basic functions of the tense-aspect categories, description of how the tense-aspect system works in each language, respectively. They were achieved mainly by comparing the transcriptions with the translations beginning with the first sentence in each language and the use of further elicitation questions and discussions with the language consultants. The final step of the data analysis process, comparison of the investigated languages with respect to their tense-aspect systems and standard negation, was done on the basis of several parameters, such as form of tense-aspect markers, types of standard negation patterns, or placement of negative markers in clauses with respect to tense markers. Also, the comparative approach adopted in the study is primarily synchronic.

There are four main arguments that have provided guidance for the analysis of tense-aspect categories in the languages analysed. These arguments have been advanced in typological studies on tense and aspect (mainly Comrie 1976, Comrie 1985, Dahl 1985, Boogaart 2004). Following the first of these four arguments, namely, tense and aspect are construed in terms of time, tense-aspect categories are understood in this study as relating to the grammatical units used in languages to locate situations in time in relation to a reference time which is typically the moment of speech (tense) and to represent the time within the situation described (aspect). The second argument concerns the occurrence of graded tenses in some languages of the world. This refers to tenses that indicate the degree of remoteness in the past or future in relation to a

reference time. For example, today past tense versus near past tense. Taking as a background this argument, together with the features pertaining to it, (for example, while in some languages the dividing lines between different degrees of remoteness distinctions are fairly rigid, in others, they are flexible) various degrees of past tense and future tense have been established in the investigated languages. The third argument, namely, a language item may have a basic use, which is contrasted against peripheral or secondary uses served as a background for the discussion of the basic functions of the tense-aspect categories. Finally, the argument that there are four uses commonly associated with the Perfect: perfect of continuation, perfect of recent past, perfect of experience, and perfect of result guided the analysis of the Perfect in the investigated languages.

The expression ‘standard negation’ originates from Payne (1985) and refers to the negation of declarative main clauses with verbal predicates. My discussion of standard negation in this study is mainly based on the distinction between symmetric and asymmetric negation proposed by Miestamo (2000, 2003, 2005). In symmetric negation, affirmative and corresponding negative clauses show no difference except for the presence of the negative marker(s) in the negative clause. In asymmetric negation, a distinction is made between asymmetric constructions and asymmetric paradigms. In the first case, that is, asymmetric constructions, further structural differences are observed between affirmative and corresponding negative clauses in addition to the presence of the negative marker(s) in the negative clause. In asymmetric paradigms, the correspondences between the members of the paradigms used in affirmative clauses and negative clauses are not one-to-one. For example, more tense distinctions are made in the affirmative than in the negative.

The study revealed that tense and aspect connect to give a variety of tense-aspect categories in each of the investigated languages. This relates to grammatical units that may have one or more basic uses. Also, they may be manifested by any of the following: the lack of an overt tense or aspect marking, a single marker (this can be a free-standing marker, a verb suffix, a tone alternation on the verb or a pre-verbal element), or a construction including at least two elements, for example, two tense markers following each other.

The discussion of standard negation demonstrated that the negation of declarative verbal main clauses in the languages analysed can be organised according to different types of standard negation patterns. This refers to the general rules used for negating declarative verbal main clauses. For instance, Medumba shows a single standard negation pattern, namely, the ‘NEG pattern’ (see section 7.6).

It has also been shown that there are cases of interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation in all the languages analysed. For instance, in each language analysed, the selection of a given standard negation marking takes account of the tense-aspect marking that occurs in the clause to be negated.

The comparative analysis revealed that the five languages under investigation show a high degree of similarity as regards the basic facts about their tense-aspect systems and standard negation. For instance, most of the investigated languages (four out of five) distinguish at least two degrees of future tense. In all the investigated languages, some tense or aspect markers

must be accompanied by a nasal prefix that typically occurs before the verb. Nevertheless, when these languages are compared on the basis of (1) a detailed description of the mechanisms for expressing standard negation and the tense-aspect categories in each language, (2) the basic functions of tense-aspect categories, and (3) the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation, it appears that the similarities and differences between them are both considerable and, thus, neither should be de-emphasised. The present research, therefore, departs from previous claims that aspects of grammar largely exhibit the same characteristics from one Bamileke language to another. Some of the similarities between the languages analysed include:

- A comparison of the investigated languages with respect to the structure of tense-aspect categories shows that in all the languages analysed, the tense marker (T) always precedes the aspect marker (A) when both elements occur together.
- When comparing the investigated languages with respect to the form of standard negation markers, it appears that the markers used to negate declarative verbal main clauses in the languages analysed are all free-standing grammatical words that occur before or after the verb. Also, most of the post-verbal standard negation particles identified are formally identical, or closely similar to the verb *be* in the investigated languages.
- In all the languages analysed where the category Perfect has been established (Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, and Medumba) the marker used to negate the perfect marker can be said to be specific in that it is exclusively used to negate the perfect marker (see the analysis of standard negation in Ngiemboon and Ghomala?), or to negate the perfect marker and one other tense-aspect marking (see standard negation in Medumba).

The following points summarise some of the variations between the investigated languages:

- When comparing the investigated languages with respect to the basic functions of the tense-aspect categories used to describe future perfective situations, it is clear that Fe?fe? stands out from the other languages analysed. This is because it is the only language where a single category, the Future (FUT), describes all future perfective situations, irrespective of the degree of remoteness in the future of the situation described. In three of the five languages analysed (Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, and Medumba) a Near Future (N_FUT) has been established. However, while in Ngiemboon and Ghomala? the Near Future describes any future perfective situation expected to occur within the time interval ‘tomorrow and before a year’, in Medumba, the Near Future describes any future perfective situation expected to occur ‘tomorrow’. In four of the five languages analysed (Ngiemboon, Ghomala?, Ngombale, and Medumba), a Remote Future (R_FUT) has been established. However, while in Ngombale the Remote Future describes any future perfective situation expected to occur as from tomorrow, in Medumba the Remote Future is used to refer to any future perfective situation expected to occur as from the day after tomorrow. In Ngiemboon and Ghomala?, the Remote Future describes any future perfective situation expected to occur in one year’s time or later.
- Eight types of standard negation patterns have been described in this study. However, these standard negation patterns are not attested in all the languages analysed. Rather, the general tendency is that different languages have different standard negation patterns.

- The nasal consonant prefix that must accompany some tense or aspect markers does not have the same distribution across the investigated languages. For instance, Ngiemboon, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba, all have a nasal consonant prefix that occurs before the verb when the verb is preceded by the hodiernal past marker. However, in negative clauses, this nasal prefix is deleted in Ngiemboon, Ghomalaʔ, and Medumba, but not in Ngombale.

The comparative analysis also revealed that various hypotheses about diachronic change relating to tense-aspect systems and standard negation in the languages under investigation, and to a certain extent in related languages outside the Bamileke group, can be advanced. For instance, it has been posited that the near past markers identified in the present research: **kà** in Ngiemboon, **kā** in Feʔfeʔ and Ghomalaʔ, and **kə** in Ngombale were probably derived from the same source. Furthermore, it has been postulated that the hypothesis about the common origin of the near past markers in the investigated languages might be extended to the whole Grassfields branch on the basis that the near past marker in related languages outside the Bamileke group, namely, **kɪ** in Bafut (Tamanji 2009) or **kə** in Isu (Kiessling 2016) looks closely similar to the near past marker in most of the investigated languages.

9.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The discussion of tense-aspect categories in the investigated languages has revealed that in all the languages analysed, certain categories, for instance, the Perfect in Ngiemboon (see 3.4.17), may have two basic uses depending on the lexical information provided by the verb, that is, depending on whether the verb of the clause is a stative or a dynamic verb. However, due to time constraints, the interaction between stative verbs and tense-aspect categories has not been comprehensively studied in this research. Therefore, it will be interesting for future research to examine the behaviour of stative verbs for each of the tense-aspect categories identified, and also to compare the languages analysed with respect to the interaction between stative verbs and tense-aspect categories.

In the preceding chapters (Chapters Three to Seven) only the basic functions of the tense-aspect categories have been discussed. Also, it has been argued in Chapter Three that the remoteness markings in the languages analysed may have extended functions that seem to be controlled by several factors, such as the discourse context in which they occur (for example, they occur in stories) or subjective elements (for example, how the speaker perceives or wants the listener to perceive the situation described). This suggests that much remains to be discovered concerning the extended functions of tense-aspect categories in the languages analysed. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to conduct thorough studies about the functions of the tense-aspect categories in individual languages.

In Chapter One, it has been observed that although the short oral texts collected did not enable the researcher to identify new markings in the investigated languages, they proved useful as they revealed a great deal of information both about the nasal prefix that accompanies some tense or aspect markers and the functions of the tense-aspect categories established in the study. When one looks at the questionnaire, it appears that most of the sentences have a uniform

structure, containing a transitive verb with a pronominal subject and a direct object which consists of a mass noun (for example, *maize*). This has the advantage that the same sentence is tested in different contexts/situations, but reduces the variety in parameters such as telicity, since bare mass nouns tend to induce atelic readings. In the introductory section of Chapter Three, it has been argued that the dividing lines between graded tenses appear somewhat rigid in the investigated languages. However, it has been further pointed out that in Ngiemboon, there is the possibility to use the hodiernal (today) past marker to describe a remote past situation if the speaker is telling a story and wants to make a remote past situation seem slightly temporally nearer. Also, the analysis of the short oral texts revealed a striking preponderance of verb forms that are unmarked for tense and aspect (Unmarked Tense-Aspect) in text data. All these observations and results suggest a need for an increased focus on text data in future research on verb-related elements in the languages analysed.

The discussion in Chapter One has also revealed that Grassfields Bantu languages, which include Bamileke languages, show a high degree of lexical similarity. From my experience working with native speakers of different Bamileke languages, I posit that despite the high degree of lexical similarity observed across Grassfields Bantu languages, native speakers of these languages have difficulties understanding each other. For instance, according to my language consultants, it is quite difficult for a Feʔfeʔ speaker and a Ngiemboon speaker to understand each other. For a group of languages like Grassfields Bantu where languages show a high degree of lexical similarity, this likely lack of mutual intelligibility is puzzling. In an attempt to explain the apparent lack of mutual intelligibility between Grassfields Bantu languages, I propose the following tentative historical scenario. At some point of time in the past, there was an early Grassfields Bantu language from which the present-day Grassfields Bantu languages were descended. During the development from the early Grassfields Bantu language to the present-day Grassfields Bantu languages, the lexical stock of the ancestral language remained fairly unchanged, whereas grammatical items, such as tense, aspect, voice or noun classes, developed different properties in different Grassfields Bantu languages. For example, a construction consisting of the marker of the first degree of remoteness in the future and another future tense marker is used to indicate the future tense in all the languages analysed as from the second degree of remoteness in the future, whereas in the Grassfields Bantu languages of the West-Ring group (Kiessling 2016), all future tenses are indicated by a single marker. Future research about the history of grammatical systems in Bamileke languages and a wide range of Grassfields Bantu languages, will certainly reveal key insights in relation to this concluding comment. Also, it might provide useful hints about the internal classification of Grassfields Bantu languages which remains a controversial issue, according to the literature (Watters 2003).

In Chapter Two, it has been noted that from an analysis of noun class and phonological differences, Hyman (1972:7-9) claimed that Bamileke languages consist of two subgroups. One, namely, West Bamileke (Ngombale, Megaka, Ngomba, Ngiemboon, Yemba, Ngwe), includes all Bamileke languages which retain typical Bantu-like noun class prefixes and are characterised by /z/ as a reflex of proto-Bamileke *z, whereas the other subgroup, that is, East Bamileke (Ghomalaʔ, Feʔfeʔ, Kwaʔ, Ndaʔndaʔ, Medumba), comprises all Bamileke languages

which have lost all noun class prefixes except for the nasal prefixes in classes 1, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10, and are characterised by /j/ as a reflex of proto-Bamileke *z.

From my comparison of the investigated languages with respect to their tense-aspect systems and standard negation, it appears impossible to propose a subclassification of Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, Ghomalaʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba that makes sense. When considering features from which one may look to define subgroups, namely, tense-aspect-standard negation features shared by some of the investigated languages, one realises that the languages are related, but it is difficult to determine how closely. For example, if one considers, on the one hand, one parameter related to the comparison of the investigated languages with respect to their tense-aspect systems, namely, ‘form of tense-aspect markers’ and, on the other hand, a parameter related to the comparison of the investigated languages with respect to the interaction between tense-aspect and standard negation, namely, ‘placement of negative markers in clauses with respect to tense markers’, one realises that on the basis of the first parameter (form of tense-aspect markers) it is possible to group Ghomalaʔ and Medumba together in one branch of a language family tree and place Ngiemboon, Feʔfeʔ, and Ngombale in three separate branches of the same tree. Based on the second parameter (placement of negative markers in clauses with respect to tense markers), a different clustering is observed, that is, the following three subgroups are obtained: (1) Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ go together, (2) Ngombale and Medumba go together, and (3) Feʔfeʔ stands alone on a separate branch. However, it is interesting to note that a close look at the hypotheses advanced in this study about diachronic change relating to tense-aspect systems and standard negation suggests that Feʔfeʔ, Ngombale, and Medumba are more innovative than Ngiemboon and Ghomalaʔ. Further research about the history of grammatical systems in the investigated languages might provide clarifications about the question how closely the analysed languages are related.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Main language consultants involved in the study

<i>Language</i>	<i>Language consultant</i>	<i>Village/origin</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Profession</i>
Ngiemboon	Fofie Honore	Bangang	Male	56	trader
-/-	Kenne Robert	Bangang	Male	43	primary school teacher
Feʔfeʔ	Tchouamo René	Banfang	Male	52	radio host and farmer
-/-	Djiomeni Arlette	Bafang	Female	69	retired nurse
Ghomalaʔ	Tagne Nestor	Bandjoun	Male	73	retired engineer
-/-	Kamdom Jeanne	Bandjoun	Female	57	primary school teacher
Ngombale	Tidjio Alain	Babadjou	Male	49	secondary school teacher
-/-	Tiayon Hypolithe	Bamessingue	Male	40	secondary school teacher
Medumba	Djappa	Bangangte	Male	48	secondary school teacher

Appendix B: List used to collect verbs in the investigated languages

to accept	to defoliate (ear of corn)	to love
to be big	to die	to peel (potatoes)
to be cold	to die in numbers	to pick grapes off
to be good	to dig	to push
to be sick	to distribute	to refuse
to be small	to drink	to reheat
to be white	to eat	to remove plantain/banana peelings
to begin	to enter	to run
to bite	to finish	to say
to braid (hair)	to germinate	to see
to burn	to give	to send
to burst	to go	to sew
to buy	to go back	to shell (groundnuts)
to call	to go out	to sing
to carry a baby on ones back	to grind	to sow
to climb	to grow	to spoil
to close	to harvest (bean)	to steal
to come	to harvest (maize)	to swallow
to cook	to harvest (potatoes)	to take
to cough	to harvest (wine)	to tie
to count	to harvest (fruits)	to understand
to cross	to hear	to urinate
to crush	to hop	to wash
to cultivate	to jump	to weed
to cut	to kill	
to cut into several pieces	to learn	
to dance	to lose	
	to lose weight	

Appendix C: The tense-aspect-mood questionnaire (English version)

Context indications are given within square brackets. Words within parentheses are meant to specify the context. Q=Question, An=Answer.

Part I – Constructions with a basic SVO structure

- 1 [Talking about something your brother did a long time ago] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 2 [Talking about something your brother did last year] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 3 [Talking about something your brother did last month] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 4 [Talking about something your brother did last week] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 5 [Talking about something your brother did yesterday] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 6 [Talking about something your brother did the day before yesterday] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 7 [Talking about something your brother has done this morning] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 8 [Talking about something your brother has just done] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 9 [Talking about something your brother has already done (he has several things to do)] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 10 [Talking about something your brother did all day long] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.
- 11 [Talking about something your brother did the whole night] He COOK maize. He NOT COOK maize.
- 12 [Talking about something your brother did a long time ago] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 13 [Talking about something your brother did last year] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 14 [Talking about something your brother did last month] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 15 [Talking about something your brother did last week] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 16 [Talking about something your brother did yesterday] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 17 [Talking about something your brother did the day before yesterday] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 18 [Talking about something your brother has done this morning] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

- 19 [Talking about something your brother has just done] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 20 [Talking about something your brother has already done (he has several things to do)] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 21 [Talking about something your brother did all day long] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 22 [Talking about something your brother did the whole night] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 23 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do when he is a grown-up man] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.
- 24 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do next year] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.
- 25 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do next month] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.
- 26 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do next week] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.
- 27 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do tomorrow] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.
- 28 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do the day after tomorrow] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.
- 29 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do today] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.
- 30 [Talking about something your brother is about to do] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.
- 31 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do when he becomes a rich man] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 32 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do next year] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 33 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do next month] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 34 [Talking about something your brother is planning do next week] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 35 [Talking about something your brother is planning do tomorrow] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 36 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do the day after tomorrow] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 37 [Talking about something your brother is planning to do today] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.
- 38 [Talking about something your brother is about to do] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

39 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession when he was still living in the village? (your brother presently lives in town and has a new job) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

40 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession last year? (your brother has a new job since the beginning of this year) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

41 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession last month? (your brother has a new job since the beginning of this month) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

42 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession last week? (your brother has a new job since the beginning of this week) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

43 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession the day before yesterday? (your brother has a new job since yesterday) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

44 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession yesterday? (your brother has a new job since this morning) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

45 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession today? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

46 [Q: What was your brother doing as a profession a couple of minutes ago? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

47 [Q: What did your brother used to do when he was still a rich man? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

48 [Q: What did your brother used to do last year? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. I NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

49 [Q: What did your brother used to do last month? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

50 [Q: What did your brother used to do last week? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

51 [Q: What did your brother used to do yesterday? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

52 [Q: What did your brother used to do the day before yesterday? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

53 [Q: What did your brother used to do today? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

54 [Q: What did your brother used to do a couple of minutes ago? An:] He DISTRIBUTE money. He NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

55 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working next year. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

56 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working next month. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CLTIVATE maize.

57 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working next week. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

58 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working the day after tomorrow. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

59 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working tomorrow. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

60 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working today. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

61 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working in a couple of minutes. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

62 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working next year. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

63 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working next month. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

64 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working next week. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

65 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working the day after tomorrow. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

66 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working tomorrow. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

67 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working today. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

68 [Your brother has got a new work contract and he is going to start working in a couple of minutes. Q: What will be his occupation at his work place? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

69 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last year at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

70 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last month at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

71 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last week at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

72 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him the day before yesterday at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

73 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him yesterday at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

74 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him this morning to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

75 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him a couple of minutes ago to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

76 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last year at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

77 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last month at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. I NOT CULTIVATE maize.

78 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him last week at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize . He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

79 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him the day before yesterday at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

80 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him yesterday at this very time to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

81 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him this morning to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize . He NOT CULTIVATE maize .

82 [Q: What was your brother doing when a midwife phoned him a couple of minutes ago to inform him that his wife gave birth to a baby boy? (Do you remember the activity he was engaged in?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

83 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next year during the Christmas holidays? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

84 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next month? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

85 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next Sunday? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

86 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him the day after tomorrow? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

87 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tomorrow? An:] He SOW maize. He NOT SOW maize.

88 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tonight? An:] He EAT food. He NOT EAT food.

89 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next year during the Christmas holidays? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.

90 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next month? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He HARVEST maize. I NOT HARVEST maize.

91 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him next Sunday? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.

92 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we visit him the day after tomorrow? (What activity will he be engaged in when we arrive?) An:] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize .

93 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tomorrow? An:] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.

94 [Q: What do you think your brother is going to be doing when we arrive tonight? An:] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.

95 [Q: What does your sister usually do when she is happy? An:] She DISTRIBUTE money. She NOT DISTRIBUTE money.

96 [Your brother works in a local agricultural industry. Q: What is his occupation at his work place? An:]. He CULTIVATE maize. He NOT CULTIVATE maize.

97 [Q: What does your brother do right now? An:] He HARVEST maize. He NOT HARVEST maize.

98 [Q: What does your brother do right now in the kitchen? An:] He DISTRIBUTE food. He NOT DISTRIBUTE food.

Part II – Constructions with at least two connected clauses or a single clause that does not have a basic SVO structure

99 [Imagine that you are a story tale and tell about the following events in your language] He WALK in the forest. Suddenly he STEP on a snake. It BITE him. He PICK UP a stone and THROW at the snake but it NOT DIE.

100 [The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother when he (the brother of the speaker) was a child.] He WALK in the forest. Suddenly he STEP on a snake. It BITE him. He PICK UP a stone and THROW at the snake but it NOT DIE.

101 [The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother yesterday] He WALK in the forest. Suddenly he STEP on a snake. It BITE him. He PICK UP a stone and THROW at the snake but it NOT DIE.

102 [The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her brother early today]. He WALK in the forest. Suddenly he STEP on a snake. It BITE him. He PICK UP a stone and THROW at the snake but it NOT DIE.

103 [Imagine that you are a hunter. You are right back from a walk in the forest. Tell the following events in your language] I WALK in the forest. Suddenly I STEP on a snake. It BITE me. I PICK UP a stone and THROW at the snake but it NOT DIE.

104 [Imagine that you are watching the following events from a window right now and tell about them in your language] A boy and a girl PLAY (right now). The boy TAKE a ball and THROW it at the girl. The girl PICK UP the ball but NOT THROW it back.

105 [Q: What is your brother going to do when he receives his first salary? (It is assumed that you have already talked about this with your brother and that he has told you about his plans] He first of all BUY a car. Then, he OFFER presents to the members of the family and he VISIT Douala.

106 [The speaker is talking about something his/her niece did yesterday] She SOW maize, while she SING.

107 [The speaker is talking about something his/her niece is doing right now] She SOW maize, while she SING.

108 [The speaker is talking about something his/her niece is planning to do tomorrow] She SOW maize, while she SING.

109 [The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her niece yesterday] She BE SOW maize, when her mother ARRIVE.

110 [The speaker is talking about something that is expected to happen to his/her niece tomorrow] She BE SOW maize, when her mother ARRIVE.

111 [The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her nephew yesterday] When he ARRIVE home (yesterday), she (the niece of speaker) already DISTRIBUTE all the food.

112 [The speaker is talking about something that happened to his/her nephew early today] When he ARRIVE home (today), she (the niece of the speaker) already DISTRIBUTE all the food.

113 [The speaker is talking about something that is expected to happen to his/her nephew tomorrow] When he ARRIVE home (tomorrow), she (the niece of the speaker) already DISTRIBUTE all the food.

114 [The speaker is talking about something that is expected to happen to his/her nephew tonight] When he ARRIVE home (tonight), she (the niece of the speaker) already DISTRIBUTE all the food.

115 [Imagine that you give an order to a single person]. DISTRIBUTE the food! DO NOT DISTRIBUTE the food!

116 [Imagine that you give an order to more than one person]. SWEEP kitchen! DO NOT SWEEP kitchen!

117 [Husband to wife]. (The husband expresses a necessity) It BE NECESSARY that we CULTIVATE maize. It BE NECESSARY that we DO NOT CUTIVATE maize.

118 [Husband to wife]. (The husband expresses a necessity) It BE NECESSARY that you DISTRIBUTE the food now. It BE NECESSARY that you DO NOT DISTRIBUTE the food now.

119 [Mother to child]. If you DISTRIBUTE money, God BLESS you. If you NOT DISTRIBUTE money, God NOT BLESS you.

120 [The speaker is talking about an uncle who has invested a lot of money in coffee growing but was not successful (this happened a long time ago)]. If he CULTIVATE maize, he HAVE money. If he NOT CULTIVATE maize, he NOT have money.

121 [The speaker is talking about an uncle who has recently invested a lot of money in coffee growing but was not successful]. If he CULTIVATE maize, he HAVE money. If he NOT CULTIVATE maize, he NOT have money.

Part III – Constructions with stative verbs

122 [The speaker is talking about the house in which s/he lives]. It BE BIG. It NOT BE BIG.

123 [Q: Do you know my father? A:]. (Yes), I KNOW him. (No), I NOT KNOW him.

124 [The speaker is talking about a house s/he saw yesterday] It BE BIG. It NOT BE BIG.

125 [The speaker is talking about a house in which s/he lived (the house has been torn down)] It BE BIG. It NOT BE big.

126 [It's no use trying to swim in the lake tomorrow] The water BE COLD (then).

127 [It's no use trying to swim in the lake next month] The water BE COLD (then).

128 [Teacher to student]. Q: Do you UNDERSTAND what I SAY? (Yes), I UNDERSTAND. (No), I NOT UNDERSTAND.

Appendix D: The tense-aspect-mood questionnaire (French version)

Les éléments entre crochets indiquent le contexte d'énonciation. Les mots entre parenthèses ont pour rôle de spécifier le contexte d'énonciation. Q=Question, R=Réponse

Première partie : Les constructions ayant une structure de base SVO

- 1 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite il y a longtemps] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 2 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite l'année passée] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 3 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite le mois passée] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 4 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite la semaine passée] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 5 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite hier] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 6 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite avant hier] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 7 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite ce matin] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 8 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère vient juste de faire] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 9 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a déjà faite (il a plusieurs tâches à accomplir)] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 10 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite durant toute la journée] Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.
- 11 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite durant toute la nuit] Il PREPARER maïs. Je PAS PREPARER maïs.
- 12 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite il y a longtemps] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 13 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite l'année passée] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 14 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite le mois dernier] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 15 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite la semaine passée] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 16 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite hier] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 17 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite avant hier] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 18 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite ce matin] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.

- 19 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère vient juste de faire] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 20 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère as déjà faite (il a plusieurs tâches à accomplir)] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 21 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite durant toute la journée] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 22 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère a faite durant toute la nuit] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 23 [A propos d'une activité que ton frère mènera lorsqu'il sera adulte] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 24 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire l'année prochaine] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 25 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire le mois prochain] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 26 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire la semaine prochaine] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 27 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire demain] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 28 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire après demain] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 29 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire aujourd'hui] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 30 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère s'apprête à faire] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 31 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire lorsqu'il deviendra un homme riche] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 32 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire l'année prochaine] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 33 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire le mois prochain] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 34 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire la semaine prochaine] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 35 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire demain] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 36 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire après demain] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 37 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère prévoit de faire aujourd'hui] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 38 [A propos d'une chose que ton frère s'apprête à faire] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 39 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il lorsqu'il vivait au village? (ton frère vie désormais en ville et a un nouveau métier) R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.

- 40 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il l'année passée? (ton frère a un nouveau métier depuis le début de cette année) R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 41 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il le mois passé? (ton frère a un nouveau métier depuis le début de ce mois) R:] il CULTIVER maïs. il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 42 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il la semaine passée? (ton frère a un nouveau métier depuis le début de cette semaine) R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 43 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il avant hier? (ton frère a un nouveau métier depuis hier) R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 44 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il hier? (ton frère a un nouveau métier depuis ce matin) R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 45 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il aujourd'hui? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 46 [Q: Quel métier ton frère exerçait-il il y a quelques minutes? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 47 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire lorsqu'il était un homme riche? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 48 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire l'année passée? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PASDISTRIBUER argent.
- 49 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire le mois passé? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 50 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire la semaine passée? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 51 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire hier? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 52 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire avant hier? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 53 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire aujourd'hui? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 54 [Q: Qu'est-ce que ton frère avait pour habitude de faire il quelques minutes? R:] Il DISTRIBUER argent. Il PAS DISTRIBUER argent.
- 55 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute l'année prochaine. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 56 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute le mois prochain. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 57 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute la semaine prochaine. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 58 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute après-demain. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 59 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute dès demain. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.

- 60 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute aujourd'hui. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 61 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute dans quelques minutes. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.
- 62 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute l'année prochaine. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 63 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute le mois prochain. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 64 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute la semaine prochaine. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 65 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute après-demain. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 66 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute dès demain. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 67 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute aujourd'hui. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 68 [Ton frère a un nouveau contrat de travail et débute dans quelques minutes. Q: Quel sera sa tâche à son lieu de service? R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 69 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) l'année passée à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 70 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) le mois passé à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 71 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) la semaine passée à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 72 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) avant-hier à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 73 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) hier à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 74 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) ce matin pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 75 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) il y a quelques minutes pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] Il SEMER maïs. Il PAS SEMER maïs.
- 76 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) l'année passée à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te

souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

77 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) le mois passé à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

78 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) la semaine passée à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

79 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) avant-hier à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

80 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) hier à cette heure précise pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

81 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) ce matin pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs .

82 [Q: Que faisait ton frère lorsqu'une sage-femme l'a contacté (par téléphone) il y a quelques minutes pour lui annoncer que sa femme avait mis au monde un garçon? (te souviens-tu de l'activité dans laquelle il était engagé) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

83 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite l'année prochaine pendant les congés de Noël? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

84 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite le mois prochain? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL CULTIVER maïs. IL PAS CULTIVER maïs.

85 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite dimanche prochain? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL SEMER maïs. IL PAS SEMER maïs.

86 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite après demain? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL SEMER maïs. IL PAS SEMER maïs.

87 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous arriverons demain? R:] IL SEMER maïs. IL PAS SEMER maïs.

88 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous arriverons ce soir? R:] IL MANGER nourriture. IL PAS MANGER nourriture.

89 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite l'année prochaine pendant les congés de Noël? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL RECOLTER maïs. IL PAS RECOLTER maïs.

90 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite le mois prochain? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL RECOLTER maïs. IL PAS RECOLTER maïs.

91 Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite dimanche prochain? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.

92 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous lui rendrons visite après demain? (dans quelle activité sera-t-il engagé lorsque nous arriverons?) R:] IL RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.

93 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous arriverons demain? R:] IL RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.

94 [Q: Que penses-tu que ton frère sera en train de faire quand nous arriverons ce soir? R:] IL RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.

95 [Q: Que fait habituellement ta sœur quand elle est contente? R:]. Elle DISTRIBUER argent. Elle PAS DISTRIBUER argent.

96 [Ton frère travail pour une société agricole locale. Q: Quel est sa tâche à son lieu de travail ? R:]. Il CULTIVER maïs. Il PAS CULTIVER maïs.

97 [Q: Que fait ton frère à l'instant? R :]. Il RECOLTER maïs. Il PAS RECOLTER maïs.

98 [Q : Que fait ton frère à la cuisine à l'instant? R:] Il DISTRIBUER nourriture. Il PAS DISTRIBUER nourriture.

Deuxième partie – Les constructions ayant au minimum deux phrases connectées ou une phrase qui n'a pas la structure de base SVO

99 [Imagine que tu es un conteur et relate les faits suivants en ta langue.] Il (un chasseur) MARCHER dans la forêt. Tout à coup, il POSER le pied sur un serpent. Il (le serpent) PIQUER lui au pied. Il PRENDRE un caillou et LANCER sur le serpent mais il (le serpent) PAS MOURIR.

100 [A propos d'une chose qui est arrivée à ton frère alors qu'il était encore un enfant.] Il MARCHER dans la forêt. Tout à coup, il POSER le pied sur un serpent. Il (le serpent) PIQUER lui au pied. Il RAMASSER un caillou et LANCER sur le serpent mais il (le serpent) PAS MOURIR.

101 [A propos d'une chose qui est arrivée à ton frère hier] Il MARCHER dans la forêt. Tout à coup, il POSER le pied sur un serpent. Il (le serpent) PIQUER lui au pied. Il RAMASSER un caillou et LANCER sur le serpent mais il (le serpent) PAS MOURIR.

102 [A propos d'une chose qui est arrivée à ton frère tôt ce matin aujourd'hui]. Il MARCHER dans la forêt. Tout à coup, il POSER le pied sur un serpent. Il (le serpent) PIQUER lui au pied. Il RAMASSER un caillou et LANCER sur le serpent mais il (le serpent) PAS MOURIR.

103 [Imagine que tu es un chasseur et que tu viens de faire une promenade en forêt. Relate les faits suivants en ta langue] Je MARCHER dans la forêt. Tout à coup, je POSER le pied sur un serpent. Il (le serpent) PIQUER moi au pied. Je RAMASSER un caillou et LANCER sur le serpent mais il (le serpent) PAS MOURIR.

104 [Imagine que tu observes la scène suivante par la fenêtre à l'instant et raconte là en ta langue.] Un garçon et une fille JOUER (à l'instant). Le garçon PRENDRE un ballon et le LANCER sur la fille. La fille RAMASSER le ballon mais NE PAS le LANCER en retour (sur le garçon).

105 [Q: Que fera-ton frère lorsqu'il percevra son premier salaire? (on suppose que tu as déjà abordé ce sujet avec ton frère et qu'il ta fait part de ses projets) R:] Il tout d'abord ACHETER une voiture. Ensuite, il OFFRIR des cadeaux aux membres de la famille et VISITER douala.

106 [Le locuteur parle d'une chose que sa nièce a faite hier] Elle SEMER le maïs, en CHANTER.

107 [Le locuteur parle d'une chose que sa nièce est en train de faire à l'instant] Elle SEMER le maïs, en CHANTER.

108 [Le locuteur parle d'une chose que sa nièce prévoit de faire demain] Elle SEMER le maïs, en CHANTER.

109 [Le locuteur parle d'une chose qui est arrivée à sa nièce hier] Elle ETRE en train de SEMER le maïs, lorsque sa mère ARRIVER.

110 [Le locutuer parle d'une chose qui arrivera à sa nièce demain] Elle ETRE en train de SEMER le maïs, lorsque sa mère ARRIVER.

111 [Le locuteur parle d'une chose qui est arrivée à son neveu hier] Lorsque il ARRIVER à la maison (hier), elle (la nièce du locuteur) déjà DISTRIBUER toute la nourriture.

112 [Le locuteur parle d'une chose qui est arrivée à son neveu tôt ce matin] Lorsque il ARRIVER à la maison (aujourd'hui), elle (la nièce du locuteur) déjà PARTAGER toute la nourriture.

113 [Le locutuer parle d'une chose qui arrivera à son neweu demain] Lorsque il ARRIVER à la maison (demain), elle (la nièce du locuteur) déjà DISTRIBUER toute la nourriture.

114 [Le locuteur parle d'une chose qui arrivera à son neveu ce soir] Lorsque il ARRIVER à la maison (ce soir), elle (la nièce du locutuer) déjà DISTRIBUER toute nourriture.

115 [Imagine que tu donnes un ordre à une personne]. DISTRIBUER nourriture! Ne PAS DISTRUBUER nourriture!

116 [Imagine que tu donnes un ordre à plus d'une personne]. BALAYER cuisine! Ne PAS BALAYER cuisine!

117 [Un homme s'adresse à sa femme]. (il exprime une nécessité) Il ETRE NECESSAIRE que nous CULTIVER maïs. Il ETRE NECESSAIRE que nous PAS CULTIVER maïs.

118 [Un homme s'adresse à sa femme]. (il exprime une nécessité) Il ETRE NECESSAIRE que tu DISTRIBUER nourriture maintenant. Il ETRE NECESSAIRE que tu PAS DISTRIBUER nourriture maintenant.

119 [Une mère s'adresse à son enfant]. Si tu DISTRIBUER argent, Dieu BENIR toi. Si tu PAS DISTRIBUER argent, Dieu PAS BENIR toi.

120 [Le locutuer parle d'un oncle qui a investi beaucoup d'argent dans la culture du café mais n'a pas eu de succès (il y a longtemps que cela c'est produit)]. Si il CULTIVER maïs, il AVOIR argent. Si il PAS CULTIVER maïs, il PAS AVOIR argent.

121 [Le locutuer parle d'un oncle qui a récemment investi beaucoup d'argent dans la culture du café mais n'a pas eu de succès]. Si il CULTIVER maïs, il AVOIR argent. Si il PAS CULTIVER maïs, il PAS AVOIR argent.

Troisième partie – Les constructions avec les verbes d'état

122 [Le locuteur parle de la maison dans laquelle il vit]. Elle ETRE GRANDE. Elle PAS ETRE GRANDE.

123 [Q: Connais-tu mon père? R:] (Oui), je CONNAITRE lui. (Non), je PAS CONNAITRE lui.

124 [Le locuteur parle d'une maison qu'il a vue hier] Elle ETRE GRANDE. Elle PAS ETRE GRANDE.

125 [Le locuteur parle d'une maison dans laquelle il a vécu mais qui aujourd'hui n'existe plus (elle a été détruite)] Elle ETRE GRANDE. Elle PAS ETRE GRANDE.

126 [Ce n'est pas la peine d'aller nager au lac demain] l'eau ETRE FROIDE.

127 [Ce n'est pas la peine d'aller nager au lac le mois prochain] l'eau ETRE FROIDE.

128 [Un enseignant s'adresse à un élève]. Q: Tu COMPRENDRE ce que je DIRE? (Oui), je COMPRENDRE. (Non), je PAS COMPRENDRE

Appendix E: Suggested topics to collect short oral texts

The following topics have been selected by the language researcher to encourage language consultants to produce, as natural as possible, short oral texts in their native language. Note that these topics are just suggestions, i.e. the language consultants were free to talk about a topic not listed here.

1. Tell me about what you have done before our meeting of today.
2. Tell me about what you did yesterday or about anything interesting that happened yesterday in your neighbourhood.
3. Tell me about a memorable event of your life (for example, the delivery of your first child, your wedding ceremony, a car accident you have witnessed, etc.).
4. Tell me about someone who had a positive impact in your life (for example, a friend, a family member, etc.).
5. Tell me about what you plan to do after our working session of today.
6. Tell me about your plans for tomorrow.
7. Tell me about your plans for next year.
8. Tell me about your plans for New Year's celebration.
9. Tell me about the steps to follow to kill a pig or harvest palm/raffia wine in your village.

Appendix F: Some of the recorded texts

Text 1: A motorbike accident (text in Ngiemboon, performed by Honore Fofié)

Text 2: Our next family meeting (text in Ngiemboon, performed by Honore Fofié)

Text 3: A car accident (text in Feʔfeʔ, performed by René Tchouamo)

Text 4: A car accident (text in Ghomalaʔ, performed by Nestor Tagne)

Text 5: New Year's celebration (text in Ghomalaʔ, performed by Nestor Tagne)

Text 6: A motorbike accident (text in Ngombale, performed by Alain Tidjio)

Text 7: A motorbike accident (text in Medumba, performed by Djappa)

The following seven texts are examples of interlinearised texts in the languages under investigation. They have been selected among the texts I recorded and transcribed due to the relatively broad variety of tense-aspect markings each contains. Apart from the performers of the texts and myself, one other person was present during the recording of these texts. This person is a friend and colleague with an interest in the transcription of spoken texts in one of the investigated languages (Ghomalaʔ) and who has been part of various projects of transcription and translation of Ghomalaʔ at the university of Yaoundé I-Cameroon.

Text 1: A motorbike accident (text in Ngiemboon, performed by Honore Fofié)

(1) pəq tsə ɲɪŋ lɔ: ɲ-gwɔ́k-ə à Ø nũ: (à)-sɪká:

1p.SBJ 1.certain 1.person R_PST.HAB N1-work-IPFV 3s.SBJ UTA drink-IPFV 7a-cigarette

'We used to work (with) somebody, he used to drink (=smoke) cigarette.'

(2) ń-nəŋé (à)-fùʔ ɲtsəm nè ɲ-gwɔ́k-ə tà á Ø kùʔ à Ø pɪŋ

N3-stay 7-time all PROG N1-work-IPFV until DEM2 UTA be.sufficient 3s.SBJ UTA after

'And (he) used to stay all the time, (he) was working, until that is sufficient, after he (...)'

(3) ń-nũ: (à)-sɪká: ɲ-gwɔ́ tsó (à)-lǝʔ məbà (à)-sɪká: jé məq

N1-drink-IPFV 7a-cigarette N3-be 7.certain 7-day then 7a-cigarette 7.POSS finish-PRF

'used to drink (=smoke) cigarette. And (he) was a day then, his cigarette has finished.'

(4) à Ø tɔŋ múó à Ø sɪŋɛ (à)-sɪká: à Ø wó púʔú tɔ́k-ó

3s.SBJ UTA call 1.child 3s.SBJ UTA sell 7a-cigarette 3s.SBJ UTA be like.that put-PRF

'He called a child, he (the child) sells cigarette. He (the child) was like that, (he) has put'

(5) (à)-sɪká: (à)-tθwó jé tsɛ: (à)-kán ɲ-gwɔ́ nà jé tsó (à)-pàq (à)-lǝŋ

7a-cigarette 7-head 7.POSS in 7-plate N3-be on 7.POSS 7.other 7-part 7-road

'(...) the cigarette (on) his head in a plate, and (he) was on the other part of the road.'

(6) à Ø tɔŋ múó múó Ø wó nè ɲ-kxuʔò: jé ń-tó páʔ

3s.SBJ UTA call 1.child 1.child UTA be PROG N1-run-IPFV EMPH N3-come as

'He called the child. The child was running him and was coming as (...)'

- (7) à yè sùŋ (à)-síká: Ø tè lǝ (à)-lǝŋ m̀bòŋ wó ñ-kxuò ñ-dzǝ?
 3s.SBJ G_FUT sell 7a-cigarette UTA NEG₁ look 7-road well NEG₂ N₃-run N₃-cross
 ‘he is going to sell cigarette, (he) did not look at the road carefully, and ran and crossed (the road) (...)’
- (8) à-fũ? mòtô kò nè ñ-ŋwón-ò mòtô à Ø tèmè múó
 7-time 1.motorbike H_PST PROG N₁-come.down-IPFV 1.motorbike SM UTA hit 1.child
 ‘at time a motorbike was coming down (the road). The motorbike hit the child.’
- (9) pèq Ø kxuò jéq ñ-guà m̀-bù? múó mètsè Ø náʔá ñ-gwó
 1p.SBJ UTA run equally N₃-go N₃-pick.up 1.child 6a.blood UTA a.bit N₁-be
 ‘We equally ran and went and raised up the child. There was a bit of blood (...)’
- (10) né mé là kà: jé ñ-ná lóqtà
 PREP.3s.OBJ INDF R_PST carry 3s.OBJ N₃-give 1.hospital
 ‘on him. One carried him and gave (him) to the hospital.’
- (11) à Ø ké tè yuǝ wó
 3s.SBJ UTA all.the.same NEG₁ die NEG₂
 ‘He did not die, all the same.’

Text 2: Our next family meeting (text in Ngiemboon, performed by Honore Fofié)

- (1) pèkǝ ñ-guǝ: (à)-ŋũʔtè (à)-tsiŋè ñ-dá ná ñb̀vòqñb̀vfò sáásèndè
 1p.SBJ.HAB N₁-have-IPFV 7-meeting 7-bottom 9-house on first 1.Saturday
 ‘We usually have a family meeting on the first Saturday (...)’
- (2) ná sàŋ lèkùà á ná ñ-gù? (à)-lá?
 on 1.moon four on on 9-year 7-village
 ‘of the month of April.’
- (3) ñ-gù? yò ñ ñ-gè lá? kuǝ ʒùʔò á màqñwèʔè
 9-year 9.DEM1 1s.SBJ N₂-G_FUT R_FUT leave here on 1.Friday
 ‘This year, I am going to leave here (for the village) on Friday.’
- (4) é Ø kú màtúà m̀bàʔám̀bà? é Ø tǝ ñ-kú m̀-buà ʔwòndzè
 SS UTA enter 1.car morning SS UTA place N₃-arrive 9-village evening
 ‘I am going to enter the car in the morning. I am going to place (myself in the car) and arrive to the village in the evening.’
- (5) ñ-dòq ñ-dáʔlá? pèq pá wò Ø kwàntè páʔá
 N₃-thus N₁-spent.the.whole.night 1p.SBJ 1.father 1.POSS UTA think.about how
 ‘And this way, (I) am going to spend the whole night with my father. (We) are going to think about how (...)’
- (6) mé yè yxuò ʃuó (à)-ŋũʔtè púʔú é pìŋ Ø lóʔó jìŋ
 INDF G_FUT N_FUT eat 7-meeting like.that SS after UTA spend.the.whole.night again
 ‘one is going to eat (=conduct) the meeting. We are also going to spend the whole night’

- (7) ń-kwàntè à-mé mé yè ɣxuò pfé à-mé mé yè ɣxuò nú
N₁-think.about 7-thing INDF G_FUT N_FUT eat 7-thing INDF G_FUT N_FUT drink
'(...) thinking about what one is going to eat, what one is going to drink.'
- (8) tà pùà ñtsəm yè ɣxuò ɣwà mú mbàʔámàʔ ń-gwó ñ-sé
until 1.people all G_FUT N_FUT before go.out.at.dawn morning N₃-be 9-ground
'Until before everybody is going to go out at dawn and is going to be present (...)'
- (9) mbà pèq pũ ñ-ǰúʔtè tà m-bũ ń-gyè à-mé
then 1p.SBJ fully N₁-gather.together until N₁-fully.PRF N₁-have 7-thing
'then we have fully gathered together until (we) have fully had what (...)'
- (10) mé yè ɣò: ń-gyè à-mé mé yè ɣxuò
INDF G_FUT discuss N₃-have 7-thing INDF G_FUT do
'one is going to discuss, and (we) have fully had what one is going to do.'
- (11) mé Ø ñèjé ñ-sé nà mǒ nəm lèyám é-zsje lè-ǰwónjé
INDF UTA sit 9-ground on on 1.sun ten N₃-start NMLZ-talk.to.each.other
'One is going to sit at ten o'clock and is going to start discussing.'
- (12) tà: Ø ɣwà: wó nà mǒ nəm púá mbà mé mǎq
until.3s.SBJ UTA before be on on 1.sun two then INDF finish.PRF
'Until before it is going to be two o'clock, then one has finished.'
- (13) é Ø zsje lé-pfé m-mó m-pfé m-mó ñ-nú mǎlúʔ
SS UTA start NMLZ-eat 7-food N₃-eat 7-food N₃-drink 6a.wine
'One is going to start eating the food, and is going to eat the food, and is going to drink wine.'

Text 3: A car accident (text in Feʔfeʔ, performed by René Tchouamo)

- (1) ńgǎ mǎ ñ-ǰũpsĩ tàʔ lý: mǎtwâ mē ā lǎ tũm ñdzè
1s.SBJ.IPFV PROG N₁-remember one accident car REL it R_PST occur bandja
'I remember (about) a car accident that occurred at Bandja.'
- (2) tàʔ mǎtwâ lǎʔ mǎ ñ-ǰ-fũ mǎ mbālmājō ńgē Ø ǰā pù
one car R_PST.IPFV PROG N₁-come from Mbalmayo CONJ1 UTA go.with people
'A car was coming from Mbalmayo and was going with people (...)'
- (3) nũndzũ pũʔē tǎʔə mǎtwâ lǎ lǎ kwē ñdzè ñ-ǰōn ñfi
bandjoun for burial.ceremony car DEM2 R_PST arrive bandja N₃-fall river
'(to) Bandjoun for a burial ceremony. That car arrived at Bandja and fell (into) a river.'
- (4) pù lǎ kwá tǎmǎgē pù nũnbwó
people R_PST die about people twenty
'People died (from the accident), about twenty people.'

Text 4: A car accident (text in Ghomalaʔ, performed by Nestor Tagne)

- (1) *pjā lā pə́ múʔ tʃəʔdzú bə́ wə́ fə́ m̄ lóʔtà ná-ʃàʔtə́*
 1P.SBJ R_PST be one day N₂.IPFV PROG come.back from hospital NMLZ-greet
 ‘We were one day coming back from a visit to the hospital.’
- (2) *gēyō bə̀nə́ tā́ bə́ fíʔ múʔ kwóʔ dzúʔ*
 sick.person N₃.return until N₂.IPFV.PROG go.down one hill N₃.hear
 ‘And (we) were returning until (we) were going down a hill and (we) heard (...)’
- (3) *wə́ Ø yə́ zāʔ⁶² mādʒə́ pjā Ø yə́ jē ā́ gə́ dāŋ pə́ʔò*
 something UTA do zāʔ road 1P.SBJ UTA say jē 3S.SBJ.IPFV N₁.do quantity DEM1
 ‘something did zāʔ (on) the road. We said (=wondered) jē⁶³ it does this quantity (...)’
- (4) *bə́ kə́ pjā lā kwà mət̄wā́ dɔʔnə́ fíʔ ā́ Ø pə́*
 N₃.be QPTCL 1P.SBJ R_PST carry car quickly go.down 3s.SBJ UTA be
 ‘it is what? We quickly carried (=took) the car and went down. It was (...)’
- (5) *mādʒə́ jōm pə́ʔə́ pjā Ø jó mət̄wā́ bā́ ā́ Ø tētə́*
 road Yom like.that 1P.SBJ UTA see car REL 3s.SBJ UTA be.parked
 ‘(somewhere around) the road (of) Yom like that, we saw a car which was parked.’
- (6) *pōmnəŋ Ø pə́ tsūʔú́ bə́ wə́ ŋwáŋə́*
 people UTA be on.the.spot N₂.IPFV PROG move.up.and.down
 ‘People were there, moving up and down.’
- (7) *pjā Ø yə́ ábā́ kə́ ắ ʃētə́ tsəʔə́ gā́*
 1P.SBJ UTA say it.be.that QPTCL 3s.SBJ.PRF happen here like.this
 ‘We said (=asked): what is it that has happened here like this?’
- (8) *pə́pjā́ wáp lā́ sí́ á́ wáp lā́ yòm gā́*
 DEM2 REL R_PST be.present REL 3P.SBJ R_PST say CONJ2
 ‘Those who were present, they said that (...)’
- (9) *ábā́ mət̄wā́ ʃām̄nə́ tsəʔə́ pōmnəŋ Ø túm tēʔố tḗ*
 it.be.that cars.PRF collide here people UTA be.injured too.much until
 ‘it is that, cars have collided here. People were badly injured until (...)’
- (10) *pú́ Ø té́ ʃə́ ná-yə́ lóʔtà́*
 INDF UTA remove some NMLZ-go hospital
 ‘we removed some (of them) to go (to) the hospital.’

⁶² Ideophone, loud noise.

⁶³ Interjection, expresses amazement.

Text 5: New Year's celebration (text in Ghomala?, performed by Nestor Tagne)

- (1) *pjā tǝʔ ɔ pɔʔò bá wá bjáp páʔ gúʔdzû sá gɔ́ tóm áá*
 1P.SBJ days DEM1 like.this N₂.IPFV PROG N₁.wait as year new N₄.G_FUT appear EMPH
 'These days like this, we are waiting as the new year is going to appear.'
- (2) *ná jǝbɔ́ nǝpâ ɔ́ pɔ́ ɲ-kwè jũ gāá sí Ø yá tǝ*
 on DEM1 matter 2s.SBJ IPFV.PROG N₁-think 2s.OBJ CONJ2 God UTA do until
 'In this regard, you are thinking you that God does until (...)'
- (3) *tǝʔdzú bɔ́: Ø kɔ́áté mó bɔ́ mó gɔ́ yò ñ-tàmtè*
 day DEM2 UTA meet INDF then INDF N₄.G_FUT go N₃-associate
 'that day meets someone, then someone is going to go and associate (...)'
- (4) *gī ɔ́ ná jǝ fǝmfá ná bwâdzǝ tǝʔ bɔ́: áá pjāpú*
 voice POSS on DEM2 his.brothers on evening day DEM2 EMPH 1s.SBJ.and.3p.SBJ
 'his voice to that of his brothers on the evening of that day. Together we (...)'
- (5) *Ø sǝɲá dó páʔ ʃǝpɔ́ lá ná-há jǝbɔ́ tǝʔdzú*
 UTA reflect N₃.be.grateful as God.PRF decide NMLZ-give DEM1 day
 'are going to reflect (=meditate), and give thanks as God has decided to give this day (...)'
- (6) *bí pjā áá ā bó ʃǝ gāá pjā Ø há mǝkǝtǝm gǝǝpɪŋ*
 to 1P.OBJ EMPH 1s.SBJ N₂.IPFV.PROG need CONJ2 1P.SBJ UTA give very.big thanks
 'to us. It is necessary that we give very big thanks (...)'
- (7) *bí ʃǝpɔ́ nǝpáʔ ê ñ-tóm pû jóq nǝpáʔ ǝ há gāá*
 to God. because 3s.SBJ.IPFV N₁-hold hand POSS because 3s.SBJ.PRF permit CONJ2
 'to God; because he holds our hands, because he has permitted that (...)'
- (8) *pjā Ø jó gúdzû sá áá*
 1P.SBJ UTA see year new EMPH
 'we see the new year.'

Text 6: A motorbike accident (text in Ngombale, performed by Tidjio Alain)

- (1) *ǝ lè pǝ lè ɲgù tósè pwó lè sòbwó léʔ jé 20 mǝ*
 3s.SBJ R_PST be on year thousand two with seven day PREP 20 May
 'It was in the year 2007, (on) the day of 20th may (Cameroon's national day).'
- (2) *mǝɲ ñ-dè pè sǝkwá ɲ-gwè jé fàʔ mǝ wó*
 1s.SBJ N₂-R_PST leave school N₃-go PREP work.place mother POSS
 'I left school (on that day) and went to my mother's work place.'
- (3) *mǝɲ ñ-dè kú júʔò mí tǝ wó tǝ mǝ ɲ-kú jé*
 1s.SBJ N₂-R_PST arrive there CONJ2 father POSS H_PST already N₁-arrive EMPH
 'I arrived there, that my father had already him arrived (this was our family meeting point at the end of the day).'

- (4) tò ñ-tò? mòtô jé jè fà? mèn ñ-dè kè
until N₁-park motorbike POSS at work.place 1s.SBJ N₂-R_PST carry
'Until (he) had parked his motorbike at the work place (of my mother). I carried (=took).'
- (5) mòtô jé ná? ñ-tsèn lándó tò ñ-kxuó só wó
motorbike POSS a.bit N₁-go.down road until N₁-add friend POSS
'(...) his motorbike, went down on the road a bit. Until (I) added my friend (...).'
- (6) tsó dzém ó pwò? là ná? ñ-dèt ñdzùmsó kè pwò? là já ywò
on behing POSS 1P.SBJ R_PST with N₁-go Djemso QPTCL 1P.SBJ R_PST even go
'on the rear of it (the motorbike). We went with (it at) Djemso. What we even went (...).'
- (7) ñdzùmsó ñ-gù yó: ká ñ m-bjè mé ñ-kētē yā
Djemso N₃-do QPTCL NEG 1s.SBJ N₂-more IPFV N₁-remember EMPH
'at Djemso and did I do not remember anymore.'
- (8) pwò? là ywò tò ñ-kú jú? pè pò é-fèn ñgè là? pèp kùné
1P.SBJ R_PST go until N₁-arrive place INDF IPFV N₁-call REL village people kougne
'We went until (we) arrived (at) the place one calls that the village (of) the people (from) kougne.'
- (9) mòtô Ø yuáq pwò zá ñ-gaté ñdó lándó mākāt m-pfèn sé
motorbike UTA exceed hand POSS N₃-swerve on road white N₃-fall.down ground
'The motorbike exceeded my hand, and swerved all over the tarred road, and fell (on) the ground.'
- (10) ñ ñ-dè fù? ñ-gwò? zá lóqtà mēfūn Ø pò ñdó mèn
1s.SBJ N₂-R_PST only N₁-wake.up EMPH hospital wounds UTA be on 1s.OBJ
'I only woke up me (at) the hospital. (There) were wounds all over my body.'

Text 7: A motorbike accident (text in the Medumba language, performed by Djappa)

- (1) mō: lū bē ñgū? mù? ñ-dzū bàkèbèbū Ø nèn mē zū
mother.POSS R_PST be year last N₂-say 1P.SBJ.and.3s.SBJ UTA go to Bazou
'My mother, last year, said we and her should go to Bazou.'
- (2) à Ø lōtè fō? à Ø zýn nō bà?
3s.SBJ UTA show plot.of.land 3s.SBJ UTA buy to 1p.OBJ
'(So that) she will show the plot of land she has bought to us.'
- (3) bà? Ø lūsī ñjēm kxuā ñkēbzū ñ-kú? nūm bābwōgē
1P.SBJ UTA wake.up hour four morning N₂-climb on motorbike
'We waked up at 4 a.m. and climbed on a motorbike.'
- (4) bà? lū bē fūtāt mbàn lū kè ñ-fitē sīn lī?zī lē bà? Ø tó?tē
1P.SBJ R_PST be three rain R_PST IPFV N₁-fall DEM2 day DEM2 1P.SBJ UTA cross
'We were three (of us). Rain was falling on that day. We crossed (...).'
- (5) ñtōnē lān m-bē ñ-swā? mētsīlī ñdzē mū? mōdzūm fē ñ-sē
market Balengou N₂-before N₁-go.down a.bit then one man N_PST N₁-dig.up
'the market (of) Balengou, and before (we) went down a bit then a man had dug up (...).'

- (6) ʃɔ̃:ʔ nɛ-kút bā ɪjī mɛbāb ʃɔ̃ʔ Ø sɛʔ nùm mɔ̃dzɛ
plot.of.land NMLZ-build house POSS a.few soil UTA be.scattered on road
'a plot of land to build his house. A small amount (of) soil was scattered on the road.'
- (7) bǎʔ Ø bɛ n-tòg bwɛ ʃũʔ Ø zūʔ wût jākɛ̀ n̄sɪ
1P.SBJ UTA before N1-go.through there just UTA hear body POSS ground
'Before we went through there, (we) just heard our body (on) the ground.'
- (8) sɔ̃mmɛ̀n lû kɛ̀ kút ɲvànɛ̀
nobody R_PST NEG carry injury
'Nobody was wounded.'

Appendix G: Tense-aspect-standard negation markings in the present study

Appendix G1: Tense-aspect-standard negation markings in Ngiemboon

<i>Labels</i>	<i>Tense-aspect-standard negation markings</i>	<i>Ref.</i> ⁶⁴
Hodiernal Past	ně (N-) vb	p. 62
Hodiernal Past Progressive	kò nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 63
Near Past	kà vb	p. 63
Near Past Habitual	kǒ: N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 64
Near Past Progressive	kà nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 64
Remote Past	là vb	p. 64
Remote Past Habitual	lǒ: N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 65
Remote Past Progressive	là nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 65
Habitual	-VL ^{LH} , -VC ^{LH} N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 65
Progressive	nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 66
General Future	yè vb	p. 67
General Future Progressive	yè kú nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 67
Near Future	yè ɣxuò/tó/lù vb	p. 68
Near Future Progressive	yè ɣxuò/tó/lù nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 68
Remote Future	yè lá? vb	p. 68
Remote Future Progressive	yè lá? nè N-vb-VL ^L , -VC ^L	p. 69
Perfect	vb LH tone, -VC ^H , H tone	p. 70
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	absence of tense-aspect marking	p. 71
Standard negation marking	tè...wó	p. 75
Standard negation marking	tě:...wó	p. 76
Standard negation marking	tè N-GF (N-) vb... wó	p. 76
Standard negation marking	kà:... (wó)	p. 77

Appendix G2: Tense-aspect-standard negation markings in Feʔfeʔ

<i>Labels</i>	<i>Tense-aspect-standard negation markings</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
Hodiernal Past	H tone vb	p. 85
Hodiernal Past Progressive	H tone bá mǎ N-vb	p. 86
Near Past	kā vb	p. 87
Near Past Progressive	kǎ? mǎ N-vb	p. 87
Remote Past	lā vb	p. 87
Remote Past Progressive	lǎ? mǎ N-vb	p. 87
Imperfective	LH tone N-vb	p. 88
Progressive	LH tone mǎ N-vb	p. 88
Future	ká vb	p. 89

⁶⁴ This column refers to the page where the respective marking is discussed in detail.

Future	Progressive	kó mō N-vb	p. 89
Unmarked Tense-Aspect		absence of tense-aspect marking	p. 90
Standard negation marking		sī...b^hó	p. 92
Standard negation marking		sī...b^hó	p. 93
Standard negation marking		sī?...b^hó	p. 94
Standard negation marking		kō?... (b^hó)	p. 94

Appendix G3: Tense-aspect-standard negation markers/constructions in Ghomala?

<i>Labels</i>	<i>Tense-aspect-standard negation markings</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
Hodiernal Past	ê (N-) vb	p. 102
Near Past	kō vb	p. 102
Near Past Imperfective	kō b́ N-vb	p. 102
Near Past Progressive	kō b́ ẃ N-vb	p. 103
Remote Past	lō vb	p. 103
Remote Past Imperfective	lō b́ N-vb	p. 103
Remote Past Progressive	lō b́ ẃ N-vb	p. 104
Imperfective	HL tone N-vb	p. 104
Progressive	b́ ẃ N-vb	p. 105
General Future	gō vb	p. 105
General Future Imperfective	gō ṕ vb	p. 105
General Future Progressive	gō ṕ ẃ vb	p. 105
Near Future	gō tí vb	p. 106
Near Future Imperfective	gō tí ṕ vb	p. 106
Near Future Progressive	gō tí ṕ ẃ vb	p. 106
Remote Future	gō ʔẃ vb	p. 107
Remote Future Imperfective	gō ʔẃ ṕ vb	p. 107
Remote Future Progressive	gō ʔẃ ṕ ẃ vb	p. 107
Perfect	LH tone vb	p. 108
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	absence of tense-aspect marking	p. 108
Standard negation marking	tō...ṕ	p. 112
Standard negation marking	tō...ṕ	p. 113
Standard negation marking	kā...(ṕ)	p. 113

Appendix G4: Tense-aspect-standard negation markings in Ngombale

<i>Labels</i>	<i>Tense-aspect-standard negation markings</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
Hodiernal Past	jǎ/tě N-vb	p. 120
Hodiernal Past Imperfective	jǎ/tě mǎ N-vb	p. 120
Near Past	kà vb	p. 120
Near Past Imperfective	kà pǎ N-vb	p. 121
Remote Past	lǎ vb	p. 121
Remote Past Imperfective	lǎ pǎ N-vb	p. 121
Imperfective	pǎ, mǎ N-vb	p. 122
General Future	ɣwǎ vb	p. 122
General Future Imperfective	ɣwǎ pǎ vb	p. 123
Remote Future	ɣwǎ ɣū vb	p. 123
Remote Future Imperfective	ɣwǎ ɣū pǎ vb	p. 123
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	absence of tense-aspect marking	p. 123
Standard negation marking	kā...E/E...pǎ	p. 127
Standard negation marking	kā...pǎ N-...E (N-)/pǎ N-...E (N-)...pǎ	p. 128

Appendix G5: Tense-aspect-standard negation markings in Medumba

<i>Labels</i>	<i>Tense-aspect-standard negation markings</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
Hodiernal Past	ɸǎ? (N-) vb	p. 137
Near Past	fǎ (N-) vb	p. 137
Near Past Imperfective	fǎ kǎ N-vb	p. 138
Remote Past	lû/nâ? vb	p. 138
Remote Past Imperfective	lû/nâ? kǎ N-vb	p. 138
Imperfective	nũm, bâ, kǎ (N-) vb	p. 139
Progressive	ɸwě? N-vb	p. 140
General Future	à? vb	p. 140
General Future Imperfective	à? kǎ N-vb	p. 140
Near Future	à? ɸǎ? (N-) vb	p. 141
Near Future Imperfective	à? ɸǎ? kǎ N-vb	p. 141
Remote Future	à? zǐ (N-) vb	p. 142
Remote Future Imperfective	à? zǐ kǎ N-vb	p. 142
Perfect	H tone vb	p. 143
Unmarked Tense-Aspect	absence of tense-aspect marking	p. 144
Standard negation marking	kǎ	p. 147
Standard negation marking	kǎ?	p. 147