

## Aspect and Modality in Kwa Languages

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### **Volume 100**

Aspect and Modality in Kwa Languages  
Edited by Felix K. Ameka and M.E. Kropp Dakubu

# Aspect and Modality in Kwa Languages

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John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Aspect and modality in Kwa languages / edited by Felix K. Ameka, M.E. Kropp Dakubu.

p. cm. (Studies in Language Companion Series, ISSN 0165-7763 ; v. 100)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Kwa languages I. Ameka, Felix K. II. Kropp Dakubu, M. E. (Mary Esther)

PL8424.A84 2008

496'.33--dc22

2008002762

ISBN 978 90 272 0567 4 (Hb; alk. paper)

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John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands

John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

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## Abbreviations

ABS	Absolute	IMP	Imperative
ALL	Allative preposition	IMPF	Imperfective
ALTRI	altrilocal	INAN	inanimate
AOR	Aorist	INCHO	Inchoative
ASSOC	Nominal Association	INDEF	Indefinite
CESS	cessative	INF	Infinitive (verb form)
COM	comitative	INT	intensifier
COMP	Complementizer	IRR	irrealis
COMPL	completive	IT	Itive
CONC	concord	JUSS	Jussive
COND	Conditional	LNK	linker
CONJ	Conjunction	LOC	Locative
CONSEC	consecutive	LOCP	Locative phrase
CONT	continuative	LOG	Logophoric pronoun
COORD	Coordinating	LTS	Low tone suffix
	Conjunction	MOD	modal
COP	copula	NEG	Negative
CTR	Counter-Factual	NOM	Nominalizer (including
DAT	Dative preposition		noun class affix used to
DEF	definite		form verbal nouns)
DEIC	Deictic	NP	Nominal phrase
DIST	Distal demonstrative	NPRES	Non-present
DURATION	Durative	OBJ	Object
EMPH	Emphatic contrast	PAST	Past tense
EXCL	Exclamation	PEJ	Pejorative
EXPL	Expletive	PERF	Perfect aspect
FOC	Focus	PFV	Perfective
aFOC	term focus marker	Pfx	Prefix
pFOC	predicate focus marker	PL	Plural
FUT	Future	PN	Pronoun
HAB	Habitual	POSS	possessive
HTS	High tone suffix	POSTP	postposition
ID	Identifiable		

POT	potential
PRED	Predication
PRES	Present
PRIV	Privative
PROG	Progressive
PROSP	Prospective
PROX	Proximal demonstrative
Q	Question marker
QT	quotative
REAL	realis
REC	Recurrent
RED	Reduplicative
REL	Relative marker
REP	Repetitive
SG	Singular
STAT	Stative
SUB	Subject
SUBJV	subjunctive
SUBORD	Subordinate clause marker
SUFF	suffix (of imperfective construction in Dangme)
TAMP	Tense-Aspect-Mood-Polarity
TOP	Topicalizer
TP	Terminal particle
TRANS	Transitive (pre-verb)
TRIP	triplicative
UFP	Utterance final particle
VENT	Ventive
WH	question pronoun
1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person



## Preface

Most of the research reported here was carried out under the aegis of the Legon-Trondheim Linguistics Project, and earlier versions of several of the papers were presented to colloquia of the project or in other fora at the University of Ghana, Legon. An exception is Harley's paper on Tuwuli. The editors took the liberty of inviting this contribution in order to provide a slightly broader perspective on the range of structures to be found.

We wish to express our gratitude to Eefje Gilbert for converting the raw manuscripts to a standard style, Mark Dingemanse for preparing the camera-ready copy, and Saskia van Putten for her invaluable assistance in implementing the corrections to the proofs and for compiling the index. Financial support that made some of this assistance possible came from the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (van Putten), for which we are most grateful. The advice and help of the Editors of the *Studies in Language Companion Series*, Michael Noonan and Werner Abraham, as well as the John Benjamins production team, especially Kees Vaes are gratefully acknowledged.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Lars Hellan of the Linguistics Department in the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, and express our appreciation for his considerable efforts in securing the funding from NUFU that made this publication possible.

Felix K. Ameka  
Mary Esther Kropp Dakubu



## Introduction

Felix K. Ameka and M. E. Kropp Dakubu

The idea that aspect is more important in some languages than in others has been around for some time (e.g. Comrie 1976, Bhatt 1999). Nevertheless, linguistic theory and description continue to be influenced by the tense-aspect systems in “Standard Average European” languages, and especially by the notions of traditional grammar, in which tense is given particular prominence. In many languages, however, and specifically in those known as Kwa, tense is not grammatically prominent, being expressed by adjuncts or interpreted entirely through the pragmatic context. In consequence, many descriptions of African languages have failed to capture the “genius” of these languages in the tense-aspect domain. This volume is intended to correct the situation.

This volume explores the thesis that in the group of West African languages known as “Kwa”, Aspect and Modality are far more central to the grammar of the verb and the clause than Tense. We deal here particularly with systems of grammatical morphemes attached to the verb stem – the languages discussed elaborate their verb morphology to different degrees, but overall it is fair to say that the primary grammatical contrasts are aspectual, especially perfective versus imperfective, and that tense distinctions are secondary if indeed they are made grammatically at all. Where tense marking has most clearly emerged, it is invariably in the expression of the future, and therefore concerned with the impending actualization or potentiality of an event, hence with modality, rather than the purely temporal sequencing associated with tense. Our knowledge of these languages has deepened considerably during the past decade or so and ideas about their structure have changed. The volume is therefore offered as a contribution to the ongoing, intercontinental discussion of the cross-linguistic typology of verb grammar, especially in respect of aspect and modality.

The term “aspect” has been used in several senses. In a recent review, Sasse (2002) divides usage into two basic types: lexical aspect or what is sometimes called *Aktionsart*, concerned with temporal values intrinsic in the verb stem, and aspectual viewpoint or temporal perspective related to the circumstances of the utterance, often expressed in morphological paradigms. In this volume the concern is mainly with the latter: all the papers examine the verb paradigm and

attempt to interpret it, with relatively little attention to features inherent in the verb itself, or the effects of interaction between the two kinds of meaning. However lexical aspect is not and indeed cannot be entirely ignored, for example in the problem of stative vs. habitual vs. progressive in Akan, as discussed in different ways by both Boadi and Osam; of the habitual vs. the recurrent in Dangme as discussed by Ameka and Dakubu; and in the deictic pre-verbs, discussed for all the languages examined here, that inhabit a space somewhere between lexical semantics and pure accidentence.

The functional load that a language accords to tense and aspect has been shown, in recent times, to correlate with certain typological properties of that language. For instance, Stassen (1997) shows that whether a language is tensed or not has a bearing on strategies that the language uses for intransitive predication or more specifically, adjectival predication. Similarly, Bhat (1999) suggests a typology of languages according to the relative prominence that the language gives to tense, aspect or mood. Exciting as these typological claims are, they need to be buttressed with more empirical data. If the descriptions that exist are not adequate, the predictions from the typologies will be shaky. Despite more than a hundred years of descriptive tradition for some of the Kwa languages, the papers presented here represent a quantum leap towards providing the kind of data and analysis needed.

The interaction of modality with both aspect and tense is another area of considerable typological interest. As de Haan (2006: 48) has pointed out, "There are clear interactions between tense and modality. An obvious candidate for such interaction is the future." Traugott (2006) writing in the same volume shows that deontic modality, or to put it very generally an expression intended to bring about or impel the occurrence of an act or an event, that by implication has not yet been carried out or happened, has not infrequently been grammaticalized to epistemic modality, which can include the knowledge or belief that an event will indeed happen. (With particular reference to African languages on this point, see also Heine, Claudi and Hünemeyer 1991:174.) The languages discussed here support these contentions: there is a particular connection between deontic modality and expression of the future, which wherever it occurs is clearly a secondary development. Typically, the verb form is built up with an aspectual marker or a modality marker, and may also carry a negation marker. These may combine with a marker of deixis, which may (but need not, depending on the other markers) give a future reading. Dedicated markers of tense are notably few.

Throughout the twentieth century the Kwa languages have been considered to be fairly closely related in genetic terms. The best known by far are Akan (Twi), Ga and Ewe. In the current literature they and their neighbors, another twenty languages at least, are classified as a grouping within Niger-Congo

called “New Kwa” (Stewart 1989) or simply “Kwa” (Williamson and Blench 2000: 18) see Figure 1.<sup>1</sup> The present geographical distributions of these language groups, converging as they do along the lower reaches of the Volta River, are probably due to relatively recent migrations and internal expansions. However there is no doubt that over the past several hundred years, contact among Akan, Ga and Ewe, and of each of these with other, smaller languages, some of them certainly closely related, has been particularly intense.

The lower Volta basin is therefore a region that can be expected to show typologically interesting interrelationships. Apart from the verb paradigm to which this volume is dedicated, there are other linguistic domains in which typological conformity is more immediately obvious. It appears to be the case, for example, that whether nominalization of a verb is shown morphologically by a prefix or by a suffix, a nominalized verb is everywhere preceded by its Object. This has important implications for the discussion by Ameka and Dakubu in this volume of the imperfective periphrastic construction in those languages that have it (Ewe, Dangme, Tuvuli). The basic functional syntax of the Nominal Phrase can be summarized for all the languages (as far as we know) in the following schema. The noun head of the structure is underlined:

Identifier Possessor Noun-Qualifier Noun Adjective Numeral Determiner  
Quantifier Intensifier

On the other hand, there is an interesting division as far as plural formation and nominal classes are concerned. Akan and its Tano relatives each have several pairs of singular and plural prefixes, but while there is usually number concord, there is in general no class concord (anaphors and modifiers do not show agreement with a head noun), while Ewe with the rest of Gbe and Ga-Dangme use the bare noun stem in the singular and a generalized suffix or clitic for the plural. Many of the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages (The Na-Togo and Ka-Togo groups in Figure 1), have prefixes and also in almost all cases nominal class concord systems (see Heine 1968 for a comprehensive account of these systems).

The aim of this volume is thus to present theoretically informed and detailed descriptions of the tense-aspect-modality systems of some of the best-known Kwa languages of Ghana, namely Akan, Ewe (with attention to the rest of the Gbe cluster), and the two-member cluster that consists of Ga and Dangme. Also included is an examination of Tuvuli (also known in the literature as Bowili or Bowiri), a relatively poorly known language that is traditionally classified genetically as most closely related to the Gbe cluster (Stewart 1989).

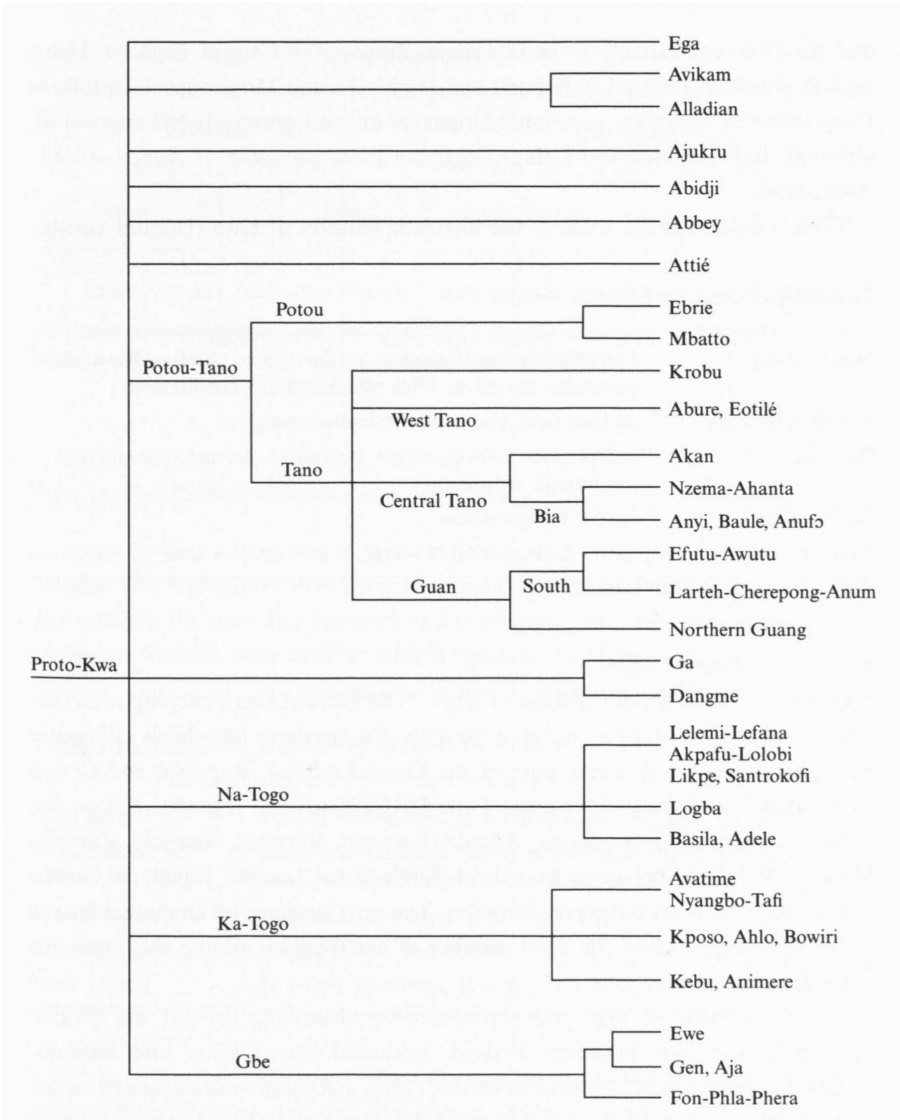


Figure 1: Classification of Kwa languages  
(Adapted from Williamson and Blench 2000: 18)

A major theme addressed is, therefore, whether the languages are primarily tense languages or whether aspect and/or mood is/are more prominent. One dimension that has not previously been thoroughly explored is the extent to which modal expressions such as potential or irrealis relate to tense prominent, aspect prominent or mood prominent typology. Several of the contributions relate to this topic. Concerning Ewe, Essegbey argues that the form (*l*)*a* that has been analyzed in some descriptions as a future tense marker is a potential marker, and thus a modal and not a tense operator, while Dakubu writing on Ga as well as Ameka and Dakubu on Dangme show that in those languages the “future” is a composite form based on a combination of modality and deixis. Modality in Akan is treated differently by Boadi and Osam, but both specifically place the “infinitive” (Boadi) or “consecutive” (Osam) form outside the aspectual system. Overall in these languages it seems that the expression of modality is closely intertwined with the expression of aspect, often belonging to the same paradigmatic system.

The nature of tense in Akan is a particularly vexed question. Focusing on different dialect areas, Akyem and Fante respectively, Boadi and Osam again come to different conclusions regarding the relevance of past tense, while agreeing on the primacy of aspect. In all the languages it is determined that contrary to some early analyses, pre-verbs or auxiliaries are distinct from the strictly paradigmatic TAMP markers, introduce different kinds of semantic features, and often appear to be the relics of grammaticized verbs. This seems to be another area where Akan is different from the rest; both Boadi and Osam recognize only two such elements in that language, the deictics. However there are four in Ga (Dakubu), and several more in Dangme (Ameka and Dakubu) and Ewe (Ameka).

Many languages of Africa have a periphrastic imperfective construction in which a verb, usually one of a small set or even unique, carrying TAMP features takes a complement consisting of a non-finite form of the event verb preceded by its Object (Heine and Claudi 2001, *inter alia*). The “Kwa” area is divided according to whether or not this construction is present; it is generally not present in Akan and other Tano languages, and it is also absent from Ga, but present in Dangme, Ewe and other Gbe varieties, and certain of the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages, including Tuvuli and Likpe. Ewe indeed appears in the literature as a classic illustration of the construction, and the supposed inversion of the standard VO order (all Kwa area languages are basically SVO languages) has been regarded as a major typological and historical problem. Taking the recent characterization by Heine and Claudi (2001) as a point of departure, Ameka and Dakubu provide a close examination of the construction in Ewe and Dangme, to argue that in both cases the AMP bearing element is a true verb, and that since VO throughout the area is nominalized as OV<sub>NOM</sub>, its

complement is a kind of nominalization and therefore there is in fact no word order change at clause level. They also show that in the languages examined, "progressive" is not an adequate semantic label for all sub-types of this construction, which are more consistently "prospective".

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Most recently, however, the late J.M. Stewart voiced strong doubts as to the validity of this classification (Stewart 2002: 205). We suspect his doubts are justified, but that is not our present concern.

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# Tense, Aspect and Mood in Akan

L.A. Boadi

The purpose of this paper is to examine the syntactic and semantic functions of the verbal affixes in the Akyem dialect of Akan. It is organized as follows: in the first section we discuss the organisation of the affixes into classes. In the second, the form(s) and functions of each affix are examined in detail; and in the final section, we examine the distribution of three time markers in relation to the tense-aspect affixes.

## 1 Classes of Verbal Affix

The affixes are divided into those which express mood and those which do not. The latter set constitute the minority, and they are (1) the Negation affix (NEG) realized as a nasal consonant; and (2) the two Deictics *bɛ* and *kɔ*. Below, we comment briefly on each of them and illustrate their use.

### 1.1 The Non-Mood Affixes

#### 1.1.1 The NEG Affix

The NEG affix expresses the contradiction of the meaning of a whole clause or some of its constituents. Not much will be said about the semantics of negation in this study. Our interest in the affix will be restricted to its distribution and the role it plays in processes leading to the surface phonological realizations of the mood affixes; and in the syntax and semantics of the Serial Verb Construction (SVC), a construction in which all the verbal affixes participate. It occurs in sentences like the following:

- (1) a.     $\dot{\text{a}}$         *a-n-tɔ*                    *bì*  
         he    PAST-NEG-buy        some  
         ‘He did not buy any.’

(1a) is the denial of the proposition contained in (1b):

- b.     $\text{ɔ}$         *tɔ-ɔ*                    *bì*  
         he    buy-PAST        some  
         ‘He bought some.’

(1a) and (1b) represent the negative and positive poles of a system of contrasts in the verb. We shall refer to this system as Polarity in the discussion that follows.

### 1.1.2 The Gressive Deixis

The second of the two non-mood systems which will be considered later in this paper is the Gressive Deixis. This system has two members realized as the prefixes *bè* and *kɔ́*. They express movement towards and away from the speaker's body, and they occur in sentences like (2).

- (2) a.    *ɔ́*     *bè-fá*  
           he    DEIC-take  
           he    move.towards.speaker-take  
           'He comes and takes it.'
- b.    *ɔ́*     *kɔ́-fá*  
           he    DEIC-take  
           he    move.away.from.speaker-take  
           'He goes and takes it.'

## 1.2 The Mood System

I use the term 'mood' to refer to a system of contrasts signalled by two inflectional paradigms of the Akan verb: the Jussive-Imperative and the Indicative. The former expresses the will of the speaker; will, here embraces wishes, requests and commands. The latter, on the other hand, expresses facts and assertions.

### 1.2.1 The Jussive-Imperative

This has two representations: a zero and a nasal. The distribution of these will be discussed more fully in Part 2. For the present it should be enough to say (3a-c) represent the Jussive-Imperative forms of the verb *didì* 'eat'. (Throughout IMP will be used to represent this mood).

- (3) a.    *didì*  
           IMP.eat  
           'Eat!'
- b.    *mé*    *ń-didí*  
           I       IMP-eat  
           'Let me eat; I wish that I be allowed to eat.'
- c.    *ɔ́*       *ń-didí*  
           he      IMP-eat  
           'Let him eat; I wish that he eat.'
- d.    *mó*      *ń-didí*  
           you     IMP-eat  
           'You (pl) may eat.'

### 1.2.2 The Indicative Mood

The question of what linguistic material represents the Indicative mood in the morphology and phonology of Akan is not a straightforward one. But it is clear that the distinction between

- (4) a. *mó*        *rè-dìdì*  
          you.PL   PROG-eat  
          ‘You are eating.’  
       b. *mó*        *nì-dìdì*  
          you.PL   IMP-eat  
          ‘I wish that you eat.’

is one of mood. (4a) is in the Indicative mood, and (4b) the Jussive-Imperative. The contrast is brought about by the Progressive affix *re-*, and the Jussive-Imperative *n-*. But, as we shall soon explain, *re-* is a member of the Aspectual system and has been referred to by writers on the verbal affixes as the Progressive Aspect. Where, then, is the Indicative located in the expression (4a)?

To get around this difficulty, it may be argued that the Indicative is unmarked, or is represented by zero. This is the position taken by Osam (1994). Unfortunately, he merely asserts that the Indicative is unmarked without making a case for a zero representation. One could just as well point out that *re-* in (4a) is the Indicative and that Aspect is unmarked. This solution is arbitrary; but so is Osam’s.

A way out of the arbitrariness is to argue that (i) Mood and Aspect are separate systems in Akan; (ii) Mood has two terms as explained above: the Jussive-Imperative and the Indicative; (iii) the Jussive-Imperative is realized overtly; (iv) at the level of expression the Indicative and Aspect are not identified by separate morphemes but form a portmanteau morph (Hockett 1947; 1958). This is an example of Matthew’s “cumulative exponence” (Matthew 1974:147). Following Matthew, we will say that the combinations of the Indicative and Tense-Aspect have cumulative exponents.

In the rest of the paper we shall assume that a sentence like (4a) has the constituents Subject, Progressive Aspect, Indicative-Mood and Verb, and may be glossed as [You.PL PROG INDIC eat]. The Indicative is realized in all sentences containing the Progressive, Habitual, Perfect, Stative, Future and Infinitive (see below). In the rest of the paper the Indicative component of the Verb will not be marked in the glosses unless its marking is crucial to the argument being made.

The Indicative affixes are divided into two: the Non-Finite (Infinitive) and Finite forms.

*The Non-Finite Indicative Affix.* The Infinitive is a one-member set represented by the prefix *a-*. It differs from the other Indicative affixes in not expressing aspect and other temporal relations. Unlike the finite forms its verb does not occur as the only predicate in independent clauses. It also exhibits peculiar syntactic properties when it occurs in SVCs. Some of these syntactic and semantic peculiarities will be discussed in Part 2 of this study. Below we illustrate the occurrence of the affix in sentences:

- (5)      ð            rɛ-tɔ            bɪ            á-kɔ̃  
           he            PROG-buy    some    INF-go  
           ‘He is buying some to take away.’

*The Finite Indicative Affixes.* The Finite Indicative forms in Akan are those which can occur alone in independent clauses and participate fully in SVCs, responding to all the syntactic and semantic constraints imposed on this construction. With the possible exception of the Perfect, all the Finite Indicative forms express aspect. The special status of the Perfect will be commented on later.

Two of the Indicative affixes, the Future Aorist and the Past Aorist (realized as prefix *bɛ-* and suffix *-e*, respectively) are tense because they express time, in addition to being aspectual. The non-tense aspectual affixes are the Progressive *re-*, the Habitual and Stative. The latter two of these affixes are non-segmental. Their tonal realisation is incorporated into one of the syllables of the verb stem. Below we illustrate the occurrence of each of the finite affixes:

- (6)    a.    ð            à-tɔ            bɪ  
           he            PERF-buy    some  
           ‘He has bought some.’  
       b.    ð            bɛ-tɔ            bɪ  
           he    FUT-buy    some  
           ‘He will buy some.’  
       c.    ð            tɔ̃-ð            bɪ  
           he    buy-PAST.AOR    some  
           ‘He bought some.’  
       d.    ð            rɛ-tɔ            bɪ  
           he    PROG-buy    some  
           ‘He is buying some.’  
       e.    ð            tɔ            bɪ  
           he    HAB.buy    some  
           ‘He buys some.’

- f.    ð      nàm              hɔ  
       he    STAT.walk    about  
       ‘He is in a state of walking.’
- g.    nà        ɔ        à-tɔ        bì  
       so.that    he        INF-buy    some  
       ‘so that he may buy some’

The verb *tɔ* has no Stative form. We have substituted the Stative *nam* to fill the gap in the paradigm.

### 1.2.3 Summary of Classification of Affixes

Table 1 contains a summary of the classification of affixes in Akan. The symbol + placed in the row of an affix indicates that the affix belongs to the category mentioned at the top of the column of the symbol. A blank indicates that the affix is not a member of the category.

As can be seen from the distribution of plus signs and blanks in the cells, affixes are either Mood or Non-Mood. All affixes express Mood except Deixis and Negation. The expression of Mood is obligatory in the morphological structure of all verbs. Deixis and Negation are optional. This optional status is incompatible with the role of Mood in the verb.

Mood affixes are either Indicative or Non-Indicative. All the mood affixes are Indicative except the Jussive-Imperative affixes.

Table 1: Classification of Verbal Affixes in Akan

MOOD AFFIXES				NON-MOOD AFFIXES	
INDICATIVE				NON-INDICATIVE	
Finite			Non-Finite		
Tense		Non-Tense			
HAB: Ø		+			
STAT: Ø		+			
PROG: <i>re-</i>		+			
PERF: <i>a-</i>		+			
PAST: <i>-e</i>	+				
FUT: <i>bɛ-</i>	+				
INF: <i>a-</i>			+		
JUSS: N, Ø				+	
NEG: N					+
DEIC: <i>bɛ, kɔ</i>					+

The Indicative mood affixes are either Finite or Non-finite. All Indicative affixes are Finite and Aspectual, except the Infinitive.

The aspectual affixes are non-tense, except the Future Aorist and the Past Aorist.

## 2 A Description of the Affixes

In this section, we describe the forms and meanings of each of the affixes. Now, as an example of an affixal paradigm of the verb, consider the following:

- (7) *dá* 'Sleep; you sleep; may you sleep.'
- (8) a. *ɔ́ n-dá* 'Let him sleep; may he sleep.'
- b. *mó n-dá* 'I request that you (pl.) sleep.'
- (9) *ò dá* 'He sleeps regularly and from time to time.'
- (10) *ò bé-dá* 'He will sleep; he is likely to sleep.'
- (11) *ò dà-è* 'He slept.'
- (12) *ò à -dá* 'He has-slept.'
- (13) *ò dà (hɔ́)* 'He is asleep; he is in a state of lying down; he is in a state of lying down or being asleep.'
- (14) *ò rè-dá* 'He is sleeping; he is in the process of falling asleep.'
- (15) a. *ò rè-bè-dá* 'He is coming to sleep (at a place where the speaker is at the time of speaking); he intends to come to sleep.'
- b. *ò-rè-kɔ́-dá* 'He is going to sleep (at a place away from where the speaker is at the time of speaking).'
- (16) *ò à-dà* 'so that he sleeps; in order for him to sleep'
- (17) a. *ò bɛ-dá* 'He comes to sleep (at a place where the speaker is at the time of speaking).'
- b. *ò kɔ́-dá* 'He goes to sleep (at a place away from where the speaker is at the time of speaking).'

In the rest of this section, I shall attempt to describe the meanings and uses of the Mood and Aspectual affixes.

### 2.1 The Imperative

The first listed member of the paradigm for *dá* above is the Imperative form of the verb. The verb is in its bare form, and has a high tone. Although it has no



overt grammatical Subject, there is an understood Subject *wó* ‘you’. It is the form used in commands, wishes, prayers and requests in speech situations involving a speaker and an addressee participant. Further examples are:

- (18) a. *kò*        *fie*  
 IMP.go home  
 ‘I (the speaker) request you (my addressee) to go home.’  
 b. *nàntè òtém*  
 IMP.walk fast  
 ‘I (the speaker) request you (my addressee) to walk fast.’

The Imperative has an overt Subject in its emphatic forms, including topicalised and focus-marked sentences. For example:

- (19) a. *wó*        *kó*        *fie*  
 you.SG IMP.go home  
 ‘You go home.’  
 b. *wó*    *nà*        *kó*        *fie*  
 you FOC IMP.go home  
 ‘You go home’

Forms like (8), which are made up of an overt segmental affix, an overt Subject and a verb stem serve a function similar to that of (7). But, in (8), the participants in the speech act differ in number and, in certain situations, role. The speaker expresses his wish, command or entreaty about a third person, who is the referent of the Subject of the sentence. There is generally a physically present addressee, although this is not an essential condition, especially if the wish is expressed as a soliloquy or is put in the form of a private prayer or is a mere velleity. If there is an addressee, he is intended by the speaker either (a) as a mediator of the wish (request or command); or (b) as merely a witness to the expression of the wish or prayer. If (a) is intended, the speaker may optionally introduce the wish (request, command or entreaty) with the indirect causative verb *ma* ‘let’. Thus

- (20)        *ó*        *ń-dá*  
 he IMP-sleep

may be glossed as ‘may he sleep; I want him to sleep’. But it may also be glossed as ‘I (the speaker) request or command you (my listener) to see to it that he (a third person) may sleep’. More specifically,

- (21)        *mà*        *ó*    *ń-dá*  
 IMP.allow he IMP-sleep  
 ‘Let him sleep.’

It is worth noting that the morphological structure of the causative verb *ma* here is that of (7) above, for an obvious reason: the speaker is engaged in a speech act with an addressee.

The forms (7) and (8) above are clearly inflectionally marked mood forms. Semantically, they express the speaker's mood and attitude and indicate his "commitment with respect to the factual status of what he is saying" (Lyons 1969: 307). Since the two are distinct both semantically and in form, there is probably a case for referring to them separately in the grammar, say the Jussive and Optative moods. As we shall see later, however, on distributional grounds the two might usefully be referred to by one term, say the Imperative.

The forms listed under (7) and (8) are not the only ones available for the Imperative paradigm. Below, we give the full paradigm:

- (22) Singular
- a. (mà)      mé      ní-dá  
cause    I      IMP-sleep  
'Let me sleep.'
  - b. dá  
'Sleep!'
  - c. (mà)      ó      ní-dá  
cause    he      IMP-sleep  
'Let him sleep.'
  - d. (mà)      Kwàsí      ní-dá  
cause    Kwasi      IMP-sleep  
'Let Kwasi sleep.'
- Plural
- e. (mà)      yé      ní-dá  
cause    we      MP-sleep  
'Let us sleep.'
  - f. mó      ní-dá  
you      IMP-sleep  
'You (pl.) sleep.'
  - g. (mà)      wó      ní-dá  
cause they      IMP-sleep  
'Let them sleep.'

With the exception of Second Person forms, members of the paradigm can (optionally) occur with the Second Person Causative *ma*.

## 2.2 The Habitual

The affix in (9), the Habitual, has no segmental representation in surface phonology and is represented in grammatical description as Ø. Its contrastive sta-

tus is indicated by a high tone on the final syllable of verbs. For example:  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *kàsá* 'he speaks';  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *dídí* 'he eats';  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *nànté* 'he walks';  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *fá* 'he takes it';  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *hyé* 'he wears it'. In a complete description, the phonological rules would assign a high tone to the appropriate syllable of the verb. Thus, given an underlying phonological form like

Hab [ .. CV +]

Vstem

(where "+" marks the end of a word), a series of phonological rules (including one which changes the tone of the vowel to high if it is non-high) would apply to change the string to Habitual forms like  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *dá* 'he sleeps';  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *hyé* 'he wears it';  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *fùrá* 'he wears it' etc. in contrast with the Stative forms  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *dà*;  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *hyè*;  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *fùrà*.

We take the view that the semantic function of the affix is purely aspectual and has no time component (see also Osam 1994). In general, it describes a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time (Comrie 1976: 27). In the words of Christaller, the affix marks "doing or being in the present time, at any indefinite time, or at all times" (1875: 58).

The affix is not a tense-marker since it does not locate events in time and it would be inappropriate to refer to it as the Present Tense as done by scholars like Christaller (1875:59), Dolphyne (1971) and Stewart (1962). But it can be used with one of the Time Markers to express Present Time, represented in our analysis as [Ø]; Past Time *ná* and Future Time *ná*. The surface form  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *kàsá* has the grammatical representation

[<sub>NP</sub>  $\text{c}$  [Ø [ Ø [ V *kàsá* ] ] ] ] ]  
PRES HAB

Such sentences are both syntactically and semantically Present Habitual. In a sense, scholars who have referred to forms like  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *kàsá*,  $\grave{\text{à}}$  *dídí*, as Present Habitual are not wrong, since that is the meaning of these sentences. The confusion is the result of referring to the Habitual affix by itself as the marker of Present Tense.

In addition to the general characterization given above, the Habitual subsumes timeless, general truths which may have been arrived at inductively or by observation. For example:

- (23) a. *nnípá nyínáa wú*  
people all HAB.die  
'All people die.'



- (27)      è      dú      ànɔpá      áà      ò      yàré  
             it      reach      morning      which he be.ill  
             ‘When morning comes, he gets ill.’

The interplay of adverbials and Time-Aspect markers has been noted several times in the literature. It is clear that any serious investigation of the semantic contribution of these affixes to the meaning of the verb phrase should have available at its disposal data on the semantics of adverbials. Regrettably, it has not been possible to draw on information of this kind in this study.

### 2.2.1 *The Expression of the Present, Past and Future Times with the Habitual Aspect*

As already explained, the Habitual affix by itself does not express present time. However, it always combines with a time-marker in the clause to express Habitual Aspect in Present, Past and Future times. The Time Marker occurs on the left of the Subject of the clause, and is realised by *ná* for Past time and Future time, and by Zero for Present time. In the sentence:

- (28)      Kwàsí      kàsá  
             Kwasi      HAB.speak  
             ‘Kwasi speaks.’

the speaker presents a situation in which the Subject *Kwasi* habitually engages in an activity of speaking. Although the time of the activity is not expressed in the syntax of the sentence, it is understood to refer to Present Time, or the time of speaking.

In surface syntactic structure Present Time is realized by zero. At a more abstract level (28) may be represented as

- (29)      PRESENT TIME Kwàsí HAB kàsá

It is likely that (29) is the kind of representation that scholars like Christaller, Dolphyne and Stewart had in mind when they referred to the Habitual as the Present Tense form of the verb. In the absence of an overt time marker, the Habitual is understood as representing both Present and Habitual. Belonging to the same paradigm as (29) are:

- (30)      PAST Kwàsi HAB kàsá  
             ná Kwasi HAB.kàsá  
             ‘Kwasi used to speak.’
- (31)      FUTURE Kwàsi HAB kàsá  
             ná Kwàsi HAB.kàsá  
             ‘Kwasi will habitually speak; it will be his practice to speak habitually.’

In (30) the Subject is presented as having been engaged in successive activities of speaking prior to utterance time. In (31) the successive activities of speaking are viewed as occurring later than the time of speaking. We return to the role of Time in Part 3. It has been pointed out that in several languages, the Habitual forms of the verb have an iterative reading as well as a progressive one (Giorgi and Pianesi 1977: 152-153). For example, in classical Latin, *laboro* may be glossed as ‘I work’ or ‘I am working’. Similarly, in French and German *je travaille* and *Ich arbeite* mean ‘I work’ and ‘I am working’. Akan is different from these languages but similar to English in this respect: *me HAB.yé adwuma* and *me Prog-yé adwuma* mean respectively ‘I work’ and ‘I am working’, and are used in different situations.

### 2.2.2 Other Interpretations of the Habitual Affix

In addition to cases of semantic ambiguity, there are other problems connected with the interpretation of the Habitual. For example, it is not clear how the verbs *sé* ‘say’ and *gyé dí* ‘believe’ in the sentences below are to be characterized in terms of the nature of the action or event:

- (32)      *Kwàsí sé brà*  
             Kwasi   HAB.say IMP.come  
             ‘Kwasi says come.’
- (33)      *Kwàsí gyé-dí sè òbíará bà-è*  
             Kwasi   HAB.believe that everybodycome-PAST  
             ‘Kwasi believes that everybody came.’

The verbs here assume the same shape as other Habitual forms, but they do not express habitual actions or events. In this context, they probably express subjective opinions rather than report habitual events. In a detailed description of Akan verbs including their semantic properties, these and others such as *kã kyérè* ‘tell’; *kyérè* ‘mean, imply’; *sùsùw* ‘suppose’; *srè* ‘beg, request’; *kyérè àsé* ‘explain’; *dwén* ‘think’; would be marked specially in the lexicon as expressing subjective opinions in the Habitual form. Responding to similar restrictions on interpretation are members of the subclass of predicates which, following some writers, we refer to here as performative. These include:

- (34)
- |                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>hyirà</i>      | ‘bless’                     |
| <i>tò dín</i>     | ‘name, christen’            |
| <i>bò àsù</i>     | ‘baptize’                   |
| <i>mà nsá</i>     | ‘pour a libation’           |
| <i>gù nsá</i>     | ‘pour a libation’           |
| <i>mà dí bèm</i>  | ‘apologise’                 |
| <i>bù fǒ</i>      | ‘declare guilty’            |
| <i>bù bèm</i>     | ‘declare guiltless, acquit’ |
| <i>fá hyé nsá</i> | ‘entrust to’                |
| <i>sú frê</i>     | ‘cry to’                    |

As an illustration of the point being made about the Habitual, consider the following. All of them contain performative verbs:

- (35) a. *mè bó wò àsù Ìésù dín mú*  
 I HAB.touch you water Jesus.ASSOC name in  
 ‘I baptize you in Jesus’ name.’
- b. *mè hyirà wó*  
 I HAB.bless you  
 ‘I bless you.’
- c. *mè mà wò dí bèm*  
 I HAB.give you eat guiltlessness  
 ‘I apologise to you.’

In none of the above sentences is the verb intended to refer to a habitual or iterative event, although the forms are Habitual. They are certainly not progressive in sense; neither do they express states. Used with these verbs the Habitual affix implies that the uttering of such sentences is accompanied by action. As suggested by Austin, these sentences “do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constate anything at all, are not true or false”, and “the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something” (Austin 1962). Similar comments apply to the forms of the conventional greetings of (36). The Habitual forms of the verbs do not express habitual events.

- (36) a. *mè mà wò àkyé*  
 I HAB.give you dawn  
 ‘I say good morning to you.’
- b. *mè mà wò àhá*  
 I HAB.give you afternoon  
 ‘I say good afternoon to you.’

- c. *mè mà wò dùé*  
 I HAB.give you condolences  
 'I commiserate with you.'
- d. *mè mà wò kòsè*  
 I HAB.give you sympathies  
 'You have my sympathies.'

Attention should be drawn at this point to one type of conditional sentence in which the verb in the *protasis* (*if*-clause) assumes the Present Habitual form. Consider a sentence like the following:

- (37) *sè ò bá áà yè békó*  
 if he HAB.come COND we FUT-go  
 'If he comes we shall go.'

In probable conditions like (37), in which the main verb is future both in form and in meaning the verb in the protasis, though Present Habitual in form, does not express a situation of an extended period of time.

### 2.3 The Future

The fourth listed member of the paradigm asserts that the event described by the verb will occur later than utterance time. Depending upon the lexical meaning of the verb and the semantic-feature specification associated with the adverbial if the sentence contains one, that event may be interpreted as going to occur once (e.g., in the environment of an adverbial like *àkyéná* 'tomorrow'); or iteratively and 'from time to time' (in the environment of adverbials like *dà bí* 'some day').

Although in most contexts, the affix under consideration has a future time reference, there are sentences in which the future affix does not refer to future time at all. In the sentence below, the main clause is, formally, future. However, it does not refer to future but present habitual time.

- (38) *wó fré nó áà ò be-gyíná hó*  
 you HAB.call him COND he FUT-stand there  
*áá nà ò à-gyè-só*  
 still COMP he INF-respond  
 'If you call him, he will stand still for a long time before he responds.'

In fact, the sentence retains the same meaning if the Future affix is replaced by the Present Habitual:



- (39) *wó fré nó àà ò gyíná h́ó*  
 you HAB.call him COND he HAB.stand there  
*àà nà ò à-gyè-só*  
 still before he INF-respond  
 ‘If you call him, he will stand still for a long time before he responds.’

The future affix is also used to express probability or likelihood with some verbs. Consider a sentence like:

- (40) *siká nó b́é-ẃó h́ó árá*  
 money the FUT-be.at there just  
 ‘The money is most likely there.’

in which the verb contains the affix *b́é*. Reference here is not to future time but to the present. The speaker expresses an opinion about the likely location of the referent of the Subject of the sentence at the time of utterance. Here are two more examples:

- (41) *mè gyé-di sé ò b́é-té Nkràn s̀eísèi*  
 I HAB.believe that he FUT-live Accra now  
 ‘I think he probably lives in Accra.’
- (42) *é b́é-só pápáápá*  
 it FUT-be.big greatly  
 ‘it is likely to be very big’

With verbs like *wó* ‘be located at’; *nim* ‘know’; *só* ‘be big’; *s̀ua* ‘be small’ and *de* ‘be called, be known as’, Future *b́é* has the likelihood interpretation only, and never a future-time reference one. With most other verbs *b́é* is to be interpreted ambiguously as having either a future-time reference or a probability and likelihood reading. This is illustrated by (43) – (46) below:

- (43) *ò b́é-hýé dán! mú! h́ó*  
 he FUT-be.in room.ASSOC in there  
 Either a. ‘He will be in the room there.’  
 Or b. ‘He is likely to be in the room there.’
- (44) *ó b́é-híá síká*  
 he FUT-need money  
 Either a. ‘He will need money.’  
 Or b. ‘He is likely to need money.’

- (45)      *ɔ*      *bé-yé*      *àsɔ́fòɔ*  
             he      FUT-be      priest  
             Either      a. 'He will become a priest.'  
             Or            b. 'He is probably a priest.'
- (46)      *ɛ*      *bé-yé*      *hú*  
             it      FUT-be      terrifying  
             Either      a. 'It will be terrifying.'  
             Or            b. 'It is likely to be terrifying.'

The likelihood interpretation of *bé* is possible for sentences of this structure only if the Subject of the verb is Second or Third Person. Thus, although the above sentences are ambiguous (as between future time and likelihood), the verb in the sentence below has the future time interpretation only:

- (47)      *mè*      *bé-yé*      *ɔsɔ́foɔ*  
             I      FUT-become priest  
             'I will become a priest.'

The likelihood interpretation is ruled out here for an obvious reason: the referent of the Subject of the sentence is the speaker making an assertion about himself, which he knows to be factually true at the time of speaking. If the likelihood interpretation were intended, the speaker would be required to use an appropriate adverbial like *ébìà* 'perhaps'. For example: *ébìà mè bé-yé ɔsɔ́foɔ* 'I am likely to become a priest'.

## 2.4 The Past and Perfect

The obvious similarity in meaning as well as common phonemic and graphic representation shared by the Past and Perfect provides an opportunity to introduce the two affixes together before proceeding to examine their respective linguistic properties in separate sections.

Both the Past and Perfect depict the event described by a verb as having completed at, and as having occurred prior to, the time of speaking. In both *à-dídí* 'he has eaten' and *ɔ didí-ì* 'he ate' the Subject of the sentence is understood to have gone through an event prior to the time of speaking. A second similarity shared by the two affixes lies in their representation as well as distribution: they are both represented at the phonological level, sometimes as the prefix [a] and sometimes as the suffix [i] depending upon whether the verb is positive or negative. If the verb is positive (i) prefix *a* is Perfect and (ii) suffix *i* is Past in the orthography. For example:

- (48) a.    ð      à-*dídí*  
           he    PERF-eat  
           ‘He has eaten.’  
       b.    ð      *dídí-ì*  
           he    eat-PAST  
           ‘He ate.’

(48a) is Perfect Positive. Its negative counterpart is (49b) below and not the negative sentence (49a) as the surface order of constituents would suggest. (48b) is Past Positive. Superficially, its negative form should be (49b), but it is not. Its negative counterpart is (49a) instead. This paradox has been noted independently by various scholars (Boadi 1966; Dolphyne 1971; Essilfie 1977 (quoted by Osam 1994); Osam (*ibid.*); Schachter and Fromkin 1968; Stewart 1962). Curiously, it escaped the attention of Christaller (1875) and Welmers (1946). The paradox exists among all the Volta-Comoe languages that the present author has examined. In the context of the negative morpheme, (a) prefix *a-* is interpreted as Past; and (b) suffix *-i* is interpreted as Perfect. For example:

- (49) a.    ð      à-*ṇ-dídí*  
           he    PAST-NEG-eat  
           ‘He did not eat.’  
       b.    ð      *ṇ-dídí-ì*  
           he    NEG-eat-PERF  
           ‘He has not eaten.’

For purposes of interpretation I shall assume that the positive paradigms (48a) and (48b) are the unmarked forms and underlying representations. The negative forms are derived. Throughout this paper, the suffix is represented by a variety of graphic symbols as done in the Akan orthography. In sentence-final position the suffix is represented by the letter *-i* if the verb ends in a vowel with the phonetic-feature specification [+Advanced]. The letter *-i* is the orthographic representation of the Akan High Advanced Vowel [i], which harmonises with verb stem-final vowels. For example:

- (50) a.    ð    *dídí-ì*      ‘he ate’  
       b.    ð    *dù-ì*        ‘he arrived’  
       c.    ð    *tíé-ì*        ‘he listened’  
       d.    ð    *ṇ-dídí-ì*    ‘he has not eaten’  
       e.    ð    *ṇ-dú-ì*        ‘he has not arrived’  
       f.    ð    *ṇ-tíé-ì*        ‘he has not listened’

The suffix is represented by the letter *-e* if the verb ends in a [-Advanced] vowel. The letter *e* is the orthographic representation of the Non-Advanced