

TENSE AND TIME ANALYSIS IN NORTHERN SOTHO  
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By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree M.A. (Department of African Languages) in the Faculty of Arts, Vista University.

SUPERVISOR: Prof. L.C. POSTHUMUS

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**Declaration:**

I declare that: "Tense and time analysis in Northern Sotho" is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Signed: *Mabale*

Date: 23.01.1993.

## TENSE AND TIME ANALYSIS IN NORTHERN SOTHO

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M.A. degree

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**Summary:**

The aim of this study is to devote attention to tense and time as verbal categories in Northern Sotho. The categories tense and time are scrutinized. Due to the different interpretations of the categories tense and time, linguists are not in agreement as far as these categories are concerned. Special attention is focused on the two types of tenses, namely, absolute and relative tenses.

Tense is a deictic category which relates the time of the action, event or state of affairs to the time of utterance. The reference point of the absolute tense is the deictic center, whereas the forms containing -be or -ba as a deficient verb are used to indicate the shifting of the reference point to before or after coding time.

Time, however, apart from the influence of tense, is also established by (i) the semantic verb phrase categorization, (ii) the influence of aspectual morphemes, (iii) the text and context, (iv) the interrelation between tense forms and temporal adverbials, and (v) the speaker's and addressee's knowledge of the world. All these time establishing mechanisms are accounted for in this research. In order to be able to discuss the categories of tense and time in their proper perspective some attention had to be devoted to moods and actuality.

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Time does not provide any landmarks in terms of which situations can be located. On the basis of this, it is absolutely necessary to establish some arbitrary reference point, in terms of which situations in time can be located. This is done by employing two major strategies, namely tense systems and time reference.

The verb category 'tense' has been scrutinized by Comrie in his publication of 1985 and Posthumus in his articles of 1988 and 1990, which will serve as a premise for this study. This study deals specifically with tense and time, and special attention will be devoted to the distinction between absolute and relative tenses on the one hand and tense and time with special reference to time adverbials on the other hand. The applicability of the distinction between absolute and relative tenses will be investigated. The realization of the tense systems in the copulative verb will also be investigated.

The traditional Northern Sotho grammarians devote much attention to tense as a verbal category. The category of tense is, however, not treated scientifically. The category of time has been totally disregarded.

#### 1.1 AIM

The aim of this study is to draw a distinction between tense and time as the two major types of strategies which are used to indicate the location of events in time. Secondly, time as a grammatical category in Northern Sotho will be scrutinized. This study will also evaluate two subcategories of Comrie's general theory on tense, namely



absolute tense and relative tense to attest its applicability to Northern Sotho.

## 1.2 METHOD OF RESEARCH

A synchronic and diachronic approach to Northern Sotho verbs and verb phrases will be used in this mini-dissertation. The Northern Sotho examples are taken from actual speech situations.

## 1.3 THE EXPOSITION OF THE MINI-DISSERTATION

This mini-dissertation will consist of six chapters, each covering the following:

### Chapter 1

The introductory chapter deals with the identification of the problem, that is, the distinction between absolute and relative tense, tense and time distinction, temporal adverbials, the method of research to be followed and the field of study.

### Chapter 2

This chapter deals with a critical analysis of Comrie's view on tense. Other authoritative publications will be consulted in an attempt to define these concepts appropriately with reference to Northern Sotho.

The subcategorization of tense into absolute and relative tense forms, will be investigated. The applicability of the terms 'past' and 'present tense' instead of 'perfect' and 'imperfect tense' will also receive attention.

### Chapter 3

In this chapter, time reference, the conceptualization of time, the grammaticalization of time, the various means of time reckoning and the interaction between tense and temporal adverbials as a time reckoning mechanism are discussed.

### Chapter 4

The realization of tense forms is discussed in this chapter. Tense as a verbal category is attested with reference to mood and negation.

### Chapter 5

The realization of tense forms in the copulatives are investigated in this chapter.

### Chapter 6

A conclusion is drawn regarding the findings and recommendations of this study concerning the treatment of tense and time in Northern Sotho.

## CHAPTER 2

## 2. TENSE

Languages indicate the location of events in time primarily by means of two types of strategies, namely, varying the morphological form of the verb, and using descriptive lexical items. Verbal forms are used typically to denote what takes place in time.

Tense is the form taken by a verb to indicate the time of the action. This means that 'tense is the grammaticalized expression of the location of events in time' as Comrie (1985:9) puts it. This definition enables us, for instance, to say that the difference between; sentence (1) and (2) is that of tense, whereas that between sentence (3) and (4) is not tense, but rather that of aspect.

Compare:

- (1) Monna o ja nama.  
'The man eats the meat.'
- (2) Monna o jele nama.  
'The man ate the meat.'
- (3) Monna o ja nama.  
'The man eats the meat.'
- (4) Monna a ka ja nama.  
'The man can eat the meat.'

There are two respects in which this view of tense as grammaticalized location of events in time is more than purely definitional. The first one is that there are languages which express location in time by means of grammatical categories, as is the case with most of the African languages, in particular Northern Sotho. Compare sentence (1) and (2) where the verbal endings are -a and -e respectively. They are markers of different tense forms. Secondly, tense can be an indication of events represented in terms of the deictic centre. The location of an event at, before, or after the deictic centre, and the relative

distance from the deictic centre may be grammaticalized as tenses.

Tense distinctions and time reference have been discussed as a deictic phenomenon by, *inter alia*, Fillmore (1975), De Klerk (1978), Gabbay and Rohrer (1978), Bäuerle and Von Stechow (1980), Lyons (1982), Levinson (1983), Posthumus (1983) and Comrie (1985). Lyons (1968:305) describes tense as follows:

"The essential characteristic of the category of tense is that it relates the time of the action, event or state of affairs referred to in the sentence to the time of utterance (the time of utterance being 'now'). Tense is therefore a deictic category,..."

Lyons (1977:677) recognizing tense as part of the deictic frame of temporal reference goes on to say it realizes in the verb. He explains:

"...it grammaticalizes the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero-point of the deictic context."

With the above, it is meant that the present tense and the past tense can be defined in relation to the zero point. If T1 (time of utterance) coincides with T2 (time of action), T1 will refer to the same time as T2 and will therefore define the notion of present tense. Tense is generally based upon a distinction of present and non-present or upon various degrees of proximity to the time of utterance.

The traditional notion is misleading in that it tends to promote the view that time is necessarily an inflectional category of the verb. It is an empirical fact that tense

is realized in morphological oppositions of the verb in some languages. Compare:

- (5) Monna o-j-a nama. (Present tense)  
 'The man eats the meat.'
- (6) Monna o-j-el-e nama. (Past tense)  
 'The man ate the meat.'

It is probably true that all languages have various deictic adverbs or particles of time comparable with the English words 'now, then, yesterday, today,' etc., which provide means when it is desirable for drawing deictic temporal distinctions of the kind that are obligatory and time distinguishing.

The crucial fact about tense, whether we are talking about sentences or propositions, is that it is a deictic category.

This description of tense is relevant for sentences such as the following:

- (7) Monna o bone noga.  
 'The man saw the snake.'

The verb 'o bone' shows that during coding time, that means 'now', the action had already taken place. The following sentence, however, poses a problem for interpretation:

- (8) Mpša e be e gobola maabane.  
 'The dog was barking yesterday.'

The barking of the dog should not be interpreted as if it is still on during coding time. It should be interpreted as happening during another reference point which is 'yesterday' established by the deficient part of the verb, in this case 'e be'. The difficulty in interpretation of these types of sentences, is explained by Gabbay and Rohrer (1978:99) when they refer to temporal dependent sentences where the problem of temporal interpretation resembles that

of the -be verb forms.

"The temporal interpretation of sentential complements is extremely difficult because the distribution of tense forms in complements differs from the distribution in independent sentences and because tense forms (surface forms) in complements may have meanings that do not correspond to those in independent sentences."

Tense is not interpreted from coding time only but it can be interpreted from another reference point as Posthumus (1983:82) puts it:

"Tyd word dus nie in alle gebruiksgevalle geïnterpreteer vanaf koderingstyd nie maar kan ook aan 'n ander verwysingspunt geanker wees."

Gabbay and Rohrer (1978:106) also support the view that tense can be interpreted with reference to another anchoring point when they say:

"Practice shows that there are two points of interest, the point of speech U and the point of evaluation T."

Bäuerle and Von Stechow (1980:399) distinguish three temporal indices in German, that is,

T1 : the 'now' of utterance.

I : the time referred to

T2 : the (actual) action time

Taylor states that the point of departure differs as far as the simple tenses and the perfect tenses of English are

concerned. Smith (1980:368) distinguishes two types of tense when he says:

"Tense is said to be 'absolute' or 'relative', depending on whether it anchors to S.T. or to other temporal expressions as well."

(S.T. = Speech Time)

Smith makes a distinction between temporal expressions that anchor freely and those that anchor only to speech time.

With regard to the absolute tense forms the reference point from which the temporal semantic interpretation is done, is the deictic centre, or coding time, whereas the tense forms which express a relation between event time, reference time and coding time are called relative tense. (Posthumus 1990:23).

These semantic-relational values of tense are found within the language itself, hence tense is marked grammatically in the verb as Lyons (1968:304) puts it:

"The category of tense has to do with time-relations in so far as these are expressed by systematic grammatical contrasts."

In the African languages, tense has been described in terms of morphological contrasts but the exposition of the semantic-relational value of tense as that between coding time, reference time and event time has been neglected in Northern Sotho.

The other aspect which needs thorough investigation is the study of the role which adverbs play in the interpretation of time. Gabbay and Rohrer (1978:99) say:

"In recent years linguists have come to the conclusion that an adequate description of the

tense forms of natural languages is impossible without a theory of how temporal adverbs and tense forms interact."

This significant semantic characteristic of time reckoning has been greatly ignored by African linguists. Cole (1955:276) describes tense as a factitiousness in the conjugation of the inchoative verbs and non-inchoative verbs. This problem will be dealt with when dealing with the absolute and relative tense forms. Lombard (1985:141) distinguishes three basic tenses in Northern Sotho, describing them as aspects of imperfectness, completion and futurity.

## 2.1 TENSE VERSUS TIME

Although grammarians have differentiated between tense and time in European languages, this distinction has been neglected in African languages in general and Northern Sotho in particular.

Languages have various means of locating events in time. Because time provides no landmarks, it is necessary to establish some arbitrary reference point, with reference to which we can then locate situations in time. In principle, a number of logical possibilities for reference points are available and many are used in language. For example, time interpretation may be anchored to some important event, such as, the birth of Christ, or may be accounted for in terms of cyclically recurring events, such as days, months and years or it may be linked to calendrical units. These are all non-deictic methods of time reckoning.

Time is, however, most frequently expressed in relation to a selected point or span which is generally coding time (C.T.). In this study the term 'speech time' is substituted



by the term 'coding time' (C.T.). What one rather finds most typically is the choice of the speech situation as the reference point, i.e. the present moment (for time). As far as absolute tense is concerned, the reference point is the present moment, and tenses locate situations either at the same time as the moment of utterance or prior to the moment of utterance, or subsequent to the moment of utterance.

The primary reference point which coincides with the coding time is generally known as the deictic centre (D.C.).

Lyons (1977:677) concurs with Comrie when he says:

"Traditional discussions of the grammatical category of tense do not give sufficient emphasis to the fact that it is a deictic category..."

The anchoring point for the interpretation of tense is taken to be the 'now' of the C.T. Even in grammatically and lexically unmarked forms this arbitrary reference point, C.T., still serves as the anchoring point from which semantic interpretations are made. The D.C. (deictic centre for time reference) is thus regarded as the implicit centre established by the context and accepted as *a priori* for any language usage. From this centre time references are made. Events are interpreted as being prior to, coinciding with or subsequent to this anchoring point (the D.C.). Comrie (1985:11) says:

"The notions that are most commonly grammaticalized across the languages of the world are simple anteriority, simultaneity, and posteriority, i.e. with the present moment as deictic centre, past, present and future."

Likewise temporal adverbials can also refer to the past, the future, or to the point of utterance itself. What

takes place in time may be something instantaneous or an ongoing process, or the completion of an activity. In a language, as Gabbay and Moravcsik (1980:59) put it, a complex system of tense, aspect, and temporal reference is possible. All these time establishing mechanisms are operative in the African languages. In most cases tense forms and temporal adverbs have the same relational value; as in example (9) below, where 'maloba' has an anterior relational reference and the verb form 're bone' also marks the event as being prior to C.T.

Tense as well as time reference is therefore anterior.

- (9) Re bone mpša e swara kgaka maloba.  
 'We saw a dog catching a duiker the day before  
 yesterday.'

In example (10), however, the temporal adverbial clause 'maabane mantšiboa' has an anterior referential value, while the verb form 'ke bala' is a verb form associated with an event coinciding with C.T.

The fact that the location of the temporal adverbial in (10) does not coincide with the tense analysis, should not be attributed to an inadequate tense analysis but to the difference between tense and time.

- (10) Maabane mantšiboa ke bala puku godimo ga setulo  
 kganthe ke a ithobatša.

'Yesterday evening when reading a book on the  
 chair I made myself to sleep.'

Some grammarians such as Gabbay and Moravcsik (1980:59) distinguish between tense and time, while others such as De Klerk as cited by Posthumus (1988:140) says:

"'Werkwoordstye' of tempus is 'n deiktiese kategorie. Die verwysingspunt is die tyd van die uiting."

Gabbay and Rohrer (1978:99) show that it is important to interpret tense forms taking note of the influence of temporal adverbials. That means they are aware of the impact of temporal adverbials on tense distinctions. They say:

"...an adequate description of tense forms of natural languages is impossible without a theory of how the temporal adverbs and tense forms interact."

The above statement supports the fact that the referential semantic value of time adverbials is one of the factors which influences time interpretation. The comprehensive discussion of the individual time establishing factors are dealt with in chapter 3.

Tense may accordingly be regarded as a category of the verb. Comrie (1985:12) maintains that tense analysis should be centered on the verb. I concur with Comrie because in languages that have tense, tense is marked in the verb by the verb morphology and/or by tone.

## 2.2 ABSOLUTE VERSUS RELATIVE TENSE

According to Reichenbach, as cited by Smith (1980:370), temporal reference also involves three points.

- (a) The point of speech, i.e. the time at which the utterance is made (speech time = S.T. or C.T),
- (b) the point of the event, i.e. the time at which the speaker asserts the event (or state) described in the sentence to occur (or obtain) (E.T.), and
- (c) the point of reference, i.e. the temporal

standpoint from which the speaker invites his audience to consider the occurrence of the event (or the obtaining of the state) (R.T.).

Other grammarians who discuss temporal reference as a phenomenon involving three points in time are, Bäuerle and Von Stechow (1980:399) and Taylor (1977:203).

Temporal reference in language involves two possible kinds of anchoring, namely, to coding time or another reference point. Gabbay and Rohrer as well as Taylor show that the anchoring point differs with respect to 'simple tenses' and the 'present perfect, past perfect and future perfect' of English.

In this regard, Smith (1980:368) says:

"Tense is said to be 'absolute' or 'relative' depending on whether it anchors to S.T. or to other temporal expressions as well."

Smith indicates that time reference, like tense, can be absolute or relative. He elaborates (1980:370) by saying:

"Temporal reference in language involves two kinds of anchoring. Absolute tense and adverbials are anchored to the time of speech, relative tense and adverbials are anchored to a time given in the text or context."

In this study I subscribe to Posthumus (1983:83) when he says:

"In aansluiting by Smith, sal daar na hierdie tydvorme verwys word as absolute tye teenoor die tydvorme waarin die koderingstyd en verwysingtyd nie saamval nie, wat dan relatiewe tye genoem sal word."

In the case of the absolute tense forms, R.T. coincides with C.T. and the reference point from where the temporal semantic interpretations are made, is the D.C. The grammaticalized tense forms commonly found which correlate with the anteriority, simultaneity, and posteriority of the 'now' of the D.C. are generally referred to as past, present, and future tense respectively. This grammaticalized time referential system has been discussed by Lyons (1977:682) in terms of a theoretical tense system called metalinguistic tense. According to this approach the tense system of the particular language is described in relation to M-tense (metalinguistic tense) where a distinction is made between present (events coinciding with C.T.), past (events prior to C.T.), and future (events subsequent to C.T.).

The categorization of the future tense has been a controversial issue, not only in the African languages but also in a well-studied language such as English as discussed by inter alia, Comrie (1985:44). Lyons (1968:306) classifies future reference in English as a modal category rather than a tense distinction; while Smith (1980:356) maintains that there is no future tense in English. He says:

"In this analysis future is indicated by the combination of present tense and future adverbials, there is no future tense."

As far as the African languages are concerned, Welmers (1973:352), Ponelis (1975:46 et seq.) Posthumus (1983:87) and Van Wyk (1981:90) are amongst the linguists who do not distinguish a future tense, while Lombard (1985:142) restricts the use of the term 'future tense' to the semantic conceptualisation of this phenomenon. The exclusion of the verb forms indicative of future reference from the tense paradigm is justified on the basis of two factors, namely the diachronical development of these forms

and semantic considerations. Van Wyk (1981:90) and Van Wyk (1987:280) offers an account of the development of the future aspect from an auxiliary word group, whereas, Posthumus (1988:141) says:

"Semantically these verbs do not express a relationship between C.T. and E.T. in the same way as do the present, past and remote past tenses. E.T. in the case of future reference is not factual as it is in the case of the true tenses."

Tense interpretation is, however, not always made in relation to the C.T., but it may also be made in terms of a newly established reference point. Relative tenses are distinguished by the fact that the reference point from which the temporal semantic interpretations are made, is a point other than C.T.

### 2.3 ABSOLUTE TENSE

As already stated, the term absolute tense is a term that is used to refer to tenses which take speech time (or coding time) as their reference point. We shall use the term 'absolute tense' to refer to a tense which includes as its primary reference point the present moment as deictic centre, whereas on the other hand 'relative tense' shall refer to a tense which depends on the deictic centre as well as a reference point for its interpretation.

The deictic centre is the primary reference point which coincides with coding time. Posthumus (1988:141) discusses Bühler's modern employment of the word 'deixis' which is derived from the Greek word 'deiktikos', meaning 'to refer'. He points out that deictic expressions refer to a deictic field of language whose zero point - the *origo* - is

fixed by the person who is speaking - (I), the place of utterance - (here), and the time of utterance - (now).

A number of linguists have followed Bühler in describing tense and time reference in terms of deixis. In the case of the absolute tense forms, as already mentioned, reference time (R.T.) coincides with coding time (C.T.) and the reference point from where the temporal semantic interpretations are made, is the deictic centre (D.C.).

The concepts 'past tense' and 'present tense' are used in this study, since they refer to a relation between event time and the deictic centre. Lombard (1985:141) on the other hand, prefers to substitute the terms 'past tense' and 'present tense' with the terms 'perfect tense' and 'imperfect tense' respectively, because, as he puts it,

"it does not necessarily or exclusively have to do with the past tense or present tense but with perfectiveness and imperfectiveness or completion and non-completion."

Another grammarian who concurs with Lombard is Van Wyk (1987:279) who says:

"The imperfect, or 'present tense' expresses actions which are incomplete at a given moment, and which may be in the process of being performed or be performed habitually, continuously or universally."

However, Van Wyk mentions that the time of action is determined by the context and not by the verb as such. He argues though that the present time is normally implied in contexts where another time is not indicated. In example (12) another time is indicated. Compare:

- (11) Dimpša di ja nama.  
'Dogs eat meat/are eating meat.'

- (12) Re ba bone ba sepela maabane.  
 'We saw them walking yesterday.'

The use of the term 'imperfect tense' in the place of 'present tense' poses a problem. If the imperfect tense is regarded as a verb form indicating continuous tense the use of the progressive aspect seems to be a tautology. Compare the use of -sa- in example (13) as opposed to (11) where there is no -sa- morpheme.

- (13) Dimpša di sa ja nama.  
 'Dogs are still eating meat.'

Cole (1955:248) describes perfect tense and past tense as the tenses signifying that the action has been carried out or completed in past time. The difference between the past and perfect tenses according to him is that the inchoative verbs in the perfect tense are used to indicate a completed action and a resultant state in the present time, for example:

- (14) Ba robotše.  
 'They are asleep.' (They went to sleep and now they are asleep.)
- (15) Di kolobile.  
 'They are wet.' (They got wet and now they are wet.)

The past tense of the inchoative verbs, on the other hand, indicates that the state was achieved in past time and continued for a period, but that something else occurred subsequently and therefore the state does not persist in present time. For example:

- (16) Ke ile ka robala.  
 'I went to sleep.' (I slept - but subsequently awoke.)

Cole (1955:284) summarizes the significance of the perfect and past tenses as follows:



- "(a) The perfect tense is used of a state or condition which is entered into in the past time and persists in present time.
- (b) The past tense is used for a state which was entered into in past time but does not persist in present time.
- (c) The past tense occurs mostly in introducing the narrative of past events.
- (d) The past tense sometimes indicates definiteness or emphasis in connection with a state entered into, in the past time irrespective of whether or not any state, or result still persists in present time."

Cole's two tenses differ with respect to the deictic centre (D.C.). His 'perfect tense' is an absolute tense form whereas the 'past tense' is a relative tense.

Bearing in mind that the verb forms with -tla- and -tlo- indicating future reference are regarded as present tense with future aspect and not future tense forms, the two absolute tenses distinguished for Northern Sotho are the present tense and the past tense as illustrated in the following examples respectively:

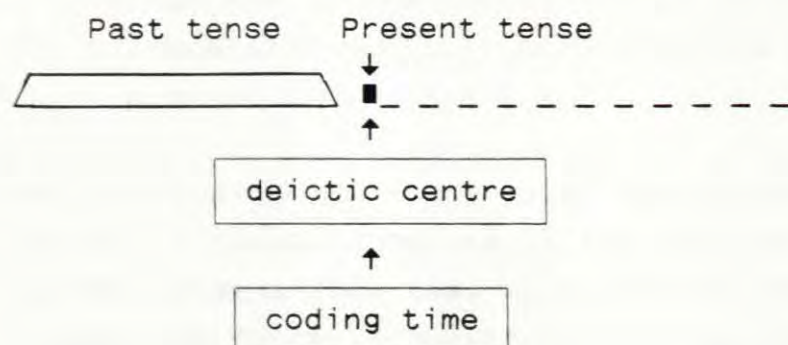
- (17) Ke ngwala puku.  
'I am writing a book./ I write a book.'
- (18) Ke robotše maabane.  
'I slept./ I went to sleep yesterday.'

Note that the E.T. (event time) coincides with the C.T. in example (17) whereas in (18) the E.T. is prior to C.T.

The tense paradigm for the absolute tense forms, that is, those tense forms which have coding time as their reference point, can be schematically represented as in figure 1

below.

Figure 1: The tense paradigm for absolute tense



## 2.4 RELATIVE TENSE

Whereas absolute tense is a tense form whereby the reference point for the location of a situation in time is the present moment, in the relative tense the reference point for the location of a situation is some point in time which is not the present moment. This point is given by the context or marked by an auxiliary/deficient verb form. In other words we distinguish between two types of relative tense, namely those that are marked by the deficient verb form *-be* and those that are dependent on another sentence (co-structure). This means this tense interpretation is not made in relation to coding time, but it is made in terms of a newly established reference point. Smith (1980:356) says in this regard that these two tense forms are interpreted as anterior to, posterior to or simultaneous with another orientation point.

The other orientation point mentioned by Smith is the newly established reference point. This newly established reference point which serves as primary anchoring point for the semantic interpretation of events, may be prior to coding time or subsequent to coding time, and is thus assigned a relational value of posteriority or anteriority in relation to C.T. This type of tense paradigm is distinguished as relative tense. Posthumus (1988:140) says

in this regard:

"Relative tenses are distinguished by the fact that the reference point from which the temporal semantic interpretations are made, is a point other than C.T."

Having studied the findings of several grammarians on the so-called compound tenses of the African languages, it has become evident that they have more or less the same view of these verb forms in question. To them these forms constitute past tenses. Bearing in mind that tense is a deictic category which relates the time of the action, event or state of affairs to the time of utterance, the form containing -be/-ba is used to indicate the newly established reference point which is selected in relation to the deictic centre. The Northern Sotho auxiliary verb forms s/c + -be and s/c + tla + -ba/-be indicate the shifting of the reference point to a moment prior to or subsequent to coding time respectively. Therefore, the forms which are traditionally called -be past tenses are not past tenses but relative tense forms.

Comrie (1985:58) suggests that the present moment is always available as a reference point for relative tenses unless barred by the context. This implies that a relative tense is strictly one which is interpreted relative to a reference point provided by the context, since the context always provides the present moment. He states:

"The difference between absolute and relative tense is not that between the present moment versus some other point in time as reference point, but rather between a form whose meaning specifies the present moment as reference point and a form whose meaning does not specify that the present moment must be its reference point."

I do not agree to this exposition given by Comrie because the difference between absolute and relative tense is that absolute tenses have the present moment as reference point whereas the relative tenses have a form whose meaning is dependent primarily on a newly established reference point which is not the D.C. The speaker/addressee, however, always has to keep track of the D.C. Due to the above argument three problems arise from Comrie's description of relative tense. Firstly, the supposition that the present moment is also available as reference point for relative tense. The second concern about Comrie's view is that there can be more than one D.C. (deictic centre) (1985:16) and the third one is that the D.C. can be shifted (1985:108 footnote).

Comrie (1985:9 and 17) does not distinguish between a reference point and a D.C. Wybenga (1985:209) rejects the notion of the shifting of the D.C. He argues that if reference can be made to a point or if a point can be projected then that point can no longer be the point from which references are made. The claim that the present moment may serve as the reference point for relative tense is unacceptable. What happens is that the speech participants always have to keep track of the D.C.

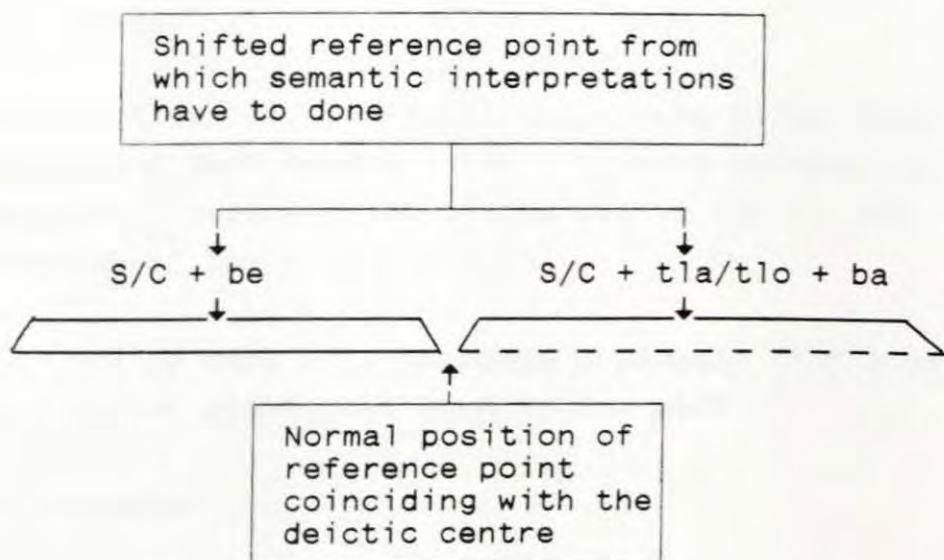
Relative tense forms in Northern Sotho suggest that the speech participants always have to keep track of the D.C. even if the events are interpreted primarily from another reorientated reference point since that reorientated reference point is in turn established in relation to the D.C. Compare the following examples and schematic representation:

- (19) Ke be ke sepela.  
'I was walking then.'

- (20) Ke be ke sepetše.  
'I had walked then.'
- (21) Ke tlo/tla be ke sepela.  
'I shall be walking then.'

In the figure below it is indicated explicitly that the structure of the deficient verb form establishes the reference point in relation to the D.C.

Figure 2: The tense paradigm for relative tense



Various African language grammarians have studied the -be deficient verb which is used in the formation of relative tense but they have different views contrary to the deictic principle.

Doke (1986:195) refers to these forms as the 'contingent mood.' He says:

"In this mood are found only past tenses indicative of unfulfilled or unaccomplished intention. Each of these tenses has past as well as future auxiliary in their formation."

He sites an example:

Bengizothanda.

'I would have loved, if...'

Van Eeden (1956:320) calls these forms compound tense forms and describes them as follows:

"In hierdie tydvorm tree die auksiliêr -be- op - omdat dit die perfektumvorm van die stam -ba- is - met die betekenis van die (temporale of tydbepalende) element wat van die saamgestelde verbale vorm 'n verlede tydvorm maak."

Ziervogel et. al. (1977:77) call these tense forms the continuous past tenses. Their remarks concerning the semantic interpretation of the use of -be in the 'compound predicates' is:

"-Be as part of a compound predicate indicates an action which continued in the past.

For example:

(22) Dipudi di be di fula thabeng.  
'The goats were grazing on the mountain'."

Cole (1982:283) subdivides the inchoative verbs into two categories, that is, the inchoative verbs with perfect tense and the inchoative verbs with past tense. He says that perfect tense is used to indicate a completed (past) action and the resultant state in present time. He cites an example such as the following:

(23) Ba-robotše.  
'They have gone to sleep.'

On the other hand, he says the past tense of inchoative verbs indicates that the state was achieved in past time

and continued for a period, but that something else occurred subsequently and therefore the state does not persist in the present time, for example:

- (24) Ke-ne ka-robala.  
 'I went to sleep./I slept but subsequently  
 awoke.'

Van Wyk (1981:101) describes the meaning of -be as follows:

"Die beginsel van samestelling berus daarop dat die hulpwerkwoordstam -ba met 'n neutrale eksistensiële betekenis, vertaalbaar as 'wees (in die omstandighede dat)' gebruik word."

The grammarians quoted above associate the use of the auxiliary verb stem -be forms with completion or incompleteness of the action. Van Wyk is the only one who suggests, although not explicitly, that the interpretation of the -be forms should not be done from coding time. (1981:93).

As already indicated in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, tense is interpreted from a determined orientation point. It has been further argued that the orientation point is generally coding time. Reference may also be made in relation to another reference point which does not coincide with the deictic centre. The verbal forms which are classified under the tense paradigms whereby the event or state or process is not interpreted from the coding time, have -be/-ba as the auxiliary verb stem. Compare the following examples:

- (25) Maabane re be re theya dihlapi.  
 'Yesterday we were fishing.'
- (26) Maabane re be re tlo theya dihlapi.  
 'Yesterday we were going to fish.'
- (27) Ke tla ba ke theya dihlapi gosasa.  
 'I shall be fishing tomorrow.'

It is clear that the state of the fishing action in the above sentences has no direct relevance to coding time but accounts for the state of affairs at a newly established reference point 'maabane' and 'gosasa' respectively.

This reorientation in terms of the semantic interpretation is done by shifting the reference point. It is important to note that the shifting of the reference point is done in relation to coding time which coincides with the deictic centre.

Relative tense is not an instance of event time being interpreted from a 'shifted deictic centre', but an expression of the relation between E.T., R.T., and C.T. In this regard Posthumus (1988:141) says:

"The D.C. cannot be shifted. The D.C. (as generally defined) is an *a priori*, the *origo* of the speech context over which the speech participants have no command. The participants in a speech act may choose (and establish) other reference points from which references in terms of person, space, and time can be made. These newly established reference points do not, however, become 'deictic centres' - they remain mere reference points which are themselves orientated in relation to the D.C."

The position of the R.T. in relation to C.T. is marked by the morphological structure of the deficient verb form which has diachronically developed from a copulative verb stem -ba, while the relation between E.T. and R.T. is marked by the morphological structure of the complementary verb. Compare:

- (28) Ke be ke ngwala go fihleng ga gagwe.  
'I was writing when he arrived.'



The above example indicates that the action of writing took place when he arrived. The auxiliary verb 'ke be' indicates that the reference point has been shifted to a period prior to coding time. The complementary form 'ke ngwala' indicates that the action of writing of the speaker was continuing at the point of the other person's arrival.

## CHAPTER 3

## 3. TIME

## 3.1 TIME REFERENCE

A total disregard of the category of time in Northern Sotho and other African languages necessitates a study of this grammatical category.

A distinction is drawn between tense and time as the two major types of strategies used to indicate the location of events in time.

Tense and time are differentiated on the grounds that tense is grammatically marked in the verb whereas time is the logical interpretation of events regardless of the tense form of the verb. Posthumus (1983:121) says:

"Tempus word teenoor tyd gestel as die logiese tydinterpretasie teenoor die vormlike tydsbepaling wat deur grammatiese opposisies weergegee word in die taal."

Tense is morphologically and phonologically marked in the verb form. The tense oppositions reveal the relation between event time, coding time and reference time. On the other hand, time is very often determined by factors outside the verb and may even be inter sentential.

A number of African language grammarians argue that the verbal form which determines a certain tense form, does not always reveal the same time interpretation. Van Rooyen (1977:172) says in this regard:

"Dit is daarom jammer dat daar soms van

die teenwoordige tydsvormelement gepraat word. Dit skep die indruk dat die handeling net in die teenwoordige tyd plaasvind terwyl dit in werklikheid nie altyd so is nie."

In sentence (1) the time interpretation of the participial verb is simultative while this verb is in the present tense. In sentence (2), however, the time interpretation is anterior in spite of the fact that the verb is in the present tense form.

(1) Mošimane o kitima a bitša bagwera.  
'The boy is running calling his friends.'

(2) Mošimane o kitimile a bitša bagwera.  
'The boy ran calling his friends.'

Welmers (1973:353) also noted this discrepancy when treating the tense paradigms of the African languages. Referring to this problem he says:

"It should also be noted that we sometimes use the present to express future action in English, particularly with the verb 'go' (he's going tomorrow), often with 'come', and occasionally with other verbs."

There are two problems that need to be addressed. The first is to establish which factors that are responsible for the tense form, do not correlate with the time interpretation of the sentence. The second problem is to describe and to categorise these factors in order to try and account for this discrepancy.

### 3.2 FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE TIME INTERPRETATION

The impact of time adverbials on time distinctions has been a subject of study in recent years.

The fact that the location of events in time in sentence (2) above does not coincide with the tense analysis, should be attributed to the influence of time interpretation and not to an inadequate tense analysis in Northern Sotho.

The referential semantic value of time adverbials is one of the factors which influence time interpretation. Factors other than temporal adverbials, which influence time interpretation are:

- (i) the semantic verb phrase categorization,
- (ii) tense,
- (iii) aspect, and
- (iv) the text and context.

#### 3.2.1 SEMANTIC VERB PHRASE CATEGORIZATION AS A TIME ESTABLISHING FACTOR

In the first place, the semantic content of the verb should be taken into consideration. In this regard Gabbay and Moravcsik (1980:63) say:

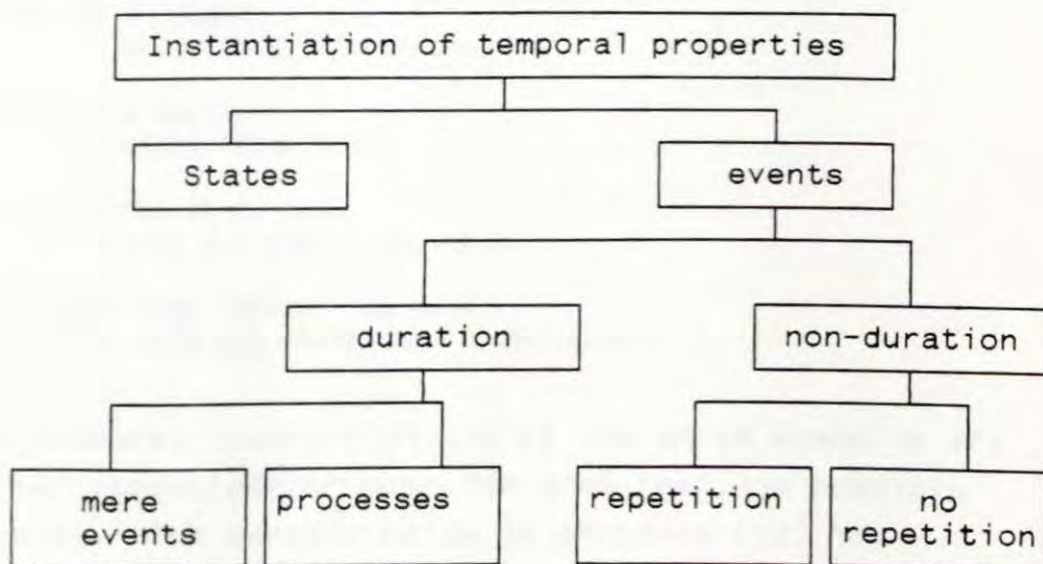
"There is no expression in English that would cover all of the different types of instantiations of temporal properties. Thus we will label this genus simply as instantiations of temporal properties."

The instantiations which are referred to above are those of state and non-state. The state covers those ones with duration. Some of these instantiations of state will be for example:

'babja' (being sick), 'tseba' (knowing), 'go ba sethata' (being solid), etc.

The non-states, therefore, are either without duration, or they have duration, and if they have duration they imply specific changes. The non-states instantiations are called the events. This categorization can be summed up as in the following figure.

Figure 1: The semantic verb phrase categorization.



### 3.2.2 TENSE AS A TIME ESTABLISHING FACTOR

Two tenses have been distinguished, namely, past and present, bearing in mind that a tense form is not necessarily limited to one particular time interpretation. If it is true that in Northern Sotho there is no 'pure future', it is compatible with our claim that reference to future is an aspectual form containing a future auxiliary.

The system of tenses and that of aspect have a cross-

Lyons (1977:704) says:

"What is traditionally referred to as the present tense of Latin or Greek is more appropriately described as being the present imperfect; it is present (or, better still, both non-past and non-future) in tense and imperfect in aspect."

Lombard (1985:141) also describes the so-called imperfect tense by sub-dividing it into four different aspects of imperfectness. These are the momentary aspect, the habitual aspect, the universal aspect and continuous aspect. He cites the following examples respectively:

- (8) Ke a ngwala.  
'I am writing.'(momentary)
- (9) Ke a kgoga.  
'I smoke.'(habitual)
- (10) Ditau di ja nama.  
'Lions eat meat.'(universal)
- (11) Ke šoma letšatši ka moka.  
'I work the whole day.'(continuous)

The temporal interpretations of the above examples are either incomplete or open for more than one possible reading. The example below in sentence (12) has progressive aspect which indicates a continuous activity but it is also temporally incomplete.

- (12) Ke sa šoma letšatši ka moka.  
'I am still working the whole day.'

If we posit two aspects, the progressive and future aspect, then the temporal reference is complete. Compare:

- (13) Ke sa tlo šoma letšatši ka moka.  
'I am still going to work the whole day.'

The present tense expresses either present events, an atemporal interpretation, or habitual activity, hence the use of 'tlo' (the future aspect) closes what would be gaps in the interpretation of temporal reference.

#### 3.2.4 TEXT AND CONTEXT AS FACTORS RELEVANT FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF TIME

The context in which the verb is used can play an important role in the interpretation of time. In this regard Welmers (1973:345) says the following:

"Before anything can be said about verbal constructions in African languages, it must be pointed out that 'I build a house' is not an English sentence, and if an African informant gives an alleged equivalent we really have no idea what it actually means. One can say 'I build houses' or perhaps even 'I build a house at ten fifteen every Monday morning', both of which express customary action. Or one can say 'I am building a house', which expresses continuing action in the present time. But 'I build a house' is in itself totally meaningless."

One example can explain the role played by the context in the interpretation of time. The time interpretation of (14) below can be simultative or atemporal.

- (14) Mollo o a fiša.  
'The fire is hot/it burns.'

If the utterance is used by a mother holding a burning candle stick in front of the baby who has no experience of

fire, then the interpretation would be atemporal. If on the other hand, people are standing in front of a burning fire and one remarks that the fire is hot (as in (14)), then the time interpretation is simultative.

Temporal reference can be established within and across sentences. Compare the following (a) and (b) sentences:

(15a) Ke boletše le Matome.  
'I talked to Matome.'

(15b) O be a thabile.  
'He was happy.'

(16a) Ke boletše le Matome ka Labohlano.  
'I talked to Matome on Friday.'

(16b) O be a sepela mo matšatšing a mararo.  
'He was leaving in three days.'

(17a) Matome o gorogile ka matena.  
'Matome arrived at noon.'

(17b) Malose o tlile ka morago.  
'Malose came later.'

Examples (15) - (17) are sequences in which the (b) sentences do not establish temporal reference on their own; they are dependent on the (a) sentences for their temporal interpretation. They are temporal dependent structures. Smith (1980:358) assumes a sort of Gricean co-operative approach in the interpretation of these structures, whereby one looks for a related interpretation of sentences presented together. Considering temporal interpretation only, he describes the sentences with a military metaphor whereby the (a) sentences are said to have 'captured' the (b) sentences, since the latter are dependent on the former for interpretation. The military metaphor focuses on sentences that may become captives, that is, on dependent structures. Sentences are divided into three possibilities; (i) a sentence may demand capture, (ii) it may be available for capture or (iii) it may be protected from capture.



Sentences that demand capture do not establish temporal reference on their own. One class that demands capture is a dependent sentence with no time adverbials as in (18b) below:

(18a) Matome ga a gona phadišanong ya sekolo lehono.  
'Matome isn't at the school competition today.'

(18b) O a šoma.  
'He is working.'

The (b) sentence is captured by the (a) sentence, the latter having no time adverbial. Sentences that demand capture, do not establish temporal reference on their own, they depend on the information given elsewhere. Such information may be part of the extra-linguistic context or may be contained in a captor sentence.

On the other hand, sentences that are available for capture can establish time reference in isolation or they may depend on the captor sentence for their time interpretation. They are interpretable as anchored to the speech time. These types of sentences may be captured to form part of an extended temporal structure. As captors they anchor to a time established in the other sentence. Compare example (19).

(19a) Mokibelo o mongwe le o mongwe ka matena, Matome o namela pese a ya toropong.  
'Every Saturday afternoon Matome takes the/a bus to town.'

(19b) O ile ntlong lehalahala ka iri ya pele.  
'He went to the hall at one o'clock.'

In isolation example (19b) indicates that Matome did something at a certain time (one o'clock) interpreted from the time of speech in the simplest interpretation. In sequence to (19a), however, (19b) has quite a different interpretation, it specifies a habitual activity of Matome on Saturday afternoon. The adverbial (Mokibelo o mongwe le o mongwe) is captor of the extended temporal interpretation

(ka iri ya pele) in (19b).

The third category is sentences that cannot be captured. These sentences are said to be protected from capture. Consider the following (a) and (b) sequences:

- (20a) Matome o boletše le Mpho ka matena.  
'Matome talked to Mpho at noon.'
- (20b) Matome o gorogile diiri tše tharo tša go feta.  
'Matome arrived three hours ago.'
- (21a) Selemo se sengwe le se sengwe Matome o a eta.  
'Every summer Matome travels.'
- (21b) Matome o ya Polokwane gosasa.  
'Matome is leaving for Polokwane/Pietersburg tomorrow.'

Although these sequences are not incoherent, they cannot be taken as extended temporal structures. Sentence (20b) indicates a time three hours before speech time. Sentence (21b) contains the adverb 'tomorrow' which is a day after speech time. Both sentences are anchored to speech time and are making deictic reference and are therefore protected from capture. Deictic reference protects a sentence from capture because it anchors to speech time and not to times established in other sentences. This tripartite referential system leads to the classification of temporal adverbials, which is explained under the classification of adverbials.

### 3.3 CLASSIFICATION OF TEMPORAL ADVERBIALS

Gabbay and Rohrer (1978:99) conclude that it is impossible to describe the tense forms of natural languages without a theory of temporal adverbs and of how temporal adverbs and tense forms interact. This is relevant because the function of the temporal adverb is to restrict the tense form and to specify the interval in which the event denoted

by the verb can occur.

The temporal adverbials are assigned consistent relational values. According to their relational reference, they may be subcategorized as anterior (event time occurs before reference time), simultative (event time coincides with reference time), posterior (event time occurs after reference time) and iterative (event time occurs repeatedly with particular intervals).

When the reference point is taken as criterion, we can subcategorize the temporal adverbs into three categories. Those that have coding time as the reference point (they are called deictic), those that can have coding time or another point as reference point (they are called dualistic or flexible) and those that always take another point as reference point (these are called dependent). The figure below is a representation of the subcategorization of temporal adverbs in terms of two sets of criteria, namely the anchoring point and relational reference.

Figure 3: The subcategorization of temporal adverbials in terms of relational reference and anchoring point.

		ANCHORING POINT		
		1. Deictic (Anchor to coding time)	2. Dependent (Anchor to another reference point)	3. Dualistic (Anchor to coding time or another ref. point)
RELATIONAL REFERENCE	(a) ante- rior	maabane 'yesterday'  ngogola 'last year'	maabane a ntshe 'the previous day'  pele ga mola 'before that'	ka Labone 'Thursday'  ka iri ya bone 'At four o'clock'
	(b) simu- lta- tive	bjale 'now'  lehono 'today'	ka nako yela 'at that time'  tšatši lela 'on that day' mohla wola 'at that time'	
	(c) pos- te- rior	gosasa 'tomorrow'  kgwedi ye e tlogo 'next month'	kgwedi ye e latelago 'the following month'	ka matena 'at noon' ka Labohlano 'Friday'

### 3.3.1 TEMPORAL ADVERBIALS WHICH ANCHOR TO CODING TIME

At first it was thought that the solution to the problem of classifying adverbials would involve semantic subcategorizing of temporal adverbials into past, present and future categories, each of which would then be inserted along with the appropriate tense. However, even though lehono (today), mongwaga (this year), bjale (now) are classified as simultative, these adverbials indicate a

time-span rather than a point in time and can thus be used together with present tense, past tense and future aspectual verbs. Compare:

- (23) Matome o tla lehono.  
'Matome comes today.'
- (24) Matome o tlile lehono.  
'Matome came today.'
- (25) Matome o tla tla lehono.  
'Matome will come today.'

The adverbial 'lehono' and 'bjale' superficially appears to associate a sentence with a time interval rather than a point in time.

Different combinations of tense and time adverbials, are possible. These combinations are restructured by their relational value. The examples below illustrate the combination of the various types of deictic temporal adverbials as listed in figure 4 with the different tense forms.

Figure 4: Time interpretation as a result of the interaction between temporal adverbials and tense forms.

Combination	Tense	Temporal adverbial (deictic)	Temporal reference
1	Present	anterior	anterior
2	Past	anterior	anterior
3	Present	simultative	simultative/ iterative/atemporal
4	Past	simultative	simultative/anterior
5	Present	posterior	posterior
6	Past	posterior	-----

The illustrative examples which are used are tense forms of the indicative mood. These tense forms can also realize in

the participial (situative) and relative moods.

Generally the combination of a present tense verb and an anterior temporal adverbial is not possible in the indicative mood, however, this combination is possible in the case of the so-called narrative tense in which case the temporal adverbial is in sentence initial position.

Compare:

- (26) Maabane ke fihla gae, ke hwetša bana ba robetše ya ba gona ke lemoga gore ke bošego.  
 'Yesterday I arrive home, I find the children asleep, then I realize it is late.'

The combination of a past tense with anterior temporal adverbial yield an anterior time reference.

Compare:

- (27) Bana ba hlatswitše diaparo maabane.  
 'The children washed the clothes yesterday.'

- (28) Bana ba thunthile lewatle mohlantse.  
 'The children swam in the sea that day.'

A combination of a present tense and a simultative temporal adverbial can yield a simultative or iterative time reference as is evident in the following examples respectively:

- (29) Mpša še e a gobola bjale.  
 'Here is a dog, it is barking now.'
- (30) Bana ba bolela ka thuto lehono.  
 'The children are talking about education today.'

This means that at the moment of speech the topic is education or the current topic among children is education. The time interpretation in example (30) is simultative or iterative.

An utterance may also be interpreted as atemporal if it

contains a present tense verb form as in (31). This time interpretation is, however, not due to the use of a temporal adverbial but to the speech participant's knowledge of the world. Compare:

- (31a) Letšatši le hlaba ka mehla.  
'The sun rises every day.'

Lyons (1977:679) classifies utterances such as the one above as omnitemporal. They are propositions that are time bound but temporally unrestricted. They are generally expressed by sentences in the present tense, but in this case there is no intrinsic connection between the grammatical category of tense and the utterance. Other sentences of this nature are called generic propositions. According to Lyons they are not omnitemporal, but timeless, for example:

- (31b) Kgomo ke sefudi.  
'A beast is herbivorous.'

A combination of a past tense and a simultative temporal adverbial may result in a simultative time interpretation as is evident in example (32) or an anterior time interpretation as in (33) or posterior time interpretation as in (34).

- (32) Mošimane o lapile bjale.  
'The boy is tired now.'
- (33) Re boletše le yena bjale.  
'We spoke to him now.'
- (34) Ke tla mmona bjale.  
'I will see him now.'

The combination of a present tense form and a posterior temporal adverbial results in a posterior time interpretation.

- (35) O hwetša moputso gosasa.  
'He is getting a reward tomorrow.'

The above example demonstrates that the decisive time establishing factor is the temporal adverb and not the tense form.

### 3.3.2 TEMPORAL ADVERBIALS WHICH ANCHOR TO A POINT OTHER THAN CODING TIME

Adverbials with all relational values occur as deictics and dependents. Deictics are those adverbials that anchor to coding time while temporal adverbials which are not anchored to coding time but to another reference point are called dependents. They are called dependent temporal adverbials because they have a dependent referential value. This can be seen in example (36).

(36) Re fihlile maabane mola bana ba fihlile go  
hlwa maabane.

'We arrived yesterday whereas the children arrived the day before yesterday.'

(37) Matome o tla fetša ka moleko ka Mokibelo  
mola Malose a tla fetša ka o o latelago.

'Matome will finish the examination on Saturday whereas Malose will finish the Saturday thereafter.'

In example (36) 'go hlwa maabane' is a dependent temporal adverbial whereas 'maabane' is the dominant temporal adverbial which is anchored to coding time. In (37) the phrase 'ka o o latelago' is dependent and 'Mokibelo' is the dominant temporal adverbial which is anchored to coding time.

There are restrictions which are placed upon the usage of the dependent temporal adverbials. The first restriction is that dependent adverbial reference cannot take place across the deictic centre. Compare example \*(38) whereby the usage is pragmatically unacceptable.



- \*(38) Morwa kgoši o tla e hwetša bosasa puku, mola ke hweditše ya ka maloba a ntshe.  
 'The prince will get his book tomorrow, whereas I got mine two days before.'

Secondly, the use of pure deictic adverbials pre-empt the dependent adverbials. Example \*(39) is thus also pragmatically unacceptable.

- \*(39) Morwa kgoši o fihlile maabane nna ke fihlile maabane a ntshe.  
 'The prince arrived yesterday, I arrived the previous day.'

Thirdly, the unit specified in the dependent temporal adverbial must be of the same magnitude as that contained in the dominant temporal adverbial. \*(40) is therefore pragmatically unacceptable.

- \*(40) Mokete o tla ba ka Agostose, rena re tla ya Polokwane maloba.  
 'The wedding will be in August, we will go to Pietersburg two days prior to that.'

### 3.3.3 TEMPORAL ADVERBIALS WHICH ANCHOR TO CODING TIME OR ANOTHER REFERENCE POINT

Temporal adverbials which anchor to coding time or another reference point are called dualistic anchoring adverbials. This means they can be used deictically or non-deictically as illustrated by examples (41) and (42) respectively, and can furthermore have an anterior or posterior referential value as illustrated by examples (43) and (44) respectively.

- (41) Ke tla go bona Labone.  
 'I will see you on Thursday.'
- (42) Labone ke letšatši le ke sa le ratego.  
 'Thursday is the day I do not like.'
- (43) Re sepetše ka Labone.  
 'We left on Thursday.'

- (44) Re tla goroga ka Labone  
'We will arrive on Thursday.'

### 3.4 TIME REFERENCE THROUGH TEMPORAL ADVERBIALS

Verbal forms are used to denote the time at which events take place. The temporal adverbials can also refer to a period located in the past, in the future or at the point of utterance. The terms anterior, simultative and posterior are used to refer to adverbs which indicate past, present and future time reference respectively. In some languages there are complex systems of tense, aspect and temporal adverbs that make a number of temporal references possible.

Time may be anchored to some important event (such as our year measure which is calculated in relation to the birth of Christ). This implies that an event may be located in relation to another event. The example below is a typical demonstration of this relation. The year in which one was born is expressed in relation to the birth of Christ. In this example the subject was born 1940 years after the birth of Christ.

- (45) O belegwe ka 1940.  
'He was born in 1940.'

Secondly, time may also be expressed in terms of cyclic units such as days, weeks and months as is evident in example (46).

- (46) O tlwaetše go fihla ka Labohlano.  
'He usually comes on Friday.'

Time may be linked to the different stages of the sun during the course of the day.

Compare:

- (47) Ke fihlile gae ka mahube.  
'I arrived home at dawn.'

'Mahube' in the example above can in turn be divided into different stages of the morning. For example:

- (48a) Ke fihlile ka mahube a banna/a thekwane.  
'I arrived at early dawn.'

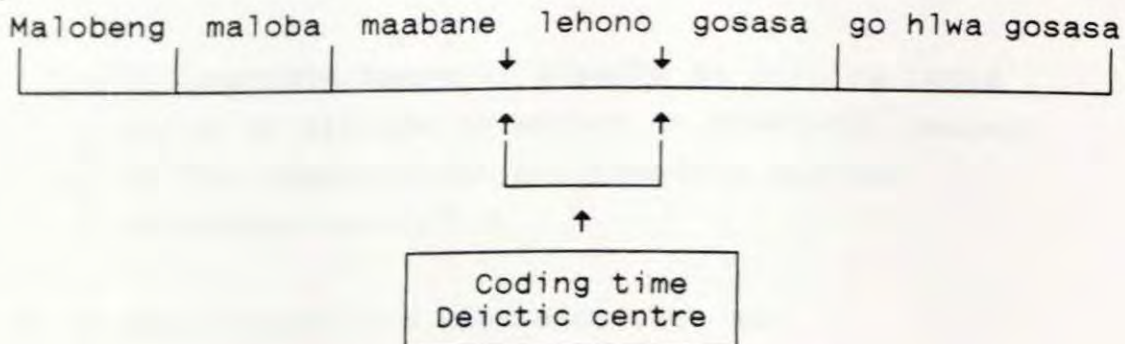
- (48b) Ke fihlile ka mahube a basadi.  
'I arrived at dawn relatively late (just before the sun rises).'

To refer to a period shortly after sunset the term 'sothwane' is used as in example (49):

- (49) O fihlile ka sothwane.  
'He arrived at dusk.'

Coding time is the primary reference point which is regarded as the implicit centre established by the context and accepted as a *priori* for any language usage. Time, like tense, is then interpreted as being anterior or prior to, simultative with or posterior to this anchoring point. Time reference which is encoded as co-ordinates anchored to the time of utterance is commonly grammaticalized in diurnal deictic adverbs of time. The deictic diurnals of Northern Sotho are illustrated diagrammatically in figure 5.

Figure 5: The deictic diurnal units of Northern Sotho.



Languages differ in their distinction of terms which are

pure deictic diurnal. Afrikaans for instance has terms for two units either side of today, English has one either side of today, while Southern Sotho has the diurnal time adverbials; maobeng 'three days ago', maoba 'the day before yesterday', maobane 'yesterday', kajeno 'today', hosane 'tomorrow' and ka moso 'the day after tomorrow'. Southern Sotho thus has three diurnal labelled units prior to today and two subsequent to today. Zulu has two diurnal terms before today and two subsequent to today, that is; kuthangi 'the day before yesterday', izolo 'yesterday', namhlanje 'today', kusasa 'tomorrow' and ngomhlomunye 'the day after tomorrow'.

Adverbs of time can either refer to an entire span as illustrated in example (50) or to a point within the relevant span as in (51) below.

- (50) Maabane ke maloba.  
 'Yesterday is the day before yesterday/ Yesterday belongs to the past.'

In example (50) the diurnal adverb 'maabane' has undergone semantic shift and does not mean 'yesterday' as such, but it means 'in the past'.

- (51) Ke bone malome maabane.  
 'I saw my uncle yesterday.'

With regard to an example such as (51) Aqvist (1978:37) says:

"...certain temporal adverbs as well as tense serve to situate an action in time with respect to the speech point and possibly another reference point."

If it were Friday, an utterance such as:

- (52) O swanetše go nketela ka Mokibelo wo o tlogo.  
 'You must visit me next Saturday.'

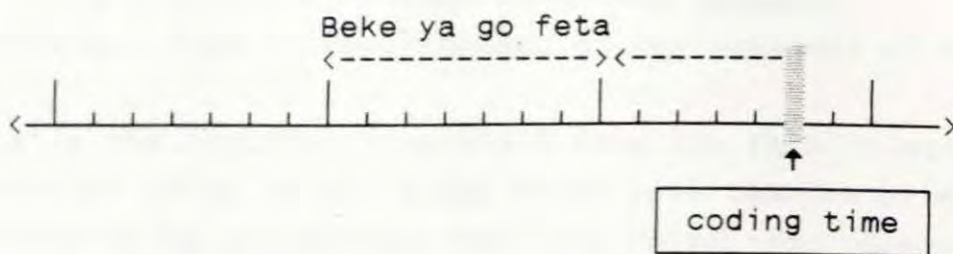
would not be interpreted as 'tomorrow' but as 'Saturday next week'. 'Ka Mokibelo wo o tlogo' can thus refer to the Saturday of the week that succeeds the week which includes C.T. or it may refer to the Saturday which first follows C.T. if the relation between C.T. and the time referred to cannot be expressed by using a diurnal deictic term.

Time reference can be made to a point within a cyclic or calendrical time span or to the entire time span which is illustrated in example (53), {refer to examples (50) and (51) as well}.

- (53) Re feditše mošomo beke ya go feta.  
'We finished the work last week.'

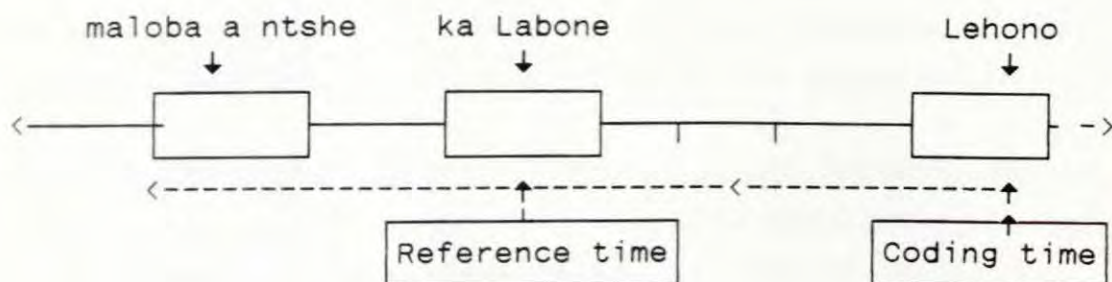
A schematic representation of time measured in terms of cyclic units relative to coding time is given in figure 6 below:

Figure 6: Time measured in terms of cyclic units relative to coding time.



Time reference is greatly complicated if it deviates from the deictic simultaneity assumption or by the interaction of deictic co-ordinates with non-deictic conceptualization of time. Figure 7 is a schematic representation of relative time reference. In this case 'maloba' is not interpreted in relation to C.T. but in relation to the newly established reference time 'ka Labone', as can be seen from the illustrative example (54).

Figure 7: Time adverbials measured relative to reference time which is in turn relative to coding time.



- (54) Re feditše mošomo ka Labone. Re o thomile maloba a ntshe.  
 'We finished the work on Thursday. We had started the work two days prior to that.'

### 3.5 INTERRELATION BETWEEN TENSE AND TIME

The most common factor establishing time distinctions is the interaction between tense forms and temporal adverbials. Time is superimposed on the category of tense.

Generally the temporal adverbials have the same relational referential value as the tense forms they combine with and thus seem to be unimportant for time reckoning. Compare examples (55) and (56):

- (55) Monna o sepela lehono.  
 'The man goes away today.'

The combination is present tense and a simultative temporal adverbial. The time interpretation, which is a result of the interaction between a temporal adverbial and a tense form, is the same as that of the tense form, in this case the present tense. Compare also an illustration of the combination whereby the past tense and the anterior temporal adverbial gives the outcome of anterior time interpretation (past event).

- (56) Monna o sepetše maabane.  
 'The man went away yesterday.'

Some possible combinations of temporal adverbials and tense forms yield opposing relational values. This is evident in figure 4 and the elucidating examples on pages 46 and 47.

The deduction one can make from these and other examples, is that the temporal adverbials play a more decisive role in time establishing than the tense forms as such.

## CHAPTER 4

## 4. TENSE FORMS WITHIN THE MOODS

## 4.1 MOODS IN NORTHERN SOTHO

When comparing the authoritative sources which deal with moods, it becomes evident that hardly any of them agree on the number of moods to be distinguished.

In the following paragraphs each of the authorities' definitions of mood is given.

Ziervogel as cited by Kruger (1971:11) defines mood as follows:

"The mood indicates the form assumed by a predicative to show how the speaker views the relation between subject and predicative."

Kruger endorses the above definition as the only one which reflects the linguistic analysis of moods using the principles of morphology, semantics and syntax. Applying these principles, he distinguishes the following moods; indicative, consecutive, imperative, and habitual (as independent moods) and the participial, subjunctive, infinitive and relative mood as dependent moods.

Doke (1935:147) on the other hand, defines mood as follows:

"A special form assumed by the verb in order to mark some manner (modus) in which that connection between subject and predicate, which every verb implies, is viewed by the speaker."

This definition of Doke is vague and as such, has led to



the divergence in the number and types of moods distinguished and cannot serve as an appropriate definition of mood in Northern Sotho.

Davey (1973:8) on the other hand categorizes the moods on the grounds of their semantic values. He follows Lyons (1968:308) when he says:

"At least three 'scales' of modality may be relevant. The first is the scale of 'wish' and intention'...The second scale is that of 'necessity', and 'obligation'... The third is that of 'certainty' and 'possibility'."

Applying this subcategorization of modality, Davey distinguishes the following moods in Xhosa: infinitive, imperative, indicative, participial, and subjunctive.

Nokaneng (1986:97) distinguishes moods on the grounds of morphological, syntactical and semantic principles. He distinguishes the infinitive, imperative, indicative, subjunctive, habitual, participial and hortative moods.

A scholar who distinguishes moods on the grounds of modality is Louwrens (1990:17). Within the domain of deontic modality he distinguishes the imperative, subjunctive and the hortative moods. Whereas within the domain of the epistemic modality he distinguishes the indicative, subjunctive, consecutive, habitual and participial moods. According to Louwrens only the semantic principle is essential for determining the moods in Northern Sotho. Louwrens (1990) and (1991) goes on to define mood in terms of verbal inflection and modality in terms of the speaker's opinion or subjective attitude towards what he is saying, however, he disregards the infinitive mood and the relative mood as moods on the grounds of lack of modality and inflection.

According to Palmer (1986:5 and 33) mood is a very clear example of 'grammatical marking', expressed in the verbal morphology while modality is a typological category expressed by *inter alia* 'modal verbs, particles and clitics'.

Palmer (1986:21 et seq.) suggests that a distinction between mood and modality should be drawn and he continues by pointing out that there are three problems relating to the analysis of traditional moods and the way they relate to modality. He explains one of these problems as follows:

"There is a second point that may, in some degree, justify the restricted use of the term 'mood'. It is that the moods of the familiar languages (or the subjunctive at least) have a whole variety of semantic functions, and that the choice between them is determined grammatically more than by modal meanings."

Lyons (1977:848) says:

"According to the view of mood and modality that has been taken in this chapter, mood is a grammatical category that is to be found in some, but not all, languages. It cannot be identified with either modality or illocutionary force as such,...."

As a result of these contradictions Van Wyk (1987:278) proposes that the obvious remedy is to analyze, describe and classify verb categories in terms of the 'own genius' of the language and to leave it to general linguistics to determine how these fit into systems of substantive universals. He proposes the following:

"(a) The individual verb categories of a language have to be determined on the basis of sets of

verbs sharing the same grammatical features and functions.

- (b) The interrelations between these individual categories as they manifest themselves in the grammatical facts of the language are the only basis for classifying them into more comprehensive categories.
- (c) Each individual category and each comprehensive category has to be named and defined in a language dependent way. Even if well-known terms such as 'tense' and 'mood' are used, they have to be defined uniquely for the language in question."

With this background as given by Van Wyk, one can use the syntactic-semantic criteria as the point of departure which is used by Posthumus (1983:5) when he says:

"Wat modusbepalend is, is die sintakties-semantiese funksie van die werkwoord in die bepaalde gebruik."

To add to this one can thus define mood as follows:

Mood, as a clear example of grammatical marking, is that characteristic morphologically and phonologically marked form of the verb which governs the semantic-syntactic usage of such a verb.

To demonstrate the above definition compare the following examples using the relative and situative moods.

Relative mood: (1) Monna yo a sepelago.  
'The man who is walking.'

Situative mood:(2a) Monna mola a sepelago šala o thuša.  
'Since the man has left, you shall remain to help.'

- (2b) Monna a sepelago, šala o thuša.  
 'Since the man left, remain helping.'

Both verbs 'a sepelago' in (1) and (2) have the morphological structure: subject concord + verb root + ending + -go suffix.

There is a difference in tonal pattern, though. Compare:

- (1)       à sèpèlàgó  
 (2)       á sèpèlàgó

Semantically sentence (1) in the relative mood qualifies an antecedent whereas sentence (2) in the situative mood is used adverbially to express a condition.

Syntactically both verbs are dependent, but sentence (1) must follow on the qualificative particle although there are environments which do permit it without this particle. On the other hand sentence (2) can follow a conjunctive as in (2a) or it can function without a conjunctive.

Moods in Northern Sotho can be defined as verbal categories which are marked morphologically and phonologically within the verb, the syntax and semantics determine the usage of such a verb.

Defining mood as a morphologically and phonologically marked form which governs the semantic-syntactic usage of a verb, one distinguishes the following moods for Northern Sotho: indicative mood, participial mood, relative mood, imperative mood, infinitive mood, subjunctive mood, consecutive mood and habitual mood.

One of the most important characteristics of the Northern Sotho moods is that they are mutually exclusive. The moods can be subdivided into different groups according to certain syntactic, semantic, phonological and morphological traits. According to these traits moods can for example be subdivided into independent and dependent moods, moods

which demand subject agreement and those which do not, and as tense distinguishing and non-tense distinguishing moods. Compare figure 1:

Tense Distinguishing		Non-Tense Distinguishing		Mood	Subject Agreement
Yes	No	Yes	No		
Indicative	Present	Imperative	Present	Imperative	Yes
Indicative	Past	Imperative	Past	Imperative	No
Indicative	Future	Imperative	Future	Imperative	No
Indicative	Conditional	Imperative	Conditional	Imperative	No
Indicative	Pluperfect	Imperative	Pluperfect	Imperative	No
Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative	Subjunctive	Imperative	No
Indicative	Infinitive	Imperative	Infinitive	Imperative	No
Indicative	Participle	Imperative	Participle	Imperative	No
Indicative	Gerund	Imperative	Gerund	Imperative	No
Indicative	Noun	Imperative	Noun	Imperative	No
Indicative	Adjective	Imperative	Adjective	Imperative	No
Indicative	Adverb	Imperative	Adverb	Imperative	No
Indicative	Preposition	Imperative	Preposition	Imperative	No
Indicative	Conjunction	Imperative	Conjunction	Imperative	No
Indicative	Interjection	Imperative	Interjection	Imperative	No
Indicative	Particle	Imperative	Particle	Imperative	No
Indicative	Other	Imperative	Other	Imperative	No

Figure 1. The moods of Northern Sotho.

Non-subject agreement		Subject agreement				
Non-tense	Tense	Non-tense	Tense			
			Indicative	Used as statement or question or as complement in co-ordination	C o n s i s t e n t e n c e s  m a i n	I N D E P E N D E N T
Imperative				Used as command		
			Situative	Adverbial, expresses simultaneous, conditional or coordinating action or as complement of another verb	D E P E N D E N T	
			Relative	Qualifies an antecedent in a noun phrase		
Infinitive				Subject morpheme go-. Dual character: as noun and verb		
		Subjunctive		Follows as result or request on another verb or may be ensuing command in a sequence of commands		
		Habitual		Follows as habit or co-occurs as habit		
		Consecutive		Chronological succession and narrative		

## 4.2 TENSE DISTINGUISHING MOODS

The absolute tense forms are the basic tense forms. They are those morphologically and phonologically marked verb forms which reflect the relation between coding time (the deictic centre) and event time.

Mood on the other hand is also a verbal category which is morphologically and phonologically marked. This marked form of the verb underscores the meaning and usage of the verb in a particular sentence type.

There are three tense distinguishing moods, namely, the indicative, situative and relative moods. In this study I will focus on one tense distinguishing mood only, namely, the indicative mood.

### 4.2.1 THE INDICATIVE MOOD

The indicative mood has an epistemic modality since it is expressed by assertives (Palmer 1986:13). Assertives according to Palmer (1986:97) are marked for tense. In this regard he says:

"...the speaker can commit himself to the truth of propositions in the past, present or future."

According to Cole (1982:242) the indicative mood states the occurrence of an action at some time in the past, present or future.

Doke (1968:166) says:

"The indicative mood is used to state what was, is or will be and covers a large range of tenses."

Tense as a category of the verb in the indicative mood comprises of the present tense and past tense. The future is not a tense form but an aspect. The two tense categories are mutually exclusive.

#### 4.2.2 THE PRESENT TENSE IN THE INDICATIVE MOOD

Two positive forms of the verb, viz. a short form and a long form with the so-called 'imperfect tense morpheme -a-' are distinguished, for example:

- (3) Monna o a sepela.  
'The man is walking.'
- (4) Monna o sepela tseleng.  
'The man is walking in the road.'

Thus the morphological structure of the indicative present tense positive is:

Subjectival concord (+ -a-) + verb root + ending -a.

The most noticeable or most salient feature of these two forms is that they have the same temporal interpretation, and that the long form can only include a definite object while the short form takes an indefinite object being direct or indirect. Compare:

- (5) Monna o a e bapala kgwele.  
'The man is playing football.'
- (6) Monna o raga kgwele.  
'The man kicks the ball.'
- (7) Monna o ragela ngwana kgwele.  
'The man kicks the ball for the child.'

What is to be noted here is that the action or process, can have simultative, iterative, atemporal or posterior temporal reference.



#### 4.3 THE PAST TENSE IN THE INDICATIVE MOOD

The positive of the past tense is formed by means of the perfect extension -il- and categorial ending -e or one of its variants, as indicated in examples (8) and (9).

(8) Lesogana le badile.  
'The gentleman read'

(9) Lesogana le boletše.  
'The gentleman spoke.'

Apart from expressing the past tense, this verb forms its tense interpretation due to factors such as adverbials. The interpretation can sometimes be simultative, though for example where it is sometimes used to express a state:

(10) Bana ba lapile bjale.  
'The children are now tired.'

(11) Mme o apere kobo.  
'Mother is dressed in a blanket.'

The temporal interpretation of the so-called stative forms is simultative and as such it cannot function together with temporal adverbials with anterior temporal reference. It is ungrammatical to say, for example:

(12) Mme o robetše maabane.  
'Mother is asleep yesterday.'

The stative forms can, however, function with adverbials with an anterior temporal reference in the so-called narrative, where the adverb takes the sentence initial position, for example:

(13) Maabane ke robetše ka ntlong, ke kwa motho a bolela a nnyaka.  
'Yesterday I was asleep in the house, I heard somebody talking, he was looking for me.'

## 4.4 TENSE AND ACTUALITY IN NORTHERN SOTHO

Actuality is used as an umbrella term for the binary opposition, positive and negative. Actuality as such is one of the essential verb categories. This means that the verb in different moods and tenses will be in one of the two actualities, viz., either positive (affirmative), for example:

- (14) Monna o a bolela.  
'The man talks.'

or negative, for example:

- (15) Monna ga a bolele.  
'The man does not talk.'

With reference to actuality, there is no one-to-one relation between these oppositions. This means that one cannot formulate a rule without exceptions as illustrated in example (16) and (17)

- (16) Monna o tla sepela. > Monna a ka se sepela.  
'The man will walk.' > 'The man will not walk'

- (17) Monna a ka sepela. > Monna a ka se sepele.  
'The man can/may walk.' > 'The man cannot/may not walk.'

The negation of the verb with the deficient verb form -tla- is not the same as that of the verb with the deficient verb form -ka-, but compare the following:

- (18) Monna ge a tla sepela. > Monna ge a tla se sepele.  
'When the man did leave.' > 'When the man did not leave.'

- (19) Monna ge a ka sepela. > Monna ge a ka se sepele.  
'If the man can go.' > 'If the man cannot go.'

The above examples demonstrate that no fixed rule can be followed of a one-to-one correspondence of opposition.

Northern Sotho has a series of negative morphemes which occupy different positions within the verb. Negation is not only brought about by means of negative morphemes but also by deficient verb forms, auxiliaries, and particles. Compare:

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| (20) (ge) Monna <i>a sa</i> sepela.<br>'when he does not walk'     | (Negative deficient verb form) |
| (21) Monna <i>a sa</i> a sepela.<br>'The man did not walk.'        | (Auxiliary verb)               |
| (22) Monna <i>ga se</i> motho.<br>'The man is not a human'         | (Copulative particle)          |
| (23) Monna ge <i>e se</i> motho.<br>'When the man is not a human.' | (Copulative verb)              |

These negative strategies do not necessarily imply that a statement which is in the negative form has a semantically negative connotation. Ponelis (1975:367) in this regard says:

"Daar moet nou duidelik onderskei word tussen die begrippe 'sin met ontkenningvorm' en 'negatiewe sin'. Dit is naamlik so dat sinne met ontkenningvorme nie altyd negatief is nie, aangesien ontkenningvorme gebruik kan word vir 'n verskeidenheid ander semantiese funksies."

Compare the following examples:

- |   |
|---|
| (24) Ga ka go botša gore o tla lehono?<br>'Didn't I tell you that he is coming today?'<br>'I told you that he is coming today.' |
| (25) Ga a nwe o a tšhela.<br>'He is not drinking, he pours.'<br>'He is drinking excessively.'                                   |

The meaning of these two propositions which are negatively marked are not negative propositions semantically but they are affirmations of actions of the truth.

Negation is a semantic phenomenon which functions in the clause. This means that the sentence as such is negative or positive. Negation is part of the binary opposition positive-negative as it appears in the following sentence types.

**Positive**

**Negative**

**Statement**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (26) Monna o sepetše.<br>'The man has left.' | Monna ga a sepela.<br>'The man has not left.' |
|--|---|

**Question**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (27) Ke mang a sepetšeng?<br>'Who has left?' | Ke mang a sago a sepela?<br>'Who has not left?' |
|--|---|

**Command**

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| (28) Sepelang!<br>'Go! Walk!' | Se sepeleng!<br>'Don't walk!/Don't go!' |
|-------------------------------|---|

The negative sentences above are in the negative form. These negatives are marked by negative formatives or negative auxiliary verbs. Before one can discuss negation in more detail let us investigate the non-negative uses of negative sentences.

General questions do not show a clear distinction between sentences used as negative sentences showing the binary negative-positive opposition, for example:

- (29a) Monna o sepetše?  
'Is the man gone?'
- (29b) Monna ga a sepela?  
'Is the man not gone?'

The general negative question (29b) above, does not imply that it is the negative of question (29a) as such, but it shows surprise which leads to a rhetorical question. Question (29b) above has the implication of: 'I know that the man is not gone', or it could also mean 'I was

expecting him to go but now I suspect/learn that in fact he has not left'. Though the tense form is past, the temporal reference is atemporal. The following examples are more positive rhetorical propositions which are iterative:

(30) Ga a ikhutša go hlwa a apea ka go nyala?  
'Is he not relieved of the cooking by marrying?'

(31) Ee! A bobedi ga bo bolaye noga?  
'Really! do two not kill a snake?'

Negation forms an essential part of exclamation in general negative forms, thus:

(32) Ga a botse!/?  
'Is she not beautiful!/?'

The above exclamation can still serve as a question rather than an exclamation, but even if it is a question or an exclamation these types of negation are not negative but positive propositions. An exclamation, like the above is postulated as a negative or positive form, e.g.

(33) A letšatši le le botse!/?  
'What a lovely/good day!/?'

(34) A ga se letšatši le le botse!/?  
'Oh isn't it a lovely/good day!/?'

The meanings of sentences (33) and (34) do not have the semantic contrast of 'positive-negative', but both are semantically positive even though sentence (34) is in the negative. Sentence (34) which has the negative form implies that the information contained in it is old information. This means, the speaker and the addressee know the information as old information which is compared to the recent encounter. On the other hand the one without the negative structure appears to be new information to at least the addressee. The above semantic interpretation suggests that though the tense is present, the temporal reference is atemporal.

Hortative: Negation in a hortative statement or proposition has a mitigating connotation. Compare:

(35) O ka se nthuše ka tšhelete?  
'Can't you help me with money?'

(36) Ga o mphelegetše ka ge ke boifa?  
'Won't you take me halfway as I am afraid?'

Strengthening with negation: Negative sentences can sometimes be used to invigorate the person's attitude towards a certain proposition or to show that the person has been animated. Compare the following:

(37) O ka se mmotše selo ka tša bogadi.  
'You can't tell her anything about marriage.'

(38) Ga a ntšhoše le gatee.  
'He does not scare me either.'

The Northern Sotho language data in the foregoing examples prove that in general, with questions, exclamations, hortatives and strengthening with negation, the negative structure of a proposition does not necessarily mean negating the proposition. Notable too is that the tense form in the foregoing examples does not determine the temporal interpretation of the verb as such. The temporal interpretation depends on the context in which it is used.

#### 4.4.1 THE NEGATION OF THE INDICATIVE PRESENT TENSE

Lombard (1985:145), Cole (1982:246), Ziervogel (1979:35) and Nokaneng (1976:102) assert that the negative of the indicative present tense is characterized by the negative morpheme *ga-* and the verbal ending *-e*.

#### 4.4.2 THE VERB STEM WITH THE CATEGORIAL ENDING -e

In this category we distinguish between the negation of single verbs and the negation of verbal groups.

The structure: negative morpheme *ga-* + subjectival concord + verbal root + *-e* categorial ending is observed in the negative of single verbs:

- (39) Monna *ga a bone*.  
'The man does not see.'

#### 4.4.3 THE *GA-* MORPHEME IN THE NEGATION OF VERBAL GROUPS

The auxiliary verb stems *-ke* and *-hlwe* are used in both the positive and the negative forms to indicate iterative temporal interpretation. These verbal groups usually consist of an auxiliary verb or verbs, plus a main verb which remains in the positive form. The structure is as follows:

negative morpheme *ga-* + s/c + auxiliary verb stem +  
complementary verb in the positive form

- (40a) Ba *ke/hlwe ba nwe*.  
'They do often drink.'
- (40b) Ga ba *ke ba enwa*.  
'They never see.'
- (41a) Bjala bo *ke bo tswale lefšega*.  
'Beer does sometimes bare a coward.'
- (41b) Bjala *ga bo ke bo tswala lefšega*.  
'Beer does sometimes not breed a coward.'

What is interesting is that the mood of the main verb in the positive form is habitual, whilst the negative form is expressed in the situative (participial). The evidence is the *e-* stabilizer which is a marker of the situative mood. An intensified negative form is expressed or a process

which usually takes place. Thus the temporal reference is iterative. The variant of the auxiliary verb stem -ke is -tle in the positive.

#### 4.4.4 THE NEGATIVE OF THE INDICATIVE MOOD PAST TENSE

The past tense of the indicative is negated in different ways, of which we shall discuss three possibilities.

The first negative form for verbs in the indicative mood past tense is characterized by the occurrence of ga- + sc + stative/perfective -a- + verb stem with categorical ending -a, e.g.

(42a) Mmutla o tšhabile.  
'The hare ran away.'

(42b) Mmutla ga o a tšhaba.  
'The hare did not run away.'

The second alternative negative form is a shortened form of the previous one. The negative morpheme ga- is followed by a fused form of the subject concord and the deficient verb form -a-, followed by the basic verb stem with ending -a. For example:

(43) Mmutla ga wa tšhaba.  
'The hare did not run away.'

The third alternative negative form of the indicative mood past tense is the one with the aspectual morpheme -se- after the negative morpheme ga-. For example:

(44) Mmutla ga se wa tšhaba.  
'The hare has not run away yet.'

The structure of this verb is:

ga- + se- + fused form of the subject concord and



stative/perfective -a + verb stem with ending -a.

With reference to this form Lombard (1985:146) remarks as follows:

"The negative particle ga se followed by the verb in the consecutive.....the negative particle ga se followed by the verb in the habitual."

The possible reason for Lombard to regard the complement to be in the consecutive mood is because the subject concord contains a concordial morpheme + -a- (perfective/stative -a-) which looks just like the consecutive mood morpheme. This morpheme, however, differs in tone from that of the consecutive mood. Compare:

(45) Mmutla ga se wá tšhaba.  
'The hare has not run away.'

(46) Mmutla o bone batho wà se tšhabe.  
'The hare saw the people and did not run away.'

The temporal meaning of sentence (45) is that the hare was still there at that moment.

The other negative form proposed by Lombard is that the indicative past tense is negated by the negative particle 'ga se' followed by the verb in the habitual. The reason why Lombard regards it to be a habitual mood is probably due to the morphology of the verb in the habitual mood which looks like that of the indicative mood present tense in the negative. For example:

(47) Mmutla ga se o tšhabe.  
'The hare has not run away yet.'

The interpretation of the above sentence is that at the moment of speech 'the hare is still there' and this means sentence (45) and (47) contain -se- which is an aspectual morpheme of negative progression. To say the verb in

sentence (47) is habitual, is based only on the segmental morphology which looks the same as that of the indicative mood present tense negative. Thus the verb which follows *ga-* + *se-* is the verb in the indicative present tense negative form and not habitual.

#### 4.4.5 NEGATION IN CO-STRUCTURES

The verbal groups and the auxiliary verb groups may appear in different structures in a group. For example:

- (48) *Monna ga a tlo tsoga a sepela.*  
 'The man will not wake up and go.'

In the sentence above '*ga a tlo tsoga*' is in the negative form whereas '*a sepela*' is in the positive form. In this regard Posthumus (1983:144) says:

"Aan die anderkant kan negatiefindringing wel plaasvind in (by)sinne wat nie 'n ontkenningvorm insluit nie."

Negative penetration does not take place with complementary verbs in the subjunctive mood containing a subjunctive conjunction. Compare:

- (49) *Ga re a go botša gore o sepele.*  
 'We didn't tell you that you must go.'

## CHAPTER 5

## 5. TENSE IN THE COPULATIVES

## 5.1 THE COPULATIVE

According to Van Wyk (1955:57) and Posthumus (1978), copulatives are subdivided into two major categories. The inchoative copulatives and the non-inchoative copulatives. The inchoative copulatives are those that indicate a process in being. Louwrens (1991:71) refers to them as dynamic copulatives. On the other hand the non-inchoative copulatives are those that indicate a completed process which Louwrens calls static copulatives. Compare examples (1) and (2) as examples of non-inchoative/static copulatives as opposed to (3) and (4) which are examples of inchoative copulatives:

- (1) Monna ke moruti.  
'The man is a priest.'
- (2) Monna ga se moruti.  
'The man is not a priest.'
- (3) Monna e ba moruti.  
'The man becomes a priest.'
- (4) Monna e bile moruti.  
'The man became a priest.'

The difference between the two types of copulatives can be observed in the copulative particle or the copulative verb stem. Copulative particles always express the non-inchoative copulatives whereas the copulative verb stem can express either the inchoative or the non-inchoative copulative. The non-inchoative implication is expressed by the stems -le, -se and -na, whereas the inchoative implication is expressed by the stems -ba, -be and -bile.

The difference between inchoative and non-inchoative copulative relationships can also be observed in those moods which distinguish different tense forms, namely, the

indicative, situative and relative.

## 5.2 THE ABSOLUTE TENSE FORMS OF THE COPULATIVE

It should be noted that tenses are distinguished in the indicative, situative and relative moods only.

### 5.2.1 THE ABSOLUTE TENSE FORMS OF THE INCHOATIVE COPULATIVES

The absolute tense forms of the inchoative copulatives can be summarized as follows:

#### Present tense

Actuality	Indicative	Relative	Situative
Positive	Monna e ba moruti.	...yo e bago moruti.	..(ge) e eba moruti.
Negative	Monna ga e be moruti. Monna ga se e be moruti.	...yo e sa bego moruti.	..(ge) e sa be moruti.

#### Past tense

Actuality	Indicative	Relative	Situative
Positive	Monna e bile moruti.	..yo e bilego moruti.	..(ge) e bile moruti.
Negative	Monna ga se ya ba moruti. Monna ga ya ba moruti.	..yo e sago ya ba moruti.	..(ge) e se ya ba moruti.

### 5.2.2 THE ABSOLUTE TENSE FORMS OF THE NON-INCHOATIVE COPULATIVES

The non-inchoative copulatives are basically distinguished by the defective verb stem -le in the positive and -se in the negative. These verb forms realize only in the present tense positive and negative of the relative and situative moods respectively. The past tense of the non-inchoative copulatives repeat the forms of the relative tense.

Compare the following examples in the table given below:

#### Present tense

Actuality	Indicative	Relative	Situative
Positive	Ke moruti.	..yo e lego moruti.	..(ge) e le moruti.
Negative	ga se moruti.	..yo e sego moruti.	..(ge) e se moruti.

#### Past tense

Actuality	Indicative	Relative	Situative
Positive	E be e le moruti.	..yo e bego e le moruti.	..(ge) e be e le moruti.
Negative	E be e se moruti.	..yo e bego e se moruti.	..(ge) e be e se moruti.

The past tense of the non-inchoative copulatives implement the relative tense structures to express absolute tense. This is because of the morphological defectiveness of the verb stems -le and -se which cannot take the past tense morphemes.

### 5.2.3 THE RELATIVE TENSE FORMS OF THE COPULATIVES

The relative tenses which are discussed here are the forms with -be and -ba. The inchoative copulative in this tense form appears as complement. The auxiliary verb portion of the construction shows the position of the newly established reference point.

The relative tenses realize only in the moods which distinguish tense. As a result of this the examples given below are in the indicative, relative and situative moods only.

Indicative mood

The reference point shifted to a position before the D.C.

Non-inchoative implication

(5a) Re be re le banna.  
'We were men.'

(5b) Re be re se banna.  
'We were not men.'

The reference point shifted to a position after the D.C.

(6a) Re tla be re le banna.  
'We will be men.'

(6b) Re tla be re se banna.  
'We will not be men.'

Inchoative implication

(7a) Re be re eba banna.  
'We were becoming men.'

(7b) Re tla be re sa be banna.  
'We were not becoming men.'

## Relative mood

## Non-inchoative implication

(8a) (Ba) re bego re le banna.  
'We who were men.'

(8b) (Ba) re bego re se banna.  
'We who were not men.'

The reference point shifted to a position after the D.C.

(9a) (Ba) re tla bego re le banna.  
'We who will be men.'

(9b) (Ba) re tla bego re se banna.  
'We who will not be men.'

## Inchoative implication

(10a) (Ba) re bego re eba banna.  
'We who were becoming men.'

(10b) (Ba) re bego re sa be banna.  
'We who were not becoming men.'

(11a) (Ba) re tla bego re eba banna.  
'We who will be becoming men.'

(11b) (Ba) re tla bego re sa be banna.  
'We who will not be becoming men.'

The reference point shifted to a position before the D.C.

## Situative mood

(12a) (ge) re be re le banna.  
'when we were men.'

(12b) (ge) re be re se banna.  
'when we were not men.'

## Non-inchoative implication

(13a) (ge) re be re eba banna.  
'when we were becoming men.'

(13b) (ge) re be re sa be banna.  
'when we were not becoming men.'

### 5.3 TIME AS A COPULATIVE VERBAL CATEGORY

#### 5.3.1 TIME INTERPRETATION OF THE COPULATIVES IN THE ABSOLUTE TENSE FORMS OF THE TENSE DISTINGUISHING MOODS

The absolute tense forms of the indicative, relative and situative moods display atemporal, iterative, simultative, anterior and posterior time interpretation.

##### Atemporal:

- (14) Setšhaba ke kgoši le balatedi.  
'A nation is the king and his subjects.'
- (15) Kwano ke maatla ge batho ba rerišana.  
'Unity is strength if people share ideas.'

##### Iterative:

- (16) Dithaba ke tSe tala ge pula e nele.  
'Mountains are green if it rains.'

##### Simultative:

- (17) Ke bolela le bao e lego bareri.  
'I talk to those who are preachers.'

##### Anterior:

- (18) Kgale batho e be e le diphoofolo.  
'Long ago people were animals.'

##### Posterior:

- (19) Gosasa ke tla ba kgoši ya setšhaba se ka gore ke fiwa setulo lehono.  
'Tomorrow I will be a king of this country because I am crowned today.'



### 5.3.2 TIME INTERPRETATION OF THE RELATIVE TENSE FORMS OF THE COPULATIVES IN THE TENSE DISTINGUISHING MOODS

Time interpretations which are distinguished here, are: anterior, posterior, anterior-atemporal, anterior-iterative, posterior-atemporal and posterior-iterative. Compare the following examples:

Anterior:

- (20) Monyadi o be a le botse maabane ge ba goroga.  
'The bride was beautiful yesterday when they arrived.'

Posterior:

- (21) Monyadi o tla be a le botse gosasa.  
'The bride will be beautiful tomorrow.'

Anterior-atemporal:

- (22) Phoofolo tša naga e be e le sešebo pele molao o thibela.  
'Antilopes were meat before the law stopped it.'

Anterior-iterative:

- (23) Pula e be e eba modupi ge ba bone dingaka.  
'Rain will then become a drizzle when they have seen the medicine men.'

Posterior-atemporal:

- (24) Re tla be re le barui ge tate a rekile dikgomo.  
'We will be farmers when our father has bought cattle.'

Posterior-iterative:

- (25) Ge e le gore Mpho e tla be e no ba sethunya gona o tla tsena sekolo.  
'If Mpho is still a bright girl, then she will remain at school.'

## CHAPTER 6

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this study an attempt has been made to define the concepts 'tense' and 'time' and to investigate their applicability to Northern Sotho. The implications which a systematic distinction between these two concepts has for the description of the Northern Sotho language data have been investigated. Whereas 'tense' is morphologically and phonologically marked within the verb form, 'time' is not necessarily marked within the verb form, but is superimposed on tense.

A distinction has been drawn between absolute tense and relative tense. The reference point of absolute tense forms is the deictic centre which coincides with coding time, while in the case of relative tense forms the events are interpreted in relation to another reference point which is not coding time. The grammaticalized tense forms of Northern Sotho which relate to the deictic centre in terms of anteriority and simultaneity are referred to as past tense and present tense respectively.

In the relative tense forms the position of the R.T. in relation to C.T. is marked by the morphological structure of the deficient verb which has developed diachronically from the copulative verb stem -ba. It can be said that the difference between absolute tense and relative tense in Northern Sotho is that the present moment serves as the reference point in the absolute tense forms whereas the relative tense forms have a form whose meaning specifies that the present moment does not serve as its reference point.

Time, like tense, is interpreted as being anterior to,

simultative with, or posterior to coding time. Time is an expression of the relation between event time and coding time regardless of the verb form. Although the tense form contributes to the establishment of time, and time and tense distinctions are often identical, the appropriate time interpretation is primarily constituted by factors outside the verb. The major time establishing device is the interrelation between tense forms and time adverbials.

Time reference, like tense, can deviate from the deictic simultaneity assumption. In other words both tense and time interpretation can be deictic (absolute) or non-deictic (relative).

The temporal adverbials are assigned consistent relational values. Their relational reference makes it possible to subcategorize them into the categories anterior, simultative, posterior and iterative.

The copulatives, as containing a special type of verb, have also been investigated in terms of the realization of tense and time in them. In this regard we have found that the realization of tense within the copulative forms is complicated by the defectiveness of the non-inchoative copulative verb stems -le and -se.

This study has furthermore reflected on the relationship between tenses and moods, tenses and actuality. It is clear that none of the essential verb categories can be discussed exclusively in isolation. In discussing any one of the verbal categories the researcher needs to take cognizance of the other categories as well since the verbal categories are mutually dependent.

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