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AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF
AFRICAN LANGUAGES
AND LINGUISTICS

**OKU VERB MORPHOLOGY :
TENSE ASPECT AND MOOD**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Award of a Post-Graduate Diploma, (Maîtrise) in Linguistics

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DEDICATION

To the Linguist

and

The Oku People.

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I thank the Almighty God for his maverillous help to me throughout the research period. He provided me with such conscientious surpervisors and helpers like Madam Rose Zoe-Obianga, of the LinguisticS Department, and Dr James Roberts and Dr Mfonyam all of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Yaounde. Through their encouragement and criticisms this work moved on to completion.

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Abbreviations & Symbols

ALCAM: Atlas linguistic du Cameroun.

CV : consonant, vowel

V : verb

P1 : Past tense one

P2 : Past tense two

P3 : Past tense three

F1 : near future

F2 : Distant future

ˊ : high tone

ˋ : mid tone

ˆ : falling tone

˘ : low tone

Aux : Auxiliary

Pft : perfect

Pftv : perfective

IMPftv : imperfective

cert : certainty

→ : indicates

S : subject

NP : noun phrase

VP : verb phrase

O : object

PP : prepositional phrase

∅ : unmarked

Obl : obligation

hab : habitual

Exp : Experiential

NEC : Necessity

SIL : Summer Institute of Linguistics

DGRST: Délégation Générale de la Recherche Scientifique et
Technique

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

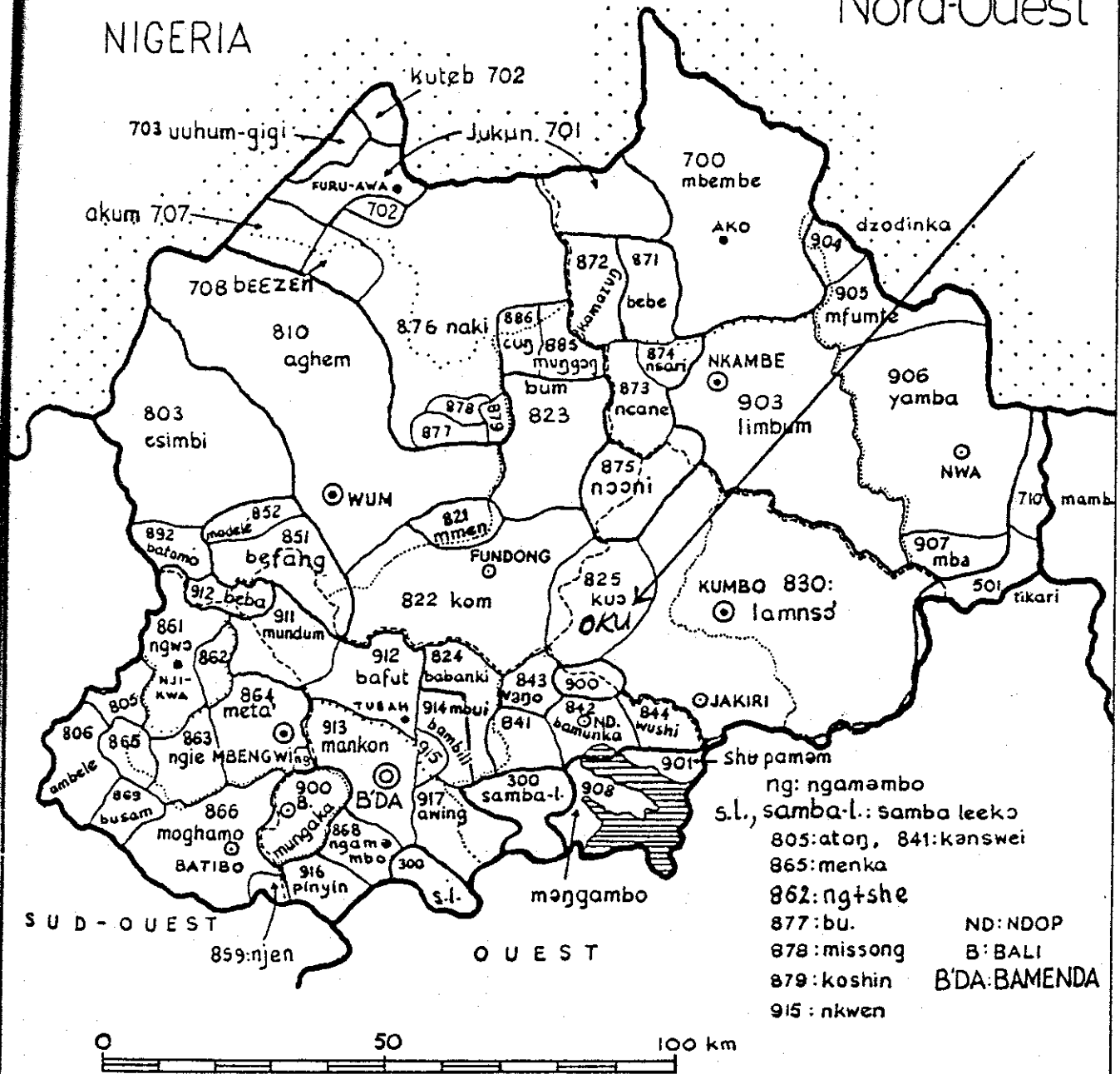
1.1 Location of Oku

Oku is situated in the South-West end of Bui Division, North West Province of Cameroon. It is bounded to the east by Nso, to the west by Kom, to the north-west by Mbesenaku, to the north by Noni and to the south by Babungo.

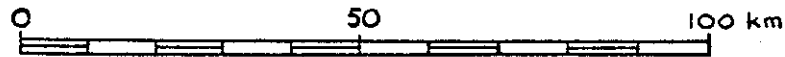
NATIONAL LANGUAGES OF NORTH - WEST

Cameroun: langues nationales. Province du Nord-Ouest

116



ng: ngamambo
s.l., samba-l.: samba leeko
805: aton, 841: kanswei
865: menka
862: ng+she
877: bu.
878: missong
879: koshin
915: nkwen
ND: NDOP
B: BALI
B'DA: BAMENDA



1987		province	département	arrondissement	district	aires linguistiques de langues dialectes	
ALCAM	limites	—	- - - - -	lamnsa'	
CREA-ISH	chef-lieu	◎	◎	◎	●	830	
BRETON		BAMENDA	NKAMBE	BALI	FURU-AWA		

Bikia

1.2 A brief history of Oku

Suinyuy (1985:16-18) a native of Oku, quoting oral traditional sources gives the following account of the Oku people.

A woman named Yiefon and her two brothers Jing and Nyanya left Tikari and moved eastwards after the death of their parents. Yiefon died on the way. The two brothers later moved to different directions. Jing moved north and settled in Tavisia (present day Nso) and Nyanga moved west and settled in present day capital of Oku.

While in Oku, Nyanya met with some settlers called the Ntul. When Nyanya died, his son Mkong Mote succeeded him. When the leader of the Ntul, Ban Kintun died, Mkong Mote seized the throne and made himself leader of the two clans.

It is believed that one of Mkong Mote's sons moved north-west and founded Mbizenaku.

The name of Oku is said to be of lamnso origin. The descendants of Nyanya's brother, Jing, who had settled in Nso invited his own descendants to a house mudding ceremony.

After the work, they were not well fed. They became annoyed and scrapped off the mud from the house. Their lamnso hosts called them 'Vikû'

meaning "those who scrapped". The colonial matters changed it to 'Oku'.

1.3 Linguistic Situation

Hyman (1979) lists Oku along with Kom, Lamnso amongst others as languages of the ring sub-group of the Western Grassfield Bantu languages. This author in a later study of Babanki and the ring languages asserts that Oku is an autonomous language. However Chia (1984) in The indogenous languages of Cameroon refers to Oku as a dialect of lamnso. In the course of this research, it was discovered in line with Hyman (1979) and Suinyuy (1985) that Oku has a geographical, political and linguistic status as a language and not a dialect.

Oku is therefore one of the 270 languages spoken in Cameroon. The Oku people call their language

əblam əbkwo

language of the Oku

Code 825 of ALCAM refers to it as kuɔ. In English it is called 'Oku' probably an anglicized form of əbkwo.

The linguistic family tree of the Oku is as follows:

NIGER - KORDOFANIAN

NIGER - CONGO

BENUE - CONGO

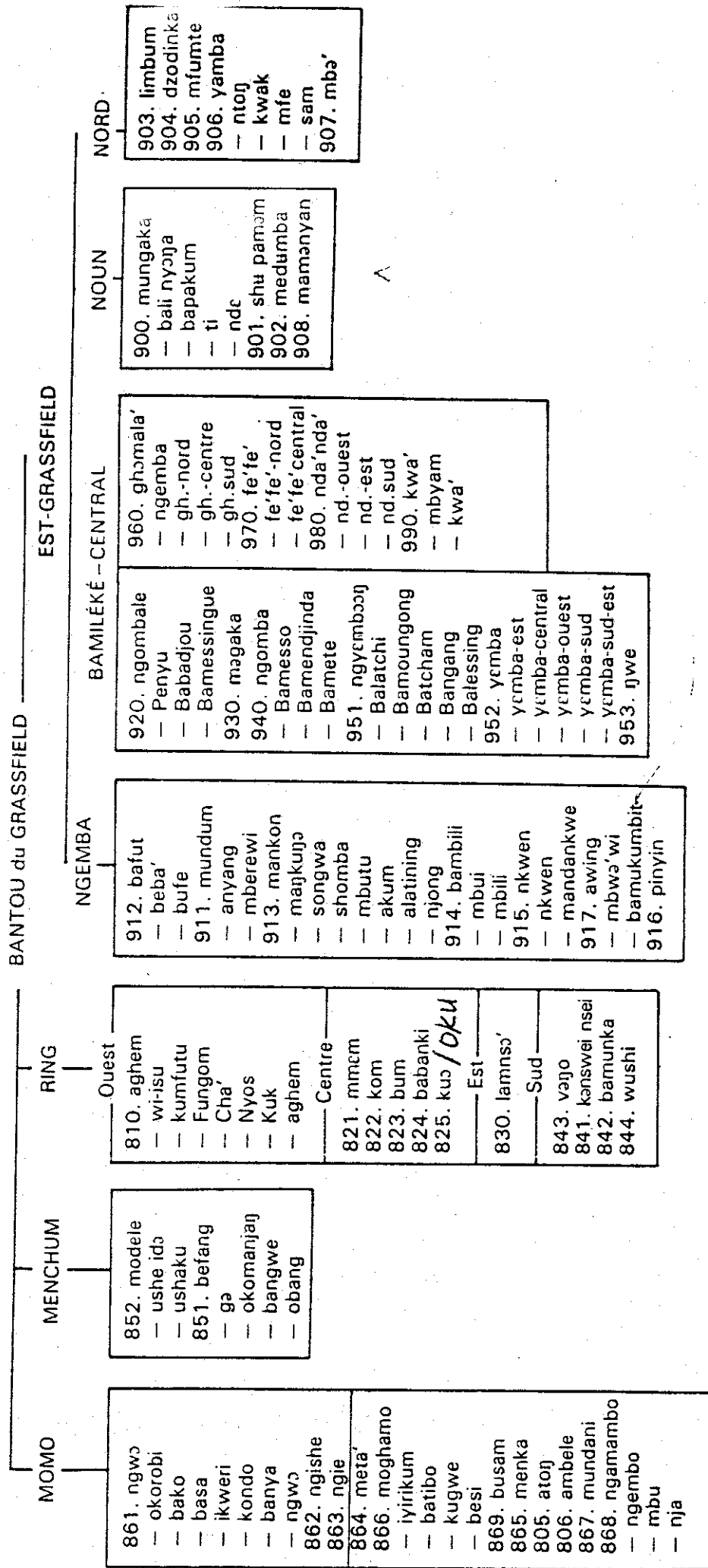
BANTOID

GRASSFIELDS

RING

Oku belongs to the central king group along with Bum, Mbizenaku. Oku appears to be most closely related to Kom, Mbizenaku, Babanki, and Lamnso each of which borders the Oku territory.

LANGUAGES OF THE GRASSFIELD BANTU



Les langues du bantou du Grassfield

50 langues : zone ALCAM 9 et partie de la zone 8

1.4. Motivation

The choice of Oku as my point of focus is not accidental. Oku is one of our national languages. Its morphology has not yet been studied. The first analytical study on the language was on the segmental phonology by Davis (1992). This current study on the verb, is the first in the domain of morphology. Not being a native speaker, I hope to apply purely scientific approaches.

This research hopefully will open more avenues for further research on the language. It will reveal to the Oku people, the richness of their language. It will also contribute to the development of our national languages.

Though dedicated to the linguist and the Oku people, I hope that everybody will find pleasure in reading this work.

1.5 Scope of Work

This study is a genuine attempt to bring the linguist and the native speaker of Oku to discover, each in his own way, the rules that characterize the expression of tense, aspect and mood in Oku.

Due to the limitations of this scope, we have not treated such aspects, as negation, voice, valency repetition and other aspects of the verb not mentioned here.

We intend to break the verb into its morphemes. Our objective, being to study their individual meanings and how

they are expressed in the sentence to indicate tense, aspect and mood in Oku.

SUMMARY OF WORK

The work begins with an introductory chapter. This chapter provides the necessary background and general information on the Oku language. Relevant phonological aspects such as the sound inventory, syllable structure and tone system are highlighted.

In the second chapter, the verb is defined. The various morphological processes that can bring a change in the verb form are explained. The various lexical and grammatical forms are identified separately and then studied in the verb phrase. Possible syntactic structures of the verb phrase are proposed while the verbs are also classified into their syntactic and semantic types.

The rest of the work concentrates on Tense, Aspect, and Mood. In studying these three grammatical categories, each is viewed as a complete system. Our scope is however limited to their grammatical forms, major functions and meanings. Our concern with meaning and syntax have equally been limited to a morphological study of tense, aspect and mood.

Our study of tense in chapter three is limited to absolute tense. Time is only used as a means of expressing tense.

Chapter four looks at aspect in the framework of the perfective/imperfective contrast. Further divisions are made depending on their existence in the language. For instance we examine the forms of the perfective and the subdivisions of the imperfective, progressive, continuous, and habitual.

Mood is treated in chapter five. The various moods and modal forms in the language are identified and studied under the corresponding semantic titles: indicative, certainty, necessity, obligation and interrogative. Modality is also reviewed in this chapter because of its importance in the mood system.

In the concluding chapter, we give a brief summary of the forms attested in the work. We equally indicate the extension of meaning of these forms in complex constructions. We attempt a synchronization of tense, aspect and mood. We end with suggestions for further study and a Bibliography.

Methodology

This research has been carried out on a two-dimensional bases: a research into the universal notion of verb morphology, and a research into the Oku verb morphology.

In looking at the universal notion of the verb morphology, we followed Comrie's (1985) analysis of Tense and Aspect which treats the relationship between these

categories and time. Palmer (1986) and Leech (1971) exhaustively treat the English verb whose morphology is both derivational and inflectional. The notion of the verbal categories is handled more closely by Bybee (1985). She examines the universal treatment of the verb and indicates particular aspects like morphological categories and the relationship between form and meaning.

From the above linguists, a framework for this research was laid. With the help of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) Questionnaire, a questionnaire was designed which represented the possible types of verbs as well as the morphological aspects to be examined. This constituted the first phase of our research.

The second phase had to do with the research on the Oku verb morphology. With the help of our questionnaire, we met our informants who provided us with the required data for analysis. We cross-checked the same information with different informants. This enabled us to avoid idiolects.

This two-dimension oriented research has the advantage that it widens the scope of the researcher. It gives room to explore more since one is aware of possible aspects to be examined. Thus the researcher is able to discover universal as well as peculiar aspects of the language in question.

We have been guided by the structural and generative theories. We have therefore been eclectic but making use of the best of the theories that could help us in our analysis.

The sentence has been the basis of our analysis. According to Chafe (1970) a sentence is composed of

... a central verb accompanied by one or more nouns, each of which stands in some particular semantic relation to the verb.

The concern here is neither on syntax nor semantics. We have only used the sentence to identify the various morphological categories. Semantics equally comes in, when the relationships between form and meaning are concerned.

1.6 Literature Review

According to ALCAM sources code 825, the following researches have been carried out on Oku language:

1. A list of more than 500 lexical words.
2. A phonological study on the dialects (under study).
3. A deep phonological study of one of the dialects (under study).
4. A morphological sketch on the Noun class by Ngum Peter.
5. A 100-word list by Chilver and Kaberry, published in 1974.
6. An alphabet for transcription of the language in the community under study.
7. A collection of traditional and christian literature.

In addition to the above, the following also exist in the Oku language:

- An Oku language Committee charged with the publication of Oku diaries.

The major published works in the language are the following:

- Hyman (1977) included Oku in his study of the Noun classes of the Ring languages.
- Beatrice Suinyuy an Oku student at the University of Yaounde, wrote an unpublished paper (1985) entitled Determining the linguistic status of Oku.
- Davis (1992) presented a Segmental Phonology of Oku. This was an unpublished masters thesis in the University of Texas at Arlington, U.S.A.

Apart from Davis' (1992), none of the afore-mentioned works have fully analysed any aspect of the language. The earlier researches carried out, were in forms of sketches, or list of words usually with deficiencies especially in the domain of tones.

Suinyuy (1985) limits her study to lexical words with no particular emphasis on the phonology. However, she traces the autonomy of Oku as an independent language.

Davis (1992) presents a sound inventory of the language in her Segmental Phonology of Oku. We have adapted this inventory for this work.

We have added to this, a tone system which gives more meaning to the sounds of the language.

1.7 Aspects of Phonology

We adapt the sound inventory presented by Davis (1992:30). She presents both the phone and phoneme charts of the Oku sound inventory.

According to Davis (1992:31) "... Oku has twenty-one consonant phonemes and seven long vowels."

We have added to the sound system, an analysis of the tone of the language.

1.7.1 Consonant Phone Chart

		Bila- bials	Labio- dental	Aveo- lars	Palatals	Velars
Stops	VL	p		t nt	tj	k kw ŋk
	VD	b mb		d nd	dj gj	g gw ŋg
Fricatives	VL		f fj fw nf	s ns	ʃ	
	VD	B	v	z	ʒ	ʎ yw
Affricates	VL			ts	tʃ ntʃ	kf
	VD	bv		dz	dʒ	gv jv
Nasals	VD	m ɱ		n	ɲ	ŋ
Laterals				l nl	j	
Semi-vowels					j ɲj	w ŋw

(Davis, 1992:55)

1.7.2 Vowel Phone Chart

	Front	B a c k		
	unrounded	unrounded	rounded	
high	i ij ii	ɪ ɪj ɪ:	u uj u:	tense
	ɪ ɪj ɪi			lax
mid		ə əj ə:	o oj l:	tense
	e ej e:	ʌ	ɔ ɔj ɔ:	lax
low	æ æ:	a aj a:		

(Davis, 1992:54)

1.7.3 Consonant Phonemes Chart

		Bila- bial	Labio- dental	Aveo- lar	Palatal	Velar
Stops	VL			t		k kw
	VD	b		d		g gw
fricatives	VL		f	s		
	VD					ɣ yw
affricates					tʃ dʒ	
nasals		m n .		n N		ŋ
laterals				l		
glides					y	w

(Davis, 1992:31)

1.7.4 Vowel Phoneme Chart

		Front	B a c k	
		rounded	unrounded	rounded
high	tense	i ii		
mid	lax	ɪ ʊ		
	tense		ɔ ɔ̄	
	lax	ɛ ɛɛ		ɔ ɔ̄ ɔ̄) o.k
			a aa	

(Davis, 1992:31)

1.7.5 The Syllable Structure

Davis (1992:19) indicates three types of components of phonological words in Oku: stems, obligatory affixes on nouns, and optional suffixes on verbs. She continues:

... Other parts of speech may also have concord markers (usually prefixed when they are in agreement with a noun. The most common syllable structure pattern in the Oku language is CVC, other patterns are CV, VC, NCV and N.

1.7.6 The Tone System

Davis, (1992) treats the segmental phonology of Oku. She acknowledges that the language is a tone language but does not lay emphasis on it. However, we found it necessary to identify the various tones and contrasts that exist in Oku. Tone differences in the language play a great role in signalling differences in meaning. It plays a grammatical role in the language as will be examined later.

In identifying the tones, we have based our judgement on the melodic pattern of the voice during the production of the words. We have also been assisted by the line provided by Mfonyam (1982) which was consequently adapted in Guide pour le Développement des Systèmes d'écriture des langues Africaines 1983). We identified four tones in Oku: high, low, mid, and falling. Examples:

1. High tone [´]
like in gwiyé
coming, come!
2. s Mid tone ⁻
like in s̄, n̄
to P3
3. Low tone [˘]
like in nt̄n
pot
4. Falling tone ^ˆ
like in l̄m
bite.

Tone Contrast

Tone contrast can bring change in meaning. In other words, the same words or constructions can signal change in meaning depending on changes in tone. Examples:

1. a) Itém
cleared land

- b) ɪtəm
gathered grass
2. a) kébám
bag
- b) kēbām
proper name.
3. a) mbán
nail
- b) mbân
to nail
4. a) kètàm
elephant
- b) kètám
trap
5. a) kán
monkey
- b) kân
to oblige
6. a) nâ lô
P3 EXP.
had come
- b) nè lô
P3 Exp.
came

In the following sentences, the difference is essentially that of tone.

1. mǎ nǎ lǎ gwì
I P3 Exp. come
'I came (yesterday).'

2. mǎ nǎ lǎ gwì
I P3 Exp. come
'I had come (last year).'

The only difference in the above sentences is in the high and low tones. The first referring to a nearer past and the second to a distant past.

More on the meaning of the above auxiliaries will be discovered under Tense.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 The verb: Morpho-syntax and semantics

This chapter focuses on the verb. In it we define the verb and the various morphological processes involved in its forms. In it we equally pay attention to the verb phrase. We look at the syntactic properties that are relevant to the morphology of the verb as far as tense, aspect and mood are concerned. We then consider a classification of the verbs. We do this in their syntactic and semantic types.

2.1.1 Definition of the verb

John Lyons (1968:319) defines the verb as:

... that part of speech without case inflection, admitting inflections of tense, person, and number, etc. signifying an activity or being acted upon.

The grammatical categories of Tense, Aspect and Mood are usually attached to the verb either directly or indirectly. The verb is a very important part of speech. The verb is to the sentence just like the vowel is to a syllable. It forms the nucleus of the sentence. The verb is also the most dynamic part of speech. This dynamism is studied in its morphology.

2.1.2 Morphology Definition

According to Mathews (1973) morphology comes from a Greek word meaning, "... the study of forms" Mathews then goes further to define morphology as:

... a branch of linguistics which is concerned with the forms of words in different uses and constructions.

This definition relates to our study of verb forms. It however lays more emphasis on the forms and their uses than on their derivation.

Huddleton (1988:16) defines Morphology as "concerned with the structure and derivation of words". This definition holds in view, forms and their derivations.

From the above definitions, we can now attempt a working definition of Morphology as:

A branch of linguistics which studies the forms and structures of words, their uses in different constructions, and how they are derived.

Our focus in this section will be on the morpho-syntactic forms of the verb, and the morphological processes involved.

2.1.3 Grammatical forms of verbs

The verb in Oku exists in three forms: an unmarked form or the stem, and marked forms which are imperfective and

perfective respectively. We are however concerned with the forms here.

2.1.3.1 The unmarked form

The verb in the unmarked form is free and is in the infinitive. It usually ends in a mid or unmarked tone. For instance:

1. a) mē:sē
abolish
- b) giātè
divide
- c) bàklè
build
- d) gvàmē
bury
- e) dinē
show
- f) jènsē
appear

The unmarked forms are forms in which no morphological processes have occurred. They can be called the lexical stems.

2.1.3 The marked forms

The marked forms refer to the forms which have been changed as a result of a morphological process. In Oku, changes in verb forms are usually inflectional through affixation.

2.2 Morphological categories

2.2.1 Inflectional morphology

According to Huddleston (1988:17):

Inflectional morphology is concerned with processes which yield the various inflectional forms of a lexeme from its lexical stem.

In the light of this definition, we can identify the following forms of the verb *sā gwī* (to come) as inflectional:

2. a) *gwìyá* - come!

gwì gwiyén
come coming
coming

b) *gwímén*
came

Rule 1: V+ ()
 (éñ)
 (mén)

The verb ends either in the floating high tone or in the *én*, and *mén* morphemes.

Bybee (1985:11) goes further to comment that:

In inflectional expressions, each semantic element is expressed in an individual unit, but these units are bound into a single word. Inflectional expressions may be in the form of affixes added to a stem, or in the form of a change in the stem itself.

As earlier mentioned, the following inflectional forms are evident in Oku.

2.2.1.1 The floating high tone

Verbs in this form end in a high tone irrespective of the suffix appended to the verb. It is because this high tone is grammatical and does not prefer the suffix it goes with at the end of the verb, that we refer to it as a floating tone. Examples:

3. a) m̄:sé
abolishing/abolish!
- b) giàté
dividing/divide!
- c) bàklé
building/build!
- d) gvēmé
burying/bury!
- e) òn̄é
showing/show!
- f) j̄ns̄é
appearing/appear!

We therefore have the following structure:

Rule 2: $V^- \rightarrow V^+$

A low tone verb becomes a high tone verb when the floating high tone is added to the suffix.

2.2.1.2 Reduplication plus é̄n (V + V + é̄n)

It is an inflection on the verb usually in a reduplicated form. Examples:

4. a) gwì gwìyán
 come coming
 (just) coming
- b) yèn yēnán
 see seeing
 (just) seeing
- c) bàklā bàklán
 build building
 (just) building

We can derive the following structure:

Rule 3: V + V + é̄n → VV-é̄n

A verb stem plus the same verb stem and the é̄n morpheme, gives the reduplicated form.

More on this form will be examined under the chapter on tense (chapter 3).

2.2.1.3 The m̄én morpheme

The m̄én form indicates a completed action. Since the action is viewed as a whole and complete, we can refer to it as the perfective. The perfective is always in the m̄én form which is more specifically a perfect marker. This morpheme can come before or after the verb. It can also go with the various tense markers to give different meanings. Examples:

5. a) Ngum lāmén kəbán
 Ngum cook(perf.) fufu
 'Ngum has cooked fufu.'
- b) Ngum kə lāmén kəbán
 tsii
 nē
 Ngum past cook(pft) fufu
 'Ngum cooked fufu.'

Here we have the structure

Rule 4: S + (Tense) + V + mən + O
 NP Marker NP

We have a subject plus an optional tense markers, plus the verb ending in the mən morpheme and then an object noun phrase.

We can summarize the various forms so far attested in the chart below:

Chart 1: Summary of verb forms

	Unmarked	M a r k e d			English gloss
	Infinitive	Imperfective		Perfective	
1.	sə mə:sə	mə:sə	mə:sə mə:sən	mə:səmən	abolish
2.	sə giātə	giātə	giātə giātən	giātəmən	divide
3.	sə bəklə	bəklə	bəklə bəklən	bəkləmən	build
4.	sə gvəmə	gvəmə	gvəmə gvəmən	gvə məmən	bury
5.	sə dinə	dinə	dinə dinən	dinəmən	show
6.	sə jənsə	jənsə	jənsə jənsən	jənsəmən	appear
7.	sə kə	kə	kə kəmə	kəmən	catch
8.	sə kək	kək	kək kəkən	kəkəmən	promise
9.	sə tim	tim	tim timən	timəmən	dig

The verbs represent various affixes in the infinitive.

2.2.2 Derivational Morphology

Huddleston (1988:18) remarks that "Lexical processes yield a different lexical item from the source, a new item of vocabulary." This remark is similar to another made by Bybee (1985:88) on derivational categories:

One of the properties that characterises derivationally related pairs of words most conspicuously is their tendency to split up to move away from one another both in meaning and in form.

These observations indicate that derivational morphology is lexical in nature. It leads to the formation of a different lexical item from the stem. That is why some people call it lexical morphology. Derivation is through the processes of affixation and conversion in Oku.

2.2.2.1 Affixation

Affixation has to do with adding an affix to a stem: Affixation may or may not result in change of class. For the most part, affixes attach to free stems, that is stems that can stand alone as a word.

2.2.2.1.1 Prefixes

Prefixes refer to affixes that come at the beginning of the word. The /i/ phoneme in Oku, serves as a derivational affix. Nouns are derived from verbs by adding this affix to

the verb as a prefix. Examples can be seen in the following chart.

Chart 2:

	V e r b s		N o u n s	
	Verb	Gloss	Noun	Gloss
1	sā tēm	to clear	itēm	clearing
2	sā nài	to cook	inái	cook
3	sā kòk	to climb	ikók	climber
4	sā fô	to give	ifó	giver
5	sā tʃék	to laugh	itʃék	laughter
6	sā tòn	to cry	itòn	a cry
7	sā yès	to sweep	iyés	sweeper

2.2.1.2 Suffixes

Davis (1992:20) quoting Grebe and Grebe (1976) confirm the existence of the following CV (consonant, vowel) suffixes in Oku:

- tē [tsòk-tē] - 'to undress'
- sē [lúm-sē] - 'to boil'
- kē [ziê-kē] - 'to learn or teach'
- nē [dziê-nē] - 'to urinate'
- mē [gvèè-mē] - 'to bury'
- lè/lē [bîn-lē] - 'to turn'

She equally identifies the following CVC forms with the vowel realized as:

/ɪ/

Front
mid
lax
unround

Examples:

sin	-	[kúp - sɪn]	-	to change
tin	-	[fəm - tɪn]	-	to ferment
nin	-	[suŋ - nɪn]	-	to speak

We notice that the verbs can exist without their affixes. Without the affixes, they give a semelfactive meaning. That is, the action is considered to be instantaneous. The suffixes give a continuous meaning to the verbs or at least that the action is not instantaneous.

2.2.2.2 Conversion

According to Huddleston (1988:18) "Conversion is where a stem is derived without any change in the form from one belonging to a different class".

In Oku, conversion can take place through tone differences. For instance the verbs:

sē mbân

to nail

become a noun: mbân from a falling tone to a high tone.

The direction of conversion depends on which meaning is more basic. Conversion achieves the same result as affixation.

The conversion of mbân to mbân has the same effect as the change from tēm to itēm which is as a result of affixation.

In the following section, we examine the verb in their syntactic and semantic types.

2.3 Morpho-syntactic Inflections

Huddleston (1988:17) explains different inflectional types

... Inflectional morphology is just one aspect of inflection, the other being syntactic: Inflectional properties are morpho-syntactic. The rules of syntax give the conditions under which a lexeme may or must carry a given inflectional property, while rules of morphology specify what the actual form will be.

Tense, Aspect and Mood markers in Oku, reflect the above observation. These grammatical forms are more relevant to the proposition as a whole than to the verb alone. Thus the morphemes, sē, lō and the auxiliaries lù, kē, nē, tsii, nii, and nāā are only morphological, in as much as they are conditioned by the sentence. Similarly the modals; tām 'may' and fēnē 'could' only give a modal meaning in the sentence.

2.3.1 Auxiliaries

Crystal (1985) defines the auxiliary as

... A term used in Grammatical description of verb phrase, to refer to the set of verbs, subordinate to the main lexical verb, which help to make distinctions in mood, Aspect, voice etc.

In Oku, auxiliaries play an important part in signalling tense, mood, and aspect. We can hence refer to them as helping verbs as has earlier been done by Ayangoke (1981:35). The following auxiliary forms exist in Oku:

The s̄ morpheme

Characteristically, the 's̄' morpheme, acts as a locative preposition 'to'. In its usage, it acts as a verbal suffix for certain verbs. Examples:

6. a) m̄is̄ v-s̄
abolish
- b) j̄ns̄
appear

It can also serve as an infinitive marker, for instance:

7. a) s̄ gw̄
to come s̄ + verb
- b) s̄ nd̄
to go
- c) s̄ yī
to eat

In some constructions it serves as a preposition when it precedes a noun.

8. a) mē ndù sē ndāà
I go to house
'I am going to the house.'

We hence have the structure

Rule 5: S + V + sē + O
(NP) p N

Lù 'be'

This is an auxiliary verb with modal overtones in Oku. In the different contexts in which it occurs, it can however give other meanings. In the following example, it gives the modal meaning of necessity.

9. a) ngèk lù sē gwì
Ngèk be to come
'Ngek has to come.'

However, in the example that follows, lù is locative

- b) ndāà fú'ù lù Elàk
House fu'u be Elack
'The nfuh house stands in Elack.'

It indicates where the nfuh house is located.

The lō morpheme

This morpheme occurs in many constructions. It lays emphasis on the past. It hence has a perfect meaning even

though in some contexts, it gives a modal meaning.

Examples:

10. a) ngék nè lō jiē kēbān
Ngék P3 cert eat fufu
'Ngék had eaten fufu.'

b) mé sē lō sē ndū
I to cert to go
'I want to go.'

c) ēb nii lō fēi
He F1 cert fall
'He wants to fall.'

When it is used in the future or present tense, it has a modal meaning of certainty.

Rule 6: nē + lō + V → Tense

sē + lō + sē → Mood

nii + lō + V → Mood

kē

This morpheme can act as a pronoun, for instance:

11. kē nè lō mē gân
It P3 cert just happen
'It just happened.'

The more usual usage of kē is as an auxiliary attached to the verb to signal the past tense though it might also combine with other forms to signal different verbal meanings.

12. m̄ k̄ gwī
I P1 come
'I came this morning.'

In this context, we refer to it as today Past (P1).

2. Tsii

It is another past tense marker indicating yesterday Past.

13. m̄ tsii gwī lán
I P2 come yesterday
'I came yesterday.'

3. ná, n̄

These two forms all mark the past tense and will go with lô morpheme to give various past meanings. But in its more characteristic usage it marks P3.

14. m̄ n̄ gwī
I P3 come
'I came (last week).'

nii

It marks the future tense. It may also give a modal meaning. It usually marks tomorrow future.

15. m̄ nii gwī
I F1 come
'I will come (tomorrow).'

n̄

Marks distant future. For instance, next year.

mā nāā gwī
I F2 come
'I will come (next year).'

These auxiliaries can combine with other morphemes or auxiliaries to give various meanings.

17. a) nā gwī
P3 come
'came'
- b) nē lō gwī
P3 cert come
'had come'
- c) sē lō gwī
to cert come
'use to come'
- d) lū sē gwī
be to come
'had to come'
- e) kē sē gwī
P1 to come
'has to come'
- f) kē fā gwī
not come
'don't come'

These forms together with various adverbials, render meaning in the language in various categories. These forms will be treated in depth in the next chapters.

The syntactic structures of the auxiliaries can be summarized as follows:

S: NP	AUX 1	AUX 2	AUX 3	AUX 4	V- [mán] + O NP
	[ø nê nê tsii nii nââ sê kê kê kê]	[kê lô sê nê lù]	[tsii sê]	[mên]	

Rule 7:

The most common auxiliaries, are those in slot one (AUX 1). They usually mark tense. Frequently, (AUX 2) will be a Tense or Aspect marker. However some of these constructions are idiomatic and hence cannot directly give the ordinary meanings of the auxiliaries.

2.3.2 Modals finê, tàm

Modal auxiliaries, are auxiliaries which signal modality. By modality, we refer to what Palmer (1986:21) calls "the grammaticalization of speakers subjective attitudes and opinions". We will now introduce the above mentioned Oku modals.

finê (might, would)

These are all adverbs with modal over tones in the

propositions in which they are used, the invited meaning is that of doubt, or possibility. For instance:

18. má kē lù finè mé kē lō gwì
I P1 he could I P1 cert come
'I would have come if I was around.'

Tām (maybe, perhaps)

19. Tām āb jāá gwì
maybe he not come
'He may not come.'

In simple constructions, these adverbials come sentence initial, when they appear in the sentence, it is usually at the beginning of a clause.

2.4 Syntactic Types

Syntactic types, refer to those verbs that influence their objects syntactically. Traditionally, a difference is made between transitive and intransitive verbs. A verb is said to be used transitively when the action or state that it denotes is regarded as going over to, i.e. as directed towards an object. When the action or state is regarded as affecting only the subject, i.e. as not directed towards an object, the verb is called intransitive. In Oku, we identify the intransitive, transitive, cognate objects, and ditransitive verbs.

2.4.1 Intransitive

Here there is only one participant which is the subject. Examples:

20. a) ghōnē nyinē
They running
'They are running.'

b) Ngum ē bōōnē
Ngum sleeping
'Ngum is sleeping.'

2.4.2 Transitive verbs

Transitive verbs are verbs which must take at least one object. Generally we have two participants. One is the subject and the other is the object. For example:

21. a) Ngūm lô nē yēn nkfūnyām
S V O
Ngum cert P3 see pig
'Ngum has seen the pig.'

b) Ngūm ē tēlē wān
S V O
Ngum beating child
'Ngum is beating a child.'

c) Bāā lēnmēn ēmdūk
Father tap wine
'Father has tapped wine.'

The last element on each of the sentences above constitutes the object which is immediately preceded by its verb. We therefore have a

Rule 8: S V O structure.

2.4.2.1 Optional Transitive Verbs

This refers to verbs that can have an optional object. Without the object, the meaning expressed could still go through. These verbs are not necessarily tied to objects.

Examples:

22. a) ghānē dzēmé (ndáà fēyin)
They praying house God
'They are praying in church.'
- b) ēb bē:mē (wēn)
He believes you
'He believes you.'
- c) Ngum ē bō:né sē ēbkùn
Ngum sleeping to bed
'Ngum is sleeping on the bed.'

We hence have the following structure:

Rule 9: S V (O)

Verbs of this group fall between the transitive and intransitive dichotomy.

2.4.2.2 Cognate object verbs

Cognate object verbs differ from the simple transitive verbs because the latter are not so much tied to any particular object. For instance, the verb:

23. sē yēn
to see

is not restricted to take

wil (person)

but can take any other object as long as it is [+ concrete]. In other words, anything that is concrete can be seen, not only a man.

However, verbs with cognate objects have only one object each and these objects are obligatory and inherent to each verb. Examples include the verbs: to urinate, to sing, to play, to dream, to walk. Examples:

24. a) Ngūm dēmē idém
Ngum play play
'Ngum is playing a play.'

b) ób dzénē ìdzēn
He urinate urine
'He is urinating urine.'

These verbs are tied to their respective objects and interchanging results in ungrammaticality. For instance, you only 'play a play' and 'urinate urine.' Even though it is possible to reduplicate all verbs in Oku, the meaning is not always that of a cognate object. It is possible for instance to derive a reduplicated form from a verb root by adding ēn to the second root to make for instance:

25. dī diyēn
cry crying

Here the second form is a verb and hence not an object. Verbs that depend entirely on their cognate objects are however limited.

2.4.2.3 Ditransitive Verbs

Ditransitive verbs are verbs that have three participants; a subject and two objects. One of the objects is the direct object and is directly affected by the action of the verb, while the other is indirect and not directly affected by the action of the verb.

26. a) Ngūm kē lō fō kātīé sē ndifōn
 Ngum P1 cert give chair to Ndifon
 'Ngum gave the chair to Ndifon.'

b) ghēnē kē tūm ndifōn sē mē
 They P1 send Ndifon to me
 'They sent Ndifon to me.'

c) Ngum fāktē fēgān sē mē
 Ngum tell story to me
 'Ngum tells me a story.'

Syntactically speaking, these ditransitive verbs have one object and the second is an object of the preposition sē, we therefore have the structure:

Rule 10: S V O sē O
 (NP) (NP) PP NP

Summary of Syntactic Types

Rule 11: S V Intransitive S V
 (NP)

S V O Transitive S V O
 (NP) (NP)

Optional transitive S V (O)
 (NP) NP

S V O O Ditransitive S V O (sē) O
 NP (NP) PP N

2.5 Semantic Types

Here, verbs are grouped with regards to their meanings. Event verbs and state verbs. The Event verbs are further divided into action verbs and process verbs. The state verbs can be viewed in terms of inert perception and inert cognition.

2.5.1 Event Verbs

An event has a beginning and an end. It can be viewed as an entity, and also make up one member of a sequence or plurality of happenings. We can further examine event verbs in the following categories.

2.5.1.1 Action Verbs

Action verbs refer to verbs which involve the use of energy and influence. Action verbs are different from state verbs in that they express visible action. A majority of verbs in Oku fall under this category. Examples:

27. a) sē ndù
to go
- b) sē yùn
to buy
- c) sē dzèl
to walk

d) s̄ kóká
to ride

e) s̄ nvéá
to smoke

f) s̄ dómā
to play

g) s̄ dzēm
to pray

h) s̄ s̄n
to split

i) s̄ tzêk
to laugh

j) s̄ gùf
to pull

With action verbs, the subject is the agent.

2.5.1.2 Process Verbs

According to Leech (1971) "a process ordinarily has duration which is indefinite". An action is said to be in process when a noun changes its state or condition.

Examples:

28. a) Fèkâk s̄ kùiyé
tree growing
'The tree is growing.'

b) Fèkâk s̄ diáfé
tree getting tall
'The tree is getting tall.'

- c) Fèkâk s̄ yùmá
tree drying
'The tree is getting dry.'

With process verbs, the subject is the object undergoing the change.

2.5.2 State Verbs

According to Leech (1971) "A state verb is undifferentiated and lacking in defined limit." He gives the following verbs as examples of state verbs: sleep, be, live, belong, last, like, stand, know, to mention just these. Unless something happens to change the state, the state continues.

Amongst state verbs, we can further make a distinction between inert perception verbs and inert cognition verbs.

2.5.2.1 Verbs of Inert Perception

We can refer to these verbs as sensitive verbs, because they deal with the senses. Examples are:

29. a) s̄ yīō
to hear
b) s̄ yán
to see
c) s̄ lèmtā
to smell
d) s̄ mōn
to taste

2.5.2.2 Verbs of Inert Cognition

These are state verbs which involve more feelings than the senses. Examples:

30. a) Njin Yafé mé
hunger hurt me
'I am hungry.'

b) kādōn yāfē mé
neck hurt me
I am thirsty

Other examples include verbs like bēmé "believe" and léisē "forget". When a verb expresses a state, the accompanying subject noun phrase is its patient and the verb specifies what it is that is in the state.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Tense

This chapter focuses on the forms that mark tense in Oku. We situate tense within the context of time, namely: present, past and future. Tense is marked in Oku by the various forms and morphemes we have identified; the unmarked form, the marked forms, and other grammatical morphemes or auxiliaries. *kà*, *tsii*, *ná*, *nii*, *náà*. Before getting to their functions, we will discuss the notion of tense in Oku.

3.1.1 Definition of tense

By tense, we are thinking of time and how it is viewed, or located in language. Crystal, (1983:306) defines tense as

... A category used in the grammatical description of verbs, referring primarily to the way the grammar marks the time at which the action denoted by the verb took place.

Comrie (1985:11) explicitly illustrates what he refers to as, "... the grammaticalisation of location in time" in the following diagram:

This is evident in Oku as will be exemplified in this chapter.

Comrie (1985:17) further argues that

... Some languages do indeed have bound morphemes attached to the verb, which indicate the time of day at which the situation holds, the precise meaning, e.g. "this morning or some morning in the past, or every morning" will depend on the tense to make this specification.

In Oku, tense is marked by auxiliaries. Adverbials of time also play a great role in specifying the time and context. These various dimensions of the Oku tense markers will be examined in the rest of this chapter. We limit ourselves here to absolute tense. As Comrie (1985:36) puts, absolute tense refers to "... a tense which includes as part of its meaning the present moment as deitic centre." This is opposed to relative tense which does not have the present moment as the deitic centre.

3.2 The Present tense: unmarked

The present tense means coincidence of the time of the situation and the present moment.

Comrie, (1985:37) defines its use as

... referring to situations which occupy a much longer period of time than the present moment, but which nonetheless includes the present moment within them.

In Oku, the present tense is unmarked. It is however used in performative utterances and to express immediate action.

3.2.1 Performative acts

In a performative sentence, the act described by the sentence is performed by uttering the sentence in question.

For instance:

1. Mé Tsìò èighêl ē wén gé Báfòn
I name name his that Bafon
'I name him Bafon.'

This statement, constitutes the act of naming the child.

3.2.2 Immediate action (recent)

The infinitive or unmarked forms is also used to express immediate action. This could semantically be read as recent past and recent future. Examples include:

2. a) mé gwì kēn lēnēn
I come just now
'I have just come.'
- b) Ngùm ē gwì kēn lēnēn
Ngum o come just now
'Ngum is coming in a while.'

ē in the second example is not a grammatical marker. It is simply a phonological link.

3. ghēnē ndū ifā1
we go work
'We are going to work.'

The unmarked form of the present tense can express a lot of other meanings but we limit ourselves here to those that illustrate tenses: that is the present moment of speaking as point of focus.

The marked forms

We refer to marked forms as those that have a grammatical marker for tense. In the Oku language, tense is marked by auxiliaries. We will examine these auxiliaries closely with particular attention to the grammatical categories they indicate.

3.3.1 The past tenses

The past tense refers to the location of a situation in time prior to the present moment of speaking. In other words, the time is situated on the left of zero on the diagram of time on chart page 47.

We will examine the past tense in order of remoteness.

The kē marker

3.3.2 Today past (P1)

kē marks an action that can be situated within the day of speaking. It is hence limited to today that is why we refer to it as Today past, since it marks the most recent past grammatically, we refer to it as past one (P1). This is indicated by the morpheme kē (P1) which precedes the verb. An optional adverbial comes after the verb for emphasis of time. Examples:

4. a) Ndifon kē gwì Bisibisè
Ndifon P1 come in the morning
'Ndifon came this morning.'
- b) Ndifon kē gwì làn
Ndifon P1 come today
'Ndifon came today.'

3.3.3 Yesterday Past (P2) tsii

It is limited to an action that occurred yesterday. The yesterday Past P2 is marked by a second past marker morpheme:

tsii
P2

It precedes the verb and is followed by an optional adverbial of time.

5. a) Ngūm é tsii gwì nē ntùùkè
Ngum P2 come in night
'Ngum came last night.'

- b) Ngūm é tsii gwī iyìǎnà
Ngum P2 came yesterday
'Ngum came yesterday.'

3.3.4 Remote Past P3 nē

This covers a remote period, usually indicated by an adverbial of time. The nē morpheme marks the tense which is past, and the adverbial emphasis the time. For instance:

6. Ngum nē gwī əbwéi wé əb nē Tsán
Ngum P3 come market that it P3 pass
'Ngum came last week.'

Notice that the notion of a week as indicated in the above example is measured in terms of market days. From one market day to the other the period is considered a week.

The yesterday past, can however be marked with the distant past markers with a difference in tone as illustrated below:

7. Mə nē ló gwī
I P3 rest come
'I came yesterday.'

Here, there is some emphasis on the arrival yesterday. It is a special usage and therefore is more semantic and specified. More commonly, tsii will mark the yesterday past.

Notice that the change of tone on the above auxiliaries from high to low will give the meaning of a distant past.

8. Mā nā lō gwī
I P3 Pft come
'I came years ago.'

The more characteristic remote Past marker is however nā.

3.4 The Future Tenses

With the future tense, the situation or action is located at a time subsequent to the present moment. It is situated on the right of the present moment marked zero. See chart (page 47).

The future tense in Oku is marked by two grammatical markers in order of remoteness into the future:

nī and nā

These forms could equally give other future meanings like the potential future and the definite future.

3.4.1 The nī future marker near future F1

nī is the first grammatical form that marks future meaning. It precedes the verb in the infinitive or unmarked form.

This covers a period in the future which is nearer, say days, weeks and months. Examples:

9. a) Ngum é nī gwī ná ntsūkà làn
Ngum P1 come night today
'Ngum will come this night.'

- b) ǝb ē nii gwì lîki bitsii
He F1 come tomorrow
'He will come tomorrow.'

3.4.2 The náà future marker

Distant future F2

It covers a distance in the future of about a year or more. The distant future is marked by a grammatical morpheme náà as indicated in the following examples.

10. Ngũm ē náà gwì ǝbàm é ngûk sē tán
Ngum F2 come be year five
'Ngum shall come after five years.'

The tense system in Oku is however more semantically elaborate than what has been grammatically discussed. It is therefore possible to express other possible tense meanings not expressed here. This is especially true of relative tense; that is tense that does not have as its point of reference the present moment. What we have presented, is the essentials of the absolute tense system.

CHAPTER FOUR

ASPECT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter treats the various forms that mark aspect in the Oku language. We examine the marked and unmarked forms within the framework of the perfective and imperfective contrast. Like in the previous chapter, we identify the various grammatical morphemes, the combinations, and the aspectual meanings they convey. We start with a definition of aspect.

4.1.1 Definition of Aspect

Whereas tense examines the concept of time relations, aspect is concerned with the manner in which the verbal action is experienced or viewed.

Comrie (1985:3) defines aspect as "... different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation."

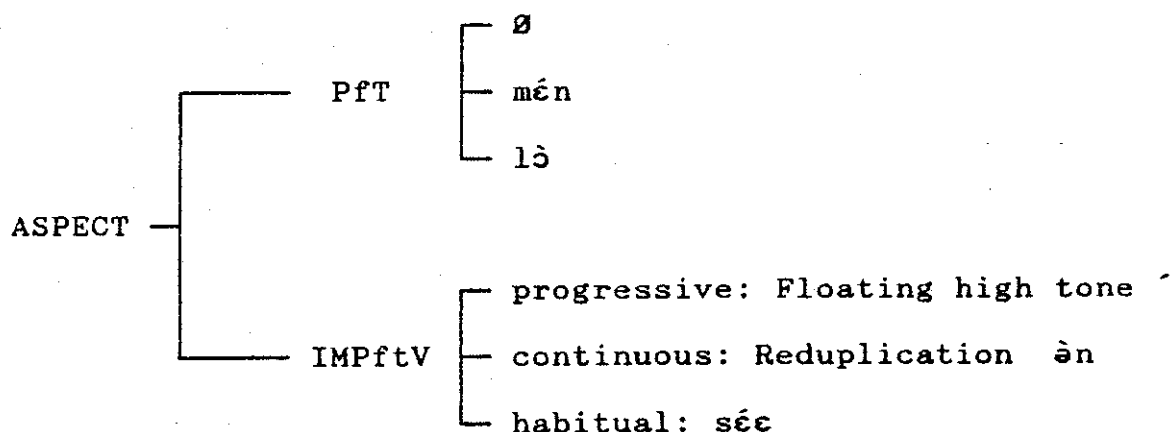
Aspect is therefore more concerned with how the action is expressed. Is it a complete or incomplete action? (perfect or imperfect)? How does the action fit into discourse? The answers to these questions are given under aspect.

We can study aspect in Oku, under the framework of the perfective and the imperfective contrast. The perfective is studied in relation to the Perfect Aspect. It is marked in Oku by the mèn morpheme.

The imperfective which indicates a progressive or continuous situation can be situated in the present, past and future. It is marked in Oku by a high tone morpheme é and a reduplicated form ending in a sound morpheme èn.

The framework can be summarized as follows:

Chart 4: Aspectual Frame



4.2 The Perfective

Whereas the perfect lays emphasis on a completed event with relevance or results, the perfective looks at the situation or event as a whole. It is usually used to contrast with imperfectivity which looks at the internal structure of the situation.

The perfective aspect looks at situations from outside

without necessarily distinguishing any of the internal structures of the situation. As Comrie (1985) puts it

... the whole situation is presented as a single unanalysable whole, with beginning, middle and end rolled into one.

Comrie further remarks that the perfective is often referred to as a completed or resultative situation. He however cautions, and rightly, that resultativity is only one possible type of perfectivity, and that the term "completed" puts unnecessary emphasis on the final stage of the situation rather than its meaning.

Perfective meaning can be expressed in the Oku language in the unmarked forms of the verb.

4.2.1 The Unmarked Forms

The unmarked forms refer to those that lack an overt aspect marker. It is hence not specifically marked for perfective or imperfective. We can however read perfective meaning in these forms in the present, past, and future.

4.2.1.1 The Present Perfective

This refers to a situation that is viewed as a whole in the present. Nothing is said about its internal constituency. Examples:

1. a) Ngum gwì
Ngum come
'Ngum comes/is coming.'

- b) Ngum súù dzèsè
Ngum wash cloths
'Ngum washes/is washing clothes.'

The above examples which are in the present, are ambiguous because they are not marked. The ambiguity can be removed if a tense marker indicates the point of reference. This defines the scope of the event and limits it to the past or future.

4.2.2 The Past Perfective

Here the event is viewed as a whole in the past.

2. a) Ngum kè gwì bīsābisā
Ngum P1 come morning
'Ngum came this morning.'

- b) Ngum tsii gwì àyionà
Ngum P2 come yesterday
'Ngum came yesterday.'

Here the adverbials of time lay emphasis to the limits of the event; this morning, and yesterday. It could equally be some other time in the past.

4.2.3 The Future Perfective

Here the point of reference is in the future. The event is hence viewed as a whole in the future. Examples:

3. a) Ngum nii gwì liki bitsii
Ngum F1 come tomorrow
'Ngum will come tomorrow.'
- b) Ngum nãã gwì
Ngum F2 come
'Ngum shall come.'

In Oku, perfective meaning is expressed more explicitly through the perfect marker.

4.3 The Perfect

These terms are usually used with Aspectual meanings. According to Comrie (1976:52).

The perfect tells us nothing directly about the situation in itself but rather relates some state to a preceding situation.

From this definition we can hence talk of present, past, and future perfect. In other words, the completed event can have results or relevance that persist to a particular moment in the past, present or future.

According to Huddleston (1988:77)

The perfect Aspectual meaning involves a situation resulting from the completion of an earlier situation.

4.3.1 The Perfect and the Perfective

The perfect and the perfective seem to be similar in that they have the notion of completedness. The perfect

looks at the result of this completed event whereas the perfective looks at the completed situation as a whole.

This similarity can be seen in the following sentence

"John has broken his leg."

Here, the action can be viewed as complete and a whole. This gives a perfective meaning. But when we view the event as having present relevance or result, it is simply perfect.

In Oku, perfective meaning can be semantically expressed in the unmarked form of the verb, that is the free stem or infinitive form. The perfective aspect also characterizes forms with the suffix *mén*, which can be identified more specifically as perfect aspect. We will now study the *mén* morpheme in detail.

4.3.2 The Marked Form (*mén*)

Perfective meaning is expressed in Oku by the perfect marker *mén*. We are looking at its perfective meaning here, that is considering the situation as a whole. The *mén* morpheme shows perfect meaning. It can hence be referred to as perfect aspect with perfective meaning.

4.3.2.1 The Present Perfect

4. a) Ngum gwimén
Ngum come Pft.
'Ngum has come.'

- b) Ngum làmén kàbán
Ngum cook Pft. fufu
'Ngum has cooked fufu.'

These examples can be viewed as perfect since the result of the past events 'coming' and 'cooking' are relevant now. They are equally perfective since the events are considered as a whole and viewed from outside.

4.3.2.2 The Future Perfect Aspect

The mén morpheme can also be used to express a future perfect aspectual meaning. Examples:

5. a) Nii lò lù likè bitsii likfē, mé yiemén
F1 cert obl tomorrow afternoon I eat Pf
'I will have eaten by tomorrow afternoon.'

- b) wé nii gwiyé likè bitsii likfè nā fō nā
you F1 come tomorrow afternoon back from bush

mé jiemén
I eat Pf

'I will have come by tomorrow evening.'

Here, the sentences express a relation between a future state and a situation prior to it, although there is no other specification of the absolute time of that prior action.

4.3.3 The Experiential Perfect Aspect:

nê + lô + verb + mên

The human mind is endowed with the ability to store information about the past. Comrie, (1985) holds that the experiential perfect refers to a situation that has held at least once during some time in the past reaching up to the present. The emphasis is however on the fact that the event held was complete. We can hence refer to it as perfective since the events are viewed as a whole. Examples:

6. a) Ngum nê lô k55 mên féə
Ngum P3 cert catch Pft rat
'Ngum once caught a rat.'
- b) Ngék nê lô binê mên kábin
Ngék P3 cert dance Pft. dance
'Ngék once danced a dance.'
- c) Ndifon nê lô mên gwī
Ndifon P3 cert. Pft. come
'Ndifon once came.'

Notice that the P3 marker is juxtaposed with the indicative modal and the perfective marker to give nê + lô + verb + mên. This gives the meaning of certainly or assurance of an act once completed in the past.

4.4 The Imperfective Aspect

Definition

Comrie (1985:4) defines the imperfective as

... crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation, since it can both look backwards towards the start of the situation and look forward to the end of the situation...

The imperfective can be sub-divided into the progressive, continuous and the habitual. The distinction between the progressive and the continuous though slim, still exists as will be illustrated in this chapter.

4.4.1 The Progressive

Leech (1971:17) gives an explicit explanation that

the progressive aspect generally has the effect of surrounding a particular event or moment by a temporal frame which can be diagrammed simply as follows

Past Present Future



This is within the flow of time, there is some point of reference from which the temporary eventuality indicated by the verb can be seen as sketching into the future and into the past.

The progressive is expressed in the following forms:

A./ The floating high tone morpheme form

This has to do with a high tone at the end of the verb.
This can be realized in sentences in all the tenses.

4.4.1.1 The Present Progressive

Here the point of orientation is normally identical
with 'now' the present moment of real time. Examples:

7. a) ēb yāmé njān
He singing song
'He is singing a song.'
- b) ghēnā Tsàklá
They jumping
'They are jumping.'
- c) kēbé sē jōfē gwīyá
outside good come
'The weather is getting bright.'

4.4.1.2 The Past Progressive

With the progressive past, some other definite point of
reference in the past is assumed. In Oku, this is made
explicit with the past tense markers kē, tsii, ná + verb H.

Examples:

8. a) ēb kē kēkē kā ēb yāfá
He P1 look like he ill
'He was looking ill.'
- b) ēb ē tsii tēmá ēbvés
He P2 shoot fire
'He was firing a gun.'

- c) ɛ̀b nà mǎkté kátù
He P3 nodding head
'He was nodding.'

4.4.1.3 The Future Progressive

It is marked by the future tense markers *nii*, and *nàà* + verb (H).

9. a) mǎ níf bǎné
I F1 sleeping
'I will be sleeping.'
- b) Ngum ɛ̀ nàà gwíyá
Ngum F2 coming
'Ngum will be coming.'

Notice that the tense does not change the progressive marker.

4.4.3 The Continuous Aspect

Definition

According to Comrie (1976:12) the term 'continuous' is a subdivision of "progressiveness". He defines progressiveness as "the combination of continuousness with nonstativity". The emphasis here seems to be laid on the actuality of the continuity of the event, while the progressive though involving continuity, is more of a process. The continuous aspect is marked in Oku by a reduplicated form.

The Reduplicated Form

Reduplication has to do with iterating or repeating the same form usually for emphasis. In Oku, this form is composed of two forms of the same verb. The first is in the stem or root form. The second in the same form plus a suffix éñ. We hence have the following form.

10. mé gwì gwìyèn
I come come (cont.)
'I am continuing to come.'

The stem is free in the first form (that is when it is alone), it is however bound when the suffix éñ is added to it in the second form. Here the emphasis is on the continuousness of the action. This continuity is relevant to the reference point which could be present, past, future.

Notice that the progressive form earlier illustrated, though engulfing the continuous, does not lay the same emphasis on the continuousness of the action. For instance:

11. mé gwìyé
I come prog.
'I am (in the process of) coming.'

Here the emphasis seems to be laid on the process rather than the continuity. It is possible that the speaker here views the act of coming as a process covering a space in time. The continuous is considered as part of this process.

4.4.3.1 The Present Continuous

This marks an action in progress at the present moment. It gives the meaning of an action still going on. For instance:

12. a) mǎ yēn yēnēn
I see see (cont.)
'I am continuing to see.'
- b) mǎ bàklē bàklēn
I build build (cont.)
'I am continuing to build.'
- c) mǎ giàtē giàtēn
I divide divide (cont.)
'I am continuing to divide.'

4.4.3.2 The Past Continuous

This refers to a continuous situation in the past. It lays emphasis on a particular time when you were actually on the move (coming). Examples:

13. a) mǎ kē gwī gwīyēn
I P1 come come (cont.) (last night)
'I was continuing to come.'
- b) mǎ tsii gwī gwīyēn
I P2 come come (cont.)
'I was continuing to come (yesterday).'
- c) mǎ nē lō gwī gwīyēn
I P3 cert come come (cont.)
'I was coming (last year).'

4.4.3.3 Future Continuous

This refers to a situation that will take place in the future. It is expected to stretch continuously within a period.

14. a) mǎ nii gwì gwiyan
I F1 come come (cont.)
'I will be coming (tomorrow).'
- b) mǎ nǎà gwì gwiyan
I F2 come come (cont.)
'I will be coming (next month).'

The continuous can be expressed in all the tenses. Adverbials could be used optionally to indicate the time for precision.

4.4.4 The Habitual

According to Comrie (1983:28) the habitual

... describes a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time. The situation is so extended that it is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely as a characteristic feature of a whole period.

We can identify the present habitual and the Past habitual in Oku.

4.4.4.1 The Present Habitual

The present habitual represents a series of recurrent events, actions or situations which as a whole make up a state stretching back into the past and forward in to the future. It is marked by *séc* as the following examples show.

15. a) Ngum ē séc gwì fén bisè bisē ēbjəm
Ngum hab. come here morning all
'Ngum comes here every morning.'
- b) eyíð tsúù séc tóó ēbtsii ēbjəm
up sun hab. shine day all
'The sun shines every day.'
- c) əb kwələ séc nāŋ
he deficate hab. much
'He always deficates.'

The habit does hold at the present moment and that is why the present tense in principle is an appropriate tense to use in describing the habitual situation.

4.4.4.2 The Habitual Past

This refers to a situation that used to be habitual in the past. The meaning that accompanies this is that the situation described no longer holds.

In Oku, generally it is the P3 (Past tense) marker *nà* which goes with the habitual marker *séc* to mark this aspect.

Examples:

16. a) ēb ná sēc ēbyé kālē ibīī
He P3 hab. he eat cola
'He used to eat cola.'

b) ēb ná sēc yīsà nù ēmdùk
He P3 hab. always drink wine
'He used to drink wine.'

The past habitual can also go with the experiential perfect marker lō as in the following examples.

17. a) ēb sēc lō ēbyùtē kàṅsē
He hab. cert. kill monkies
'He used to kill monkies.'

b) ēb sēc lō ēbyē bìn
he hab. cert. he dance
'He used to dance.'

With the experiential perfect, the habitual is emphasised as a property of a particular time long in the past.

We can observe from the above analysis of Aspect in Oku, that Aspect is related to tenses while tense simply situates the action in time. Aspect, observes how this action is situated in time. It looks at its internal constituency. It describes the nature of the situation, usually as complete or incomplete. The link between Tense and Aspect is so close that the two can be said to complement each other.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOOD

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the mood system in Oku. We bring in the notion of modality because the mood system is enriched by the modals. The chapter starts with a general explanation of mood and modality. We then move on to these categories in Oku. Like in the previous chapters, we pay particular attention to the forms through which mood and modality are expressed.

5.1 Definition of Mood

Mood is a verbal category usually realized in the sentence. According to Palmer (1986:21)

The term 'mood' is traditionally restricted to a category expressed in verbal morphology. It is formally a morpho syntactic category like tense and Aspect, even though its semantic functions relate to the contents of the whole sentence...

This remark indicates that mood is marked by morphological components of the verb in the sentence. This is in line with Bybee (1985:22) that

even though mood is expressed as a verbal

inflection, it is clear that it has the whole proposition on its scope and does not only modify the verb.

The term mood also involves the expression of feelings, emotions and various options of the speaker's statement. Mood is hence subjective because it is up to the speaker to choose the way he says what he says. This ties with Lyons (1968:307) that mood is "... the grammaticalization of speakers subjective attitudes and opinions."

Abangma, (1987) gives three options of mood in his definition when he refers to mood as

speaker's communicative options that serve to identify the speech act in a given clause. The speaker's communicative options might be to inform, request information or command.

These three options give what has been traditionally referred to as the indicative (declarative), interrogative and imperative moods.

5.1.1 Modality

In order to better understand mood in Oku, we need some knowledge of modality.

We can distinguish between grammatical mood and semantic modality just in the same way we distinguish between Tense, a category of grammatical form and Time, and category of meaning.

As Palmer (1986:21) states:

The distinction between mood and modality is then similar to that between tense and time gender and sex.

Huddleston (1988:78) further points out that

Modality is expressed by a variety of linguistic devices, lexical, grammatical and prosodic.

He quotes the following lexical items in English as having modal meanings.

Modal Verbs

May, must, can, be, shall, ought

Modal Adverbs

Perhaps, maybe, possibly

A distinction has been made between Epistemic and Deontic modalities.

5.1.1.1 Epistemic Modality

According to Huddleston (1988:78) "Epistemic derives from the Greek word meaning 'knowledge'. These uses are thus called epistemic because they involve implications concerning the speaker's knowledge of the situations.

He uses the following English sentences for illustration:

- (i) He may be ill.
- (ii) He must be a friend of hers.
- (iii) He will have finished by now.

Without the underlined modals, it is implied that the speaker is sure of his assertion. The modals hence indicate the lack of immediate knowledge to confirm the assertion. We can hence read a conditional meaning, or possibility. In a strong usage it can mean necessity.

5.1.1.2 Deontic Modality

Huddleston (1988:78) similarly traces 'Deontic' from another Greek word meaning 'binding'. In these uses there are implications of obligation, prohibition, permission and the like. In the following examples

- (i) You can/may have another apple.
- (ii) He must/be in bed before 8 o'clock.
- (iii) You shall have your money back.

there is some implied knowledge which binds the assertion.

5.1.2 Differences between Mood and Modality

After explanations of mood and modality, we can identify differences between the two. Mood in Oku seems to be marked on the verb or through auxiliaries. Modality on the other hand is marked by lexical items like modals as earlier shown.

Huddleston (1988:80) summarizes the difference between mood and modality as follows:

Mood involves the grammaticalization of Modality... Mood applies to a system of the verb marked inflectionally or analytically (by auxiliaries) where just one term, the most elementary, is characteristically used, in making assured factual assertions, while the other terms, by contrast are characteristically used to express various forms of Modality.

5.2 Modality in Oku

In our definition of modality, we examined epistemic and deontic meanings. The accompanying meanings or interpretations were: possibility, necessity, prohibition, obligation and permission. The modal adverbials *tàm* "may", and *finè* "might", express these meanings.

5.2.1 Tàm (Epistemic)

may (possibility)

This adverbial, introduces doubt in the proposition. It gives the interpretation that the occurrence of the event depends on a possibility. It can hence be referred to as epistemic since the notion of possibility (or probability) is carried in the epistemic modality. Examples:

1. a) *Tàm ēb nāà nāk*
Maybe he F2 write
'He shall probably write.'

b) Tàm ēb yàfə yàfán
maybe he hurt hurt cont
'He may be ill.'

c) Tàm ēb kə ndùmén
maybe he P1 go Pft
'He might have gone.'

The presence of Tàm introduces doubt in the proposition. The sentence has the meaning of what Bybee (1985) calls the dubitative. According to her, the dubitative expresses an element of doubt that the event described in the proposition occurred or will occur.

Notice that with the absence of the adverbial Tàm the sentence is without any modal colouring. For instance:

2. a) ēb nāà ndù
he F2 go
'He shall go.'

b) ēb yàfə yàfán
he hurt hurt (cont)
'He is ill.'

c) ēb kə ndùmén
he P1 go pert
'He went.'

finè (possibility)

This is another adverbial which gives the meaning of a possibility expressed by the epistemic modality. Examples include:

3. finē ē kə nàimén
might he P1 do pert.
'He might have done it.'

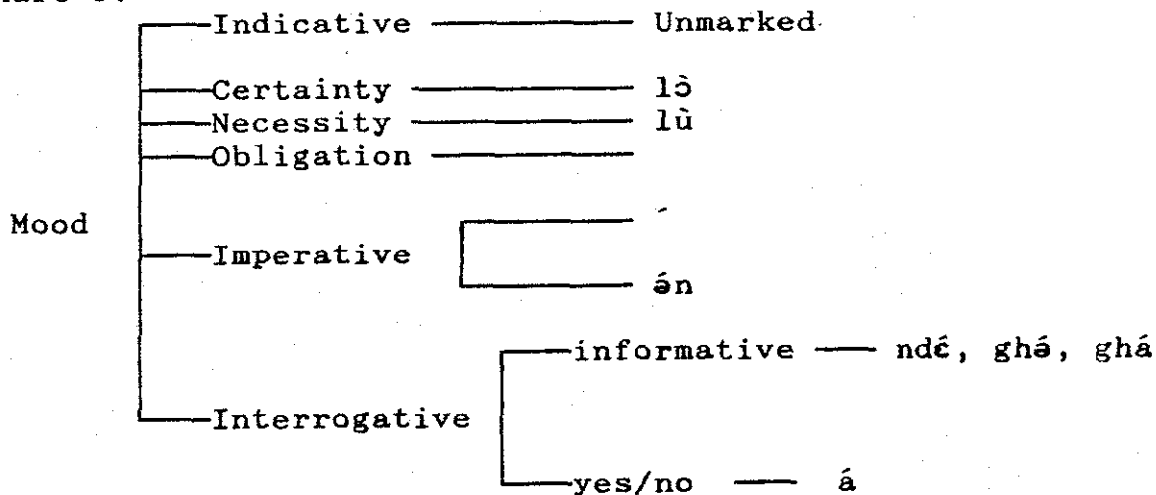
There is a lack of certainty in this statement expressed by *finē* "might". It depends therefore on a possibility that he could have done it. The speaker hasn't the immediate knowledge to enable him make a factual statement as

4. *ēb kē nēimēn*
he P1 do *gert*
'He has done it.'

5.3 Moods in Oku

The mood system in Oku can be divided into the indicative, mood of certainty, the imperative, and the interrogative.

Chart 5:



5.3.1 The Indicative Mood

The indicative mood specifies that the speaker knows what he is asserting. It could be stating a fact without

questioning it. Here we talk of the declarative. If it is asking a question of fact, we talk of the interrogative. The declarative, is a term often used in contrast to the interrogative. In Oku, the indicative mood is unmarked.

5. a) mē dzēmē ēbtsiī əbjəm
I pray day all
'I pray every day.'
- b) ēb ē tsīi tēmā əbvés
he P2 shoot (prog) fire
'He was firing a gun.'
- c) Ngum nii gwī
Ngum F1 come
'Ngum will come.'

The majority of the statements in the language are indicative. This is because it is a simple way of talking. It is only when emphasis is laid on the proposition that we can start reading other moods in them.

5.3.2 The Mood of Certainty "lō"

Emphasis could be laid on the statement by the morpheme lō. It emphasizes the certainty of the occurrence of the event. We can hence refer to lō here as a marker of certainty. Examples include:

6. a) ēb nīi lō fēi
he F1 cert fall
'He will fall.'

- b) Ngék nê lô jié kâbân
Ngék P3 cert eat fufu
'Ngek once ate fufu.'

These statements do not indicate any doubt on the part of the speaker.

The lô morpheme, has both the meaning of the perfect and mood. Notice that our last example can be interpreted as an experiential perfect (see aspect). This is not surprising since the perfect, especially the past perfect refers to complete, and hence factual events.

5.3.3 Epistemic lù (Mood of Necessity)

Lù can also give the meaning of necessity as the following examples indicate.

7. Wé kê lù sē nái
You P1 be to cook.
'You had to cook.'

Here it indicates the necessity of a particular time in the past to cook.

8. Ngùm lù sē gwì
Ngum be to come
'Ngum is supposed to come.'

There is the need for Ngum to come, so it is necessary that he comes.

5.3.4 Deontic 'lù'

Mood of Obligation

The Deontic Modality can give the meaning of obligation as indicated below.

9. Ngék lù sē fēnē ilīm ghī
Ngék obl to see yam that
'Ngek has to sell those yams.'

Without 'lù' the sentence is reduced to the indicative mood.

For instance:

10. Ngék sē fēnē ilīm ghī
Ngék inf sells yam this
'Ngek sells these yams.'

This second sentence, is weaker than the first. There is no sign of obligation in it. The following example further illustrates the modal meaning of lù.

11. Ngék lù sē yiē kēbām ki
Ngék obl to eat fufu this
'Ngek must eat this fufu.'

Here, Ngek is under the obligation to eat the fufu.

5.3.5 The Imperative Mood

The imperative mood is one of commands, insistence, and obligations. It indicates a great determination. The imperative mood is expressed inflectionally in Oku. It exists in both the floating high tone, and the reduplicated morpheme forms. The following chart illustrates this.

5.3.5.2 Positive Imperative

Chart The Imperative Mood Chart

Infinitive	high tone form	reduplicated form
sā m̀: s̀ to abolish	m̄: s̄ Abolish!	m̄: s̄ m̀: s̄n Abolish quickly!
sā b̀kl̀ to build	b̀kl̄ Build!	b̀kl̄ b̀kl̄n Build quickly!
sā gw̄ to come	gw̄ȳ Come!	gw̄ gw̄ȳn Come quickly!
sā j̄ to eat	j̄k̄ Eat!	j̄ j̄k̄n Eat quickly!

In the high tone form, the verb is usually simple. The subject and the object are only implied. This morpheme is homophonous to the imperfective usage.

The reduplicated form is a combination of the continuous aspect with an imperative mood marker, which is the high tone. The difference between the two is hence just that of tone. The continuous morpheme is with a low tone ̀n, while the imperative is in the high tone ̄n.

5.3.5.2 The Negative Imperative

The negative states the contrary of what is known or unknown. It emphasizes or warns in the negative form. It is also called the prohibitive mood by some grammarians.

In Oku, it is expressed by

12. k̄f̄
Don't

Examples:

a) k̄f̄é ndù
Don't go!

b) k̄f̄é yié k̄b̄án k̄i
Don't eat fufu that
'Don't eat that fufu.'

In general, the imperative is marked by the high tone in Oku. This seems obvious since it expresses some obligation or command.

5.3.6 The Interrogative Mood

It indicates a situation of uncertainty which initiates a question. It is usually used in contrast to the declarative. There is controversy over the interrogative as a mood. This is perhaps because all declarative statements could be turned to questions. But in reality, the speaker does this because he is not certain of a fact and needs information. It is hence a mood of uncertainty. Adivé (1989) and Tanyi (1990) have convincingly studied the interrogative as a mood in Kenyang and Epira languages respectively. The interrogative is characterized by a rising intonation at the end of the statement. In Oku, we can divide the interrogative into a) information questions and b) Yes/No questions.

5.3.6.1 Information Questions

This refers to questions that require some information as an answer. The answer thus involves an explanation. In Oku, this is marked by

13. a) ndé
 who
 b) ghé
 what
 c) ghá
 where.

Examples:

14. a) Yùitè ndé kvèghàm yín
 kill who pig this
 'Who has killed this pig?'
 b) ghàsàn nīī ghé
 we F1 what
 'What should we do?'
 c) mé ndù ghá lènhén
 I go where now
 'Where will I go now?'

In the above examples, the speaker is uncertain and seeks for information. That is why we call the above forms information questions.

5.3.6.2 The Yes/No Question

This refers to questions that necessitate Yes or No as an answer. The dominant question marker in Oku is a rising

intonation at the end of the sentence. It usually ends with the question morpheme á. Examples:

15. a) wé jí kàbána
you eat fufu
'Do you eat fufu.'

b) wé gwiya
you come
'Are you coming?'

The question marker could be on the object Noun Phrase or on the Verb Phrase depending on which one comes at the end of the sentence.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

We started this study with the aim of studying the various forms of the Oku verb that mark tense, aspect and mood. As such, we studied the various grammatical and lexical forms separately. We viewed their morphological, syntactic, and semantic classifications and functions. We discovered that the Oku verb phrase is made up of a main verb, auxiliaries and modals.

Tense in Oku is a morpho-syntactic property. It is not inflectional like in English where the past tense marker is usually an inflection or suffix at the end of the verb. Auxiliaries like *kè*, *tsiì*, *nè*, *nii*, and *nàà* mark the various tenses in Oku. Usually, adverbs of time like

<i>làn</i> ,	<i>likè bitsiì</i> ,	<i>bisèbisè</i>
today	in the evening,	morning

precise the time of the event. However, the Oku tense system is similar to that of other grassfield Bantu languages like Bafut.

Aspect, has its own peculiarities as well, though the perfect exist in the unmarked forms of the verb, it is overtly expressed by *mén* and *lò*. What is interesting about these morphemes is that *mén* appear either after the verb, or

before it. l̄ɔ̄ is not only an experiential perfect marker, but a mood marker. The imperfective is characterised by inflections. The floating high tone marks the progressive. Unlike in English, no overt auxiliary marks the continuous. It is instead marked by a reduplicated form plus ɛ̄n in Oku.

Another morpheme s̄ɛc marks the habitual. A common feature of the imperfective in Oku, is that it is marked by the high tone.

The mood system, is very rich. Apart from the indicative which is unmarked, the auxiliaries l̄ɔ̄ and l̄u are very predominant in the mood system. They mark certainty and necessity respectively. The imperative and the interrogative are marked by the high tone. This seems to be a common aspect of language since these two moods, involve emphasis. This emphasis naturally comes at the end of the expression in a rising intonation. It is interesting that the interrogative in addition to the á morpheme which is a marker of Yes/No questions, we also have information question markers

nd̄ɛ,	gh̄ɛ,	gh̄á
who,	what,	where

These markers are similar to what we call the wh- types in English.

The modals,

T̄am,	fin̄á
may,	might,

characterise the epistemic meaning of possibility like in English.

6.2 Verb Phrase structure

can summarize the verb phrase in Oku as follows:

Rule 11:

(MDL)	S	(T)	(MD)	(PP)	V-(INFL)	(PP)	(O)
Ø	NP	Ø	Ø	sā	VP	Ø	sā
finə		nii	lù	séε	/		
		náā	lò		ən		
		kə			mén		
Tám		tsiì					
		nè					

Modality	Subject	Tense	Mood	PP	Aspect Inflection	PP	Object
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PP - Prepositional Phrase

NP - Noun Phrase

Ø - unmarked

A sentence can take any of the following structures:

MDL	S	T	MD	V	+	INFL	+ O
MDL	S	T	MD	V	+	INFL	
MDL	S	T	MD	V			
	S	T	MD	V	+	INFL	
				V		(INFL)	

Modality	Subject	Tense	Mood	Verb	Inflection	object
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6.3 Complex constructions

We have endeavoured, to simplify the verb phrase into its simple form. However, there are more complex constructions, which seem to make the verb phrase more striking.

For instance all the past tense markers can come together in the following expression:

2. nà kâ tsîi mên gwî
P3 it P2 Pft come
'It has already come.
It has happened.'

This expression is impersonal and could be referred to as an idiomatic expression. It expresses surprise and dispair.

3. kâ lù sâ gwî
It NEC to come
'It had to happen.'

These expressions are usually impersonal.

4. kâ nâ lô mé gàn gé má lù sâ jié
It P3 cert. just happen that I NEC to eat
'It just happened that I had to eat.'
occured

In the above three examples, the auxiliary kâ is not a Past tense marker but an impersonal pronoun.

Another observation we discover from these constructions is their structures. For instance if we bring them together, we can have:

- | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| 5. | AUX | AUX | AUX | AUX |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | nâ | kâ | tsîi | mên |
| | kâ | niî | sâ | |
| | kâ | nâ | lô | má |

The structure of these phrases is quite complex and due to our limited scope, we cannot authoritative give their syntactic structures. In a subsequent study of the syntax

of the verb phrase, such constructions could be given closer attention.

6.4 Relationship between Tense, Aspect and Mood

Tense, Aspect and Mood are categories that can further specify or characterize the basic predications which can be referred to as the event. Tense locates the event in time. Aspect characterizes the internal temporal structure of the event. Mood describes the actuality of the event in terms such as, possibility, obligation, necessity, certainty and desirability. This relationship can be illustrated in the following sentence in Oku.

6. Ngum nê lô gwì fên
Ngum P3 cert. come here
'Ngum once came here.'

This sentence is located in time, which is the past. The past tense marker nê indicates this.

The whole event is viewed as a whole and complete (perfective aspect). The presence of lô emphasis on the certainty of the speaker. This gives us the mood of certainty.

6.5 Areas for further research

We invite other researchers for a semantic study of the language. We discovered that tone plays a very important part in the morphology of the language. We invite future

researchers to pay particular attention to this domain. We equally call on researchers on tone languages in general to pay particular attention to the tone because it usually constitute part of the grammar of the language.

We believe that this research though modest will provoke constructive criticisms from readers. As such we could be reminded of our short comings which could be perfected in subsequent studies.

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