

Questionnaire on Tense and Aspect in African Languages

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Introduction

This questionnaire seeks to establish a number of facts related to the encoding and interpretation of temporal relations in African languages. The specific goals of this exercise are (i) to establish if tense systems have clearly marked temporal boundaries (for example some languages mark hodiernal and hesternal past/future) and thus determine what 'remote/distant' and 'near/recent' tenses mean; (ii) to establish if (and the extent to which) the present tense is distinguished from habitual and (present) progressive aspect; (iii) to determine the extent to which the tense/aspect system is intertwined with the encoding of the 'persistence of the effects' or lack thereof of a past situation (see example 1 below); and (iv) to determine the flexibility in the uses of particular tenses in a language.

As you provide sentences based on the model sentence, please provide, for every example, a latinized version of the pronunciation as it might appear in works written in your language (the 'original text' line), and if there are no standard representations that make the pronunciation clear, please indicate to us as much as you can (in some prefatory remarks) how your transcriptions should be pronounced. If you find it best to use the phonetic alphabet, please do so, but it is not necessary as long as your instructions are clear enough.

Present each example with a morpheme breakdown as well indicating, as best you can, the distinctions between the morphemes. All morphemes within the same word should be separated by dashes and any morpheme that codes several features in an undecomposable form should distinguish the relevant elements by separation with periods. The following examples from ciNsenga are illustrative.

Example 1 (ciNsenga, Bantu N41)

- 1a) Khuzwayo waꞑnoꞑla ꞑ mkoꞑndoꞑ
Khuzwayo w-a-nol-a mkondo
Khuzwayo SM.C1-PST-sharpen-fv 3.spear
'Khuzwayo sharpened the spear'
- 1b) Khuzwayo eꞑnzeꞑ waꞑnoꞑla ꞑ mkoꞑndoꞑ
Khuzwayo ø-e-nze w-a-nol-a mkondo
SM.C1-PST-be SM.C1-PST-sharpen-fv 3.spear
'Khuzwayo sharpened the spear'

Both sentences in Example 1 describe an event that occurred on the day of utterance (hodiernal past). The difference is that 1a) implies that the spear in question is still sharp (i.e. the effects of 'sharpening' persist) at the time of utterance whereas 1b) implies that the spear is no longer sharp (i.e. the effects of sharpening no longer persist) at utterance time. These interpretive distinctions are exemplary of the sorts of distinctions you will be asked to be sensitive to in answering the questions below. Please be sure to comment whenever you think it will clarify what you take the interpretation to be, and especially if the sentence is acceptable under one interpretation, but not another. If you notice something special, or you want to clarify the

morphology or syntax, please comment on that as well (right below the example or set of examples in question. Finally, if a model sentence has more than one translation, be sure to provide both and please indicate, as best you can, whatever differences in meaning or conversational usage might distinguish using one translation or the other.

As the last remarks indicate, in many of the tasks that follow, you will be asked not only for a translation of a model sentence, but for judgments about the scenarios in which the sentence can be appropriately uttered. Please be sure to indicate as clearly as possible which reading for any given sentence is the one you find acceptable and if you find that some examples are more acceptable than others, please use our acceptability scale to give graded judgments, if you feel that such gradations accurately capture your intuitions. The scale is as follows:

* Unacceptable either at all or at least under the interpretation that you have been asked about.

*? Very marginally possible, perhaps only by comparison with an example or interpretation that is clearly *

?? Very odd. You probably would not say this sentence this way or would not say it this way for the interpretation you have been asked about.

? Just a little off. Something not quite right about it.

OK This sounds like a natural sentence and is an appropriate sentence to use for the interpretation that you have been asked about.

If you have any questions about how to proceed or you would like to check if you are filling in the questionnaire in the way desired, please contact me at R.Simango@ru.ac.za.

Questionnaire

Translate all the sentences in this questionnaire into the specified language in accordance with the context given.

Specify the language into which you are translating here: _____

A1. The event or situation occurred today

- a) Jack moulded a clay pot
- b) Mavuto went to the market
- c) Timothy insulted the man
- d) Maureen closed the door
- e) Jennifer combed her hair

A2. The event or situation occurred yesterday (if the sentences are identical those in (A1), say 'same as above')

- a) Jack moulded a clay pot
- b) Mavuto went to the market
- c) Timothy insulted the man
- d) Maureen closed the door
- e) Jennifer combed her hair

A3. The event or situation occurred two days ago (if the sentences are identical to those in (A2), say 'same as above')

- a) Jack moulded a clay pot

- b) Mavuto went to the market
 - c) Timothy insulted the man
 - d) Maureen closed the door
 - e) Jennifer combed her hair
- A4. The event or situation occurs on a regular basis
- a) Jack washes his own dishes
 - b) Mavuto goes to the market
 - c) Timothy likes the man
 - d) Maureen rides a bicycle
 - e) Jennifer draws pictures
- A5. The event or situation is currently ongoing
- a) Jack is washing his own dishes
 - b) Mavuto is going to the market
 - c) Timothy is speaking to the man
 - d) Maureen is riding a bicycle
 - e) Jennifer is drawing pictures
- A6. The event or situation will occur later today
- a) Jack will wash his own dishes
 - b) Mavuto will go to the market
 - c) Timothy will insult the man
 - d) Maureen will ride a bicycle
 - e) Jennifer will draw pictures
- A7. The event or situation will occur tomorrow (if the sentences are identical to those in (A6), say 'same as above').
- a) Jack will wash his own dishes
 - b) Mavuto will go to the market
 - c) Timothy will insult the man
 - d) Maureen will ride a bicycle
 - e) Jennifer will draw pictures
- A8. The event or situation will occur the day after tomorrow (if the sentences are identical to those in (A7), say 'same as above')
- a) Jack will wash his own dishes
 - b) Mavuto will go to the market
 - c) Timothy will insult the man
 - d) Maureen will ride a bicycle
 - e) Jennifer will draw pictures
- * If your language has other forms of marking future time over and above those indicated in A6 – A8, please indicate and provide examples following the pattern above.
- A9. The event or situation was ongoing at the said time
- a) Jack was washing dishes when we arrived
 - b) Mavuto was going to the market when we met him
 - c) Timothy was speaking to the man when Sam left
 - d) Maureen was riding a bicycle when we saw her

- e) Jennifer was drawing pictures before we arrived
- A10. The event or situation had just come to pass at the said time
- Jack had just washed the dishes when we arrived
 - Mavuto had gone to the market when we left
 - Timothy had spoken to the man that morning
 - Maureen had ridden a bicycle for three months
 - Jennifer had drawn pictures before we arrived
- A11. The event or situation will be ongoing at the said time
- Jack will be washing his clothes when we arrive home
 - Mavuto will be going to the market in the morning
 - Timothy will be speaking to the man starting tomorrow
 - Maureen will be riding a bicycle from next week
 - Jennifer will be drawing pictures until you return
- B1. The event or situation occurred today (assume the information in brackets to be true at the time of speaking).
- Jack moulded a clay pot (*The pot still exists*)
 - Mavuto went to the market (*Mavuto is at the market*)
 - Timothy insulted the man (*The man is angry*)
 - Maureen closed the door (*The door is closed*)
 - Jennifer combed her hair (*The hair looks kempt*)
- B2. The event or situation occurred today (assume the information in brackets to be true at the time of speaking. Note: if the sentences are identical to those in (B1), say 'same as above').
- Jack moulded a clay pot (*the pot is broken*)
 - Mavuto went to the market (*Mavuto has since returned from the market or gone to another place*)
 - Timothy insulted the man (*Timothy has since apologized and the man has forgiven him*)
 - Maureen closed the door (*The door is open*)
 - Jennifer combed her hair (*The hair is dishevelled*)
- B3. The event or situation occurred yesterday (assume the information in brackets is true at the time of speaking. Note: if the sentences are identical to those in (B1/B2), say 'same as above').
- Jack moulded a clay pot (*The pot still exists*)
 - Mavuto went to the market (*Mavuto is at the market*)
 - Timothy insulted the man (*The man is angry*)
 - Maureen closed the door (*The door is closed*)
 - Jennifer combed her hair (*The hair looks kempt*)
- B4. The event or situation occurred yesterday (assume the information in brackets is true at the time of speaking. Note: if the sentences are same those in (B3), say 'same as above')
- Jack moulded a clay pot (*the pot is broken*)
 - Mavuto went to the market (*Mavuto has returned from the market or gone to another place*).
 - Timothy insulted the man (*Timothy has since apologized and the man has forgiven him*)

- d) Maureen closed the door (*The door is open*).
- e) Jennifer combed her hair (*The hair is dishevelled*).

B5. The event or situation occurred the day before yesterday (assume the information in brackets is true at the time of speaking. Note: if the sentences are identical to those in B3/B4, say 'same as above').

- a) Jack moulded a clay pot (*the pot still exists*)
- b) Mavuto went to the market (*Mavuto is at the market*)
- c) Timothy insulted the man (*The man is angry*)
- d) Maureen closed the door (*The door is closed*)
- e) Jennifer combed her hair (*The hair looks kempt*)

B6. The event or situation occurred the day before yesterday (assume the information in brackets is true at the time of speaking. Note: if the sentences are identical to those in B3/B4, say 'same as above').

- a) Jack moulded a clay pot (*the pot is broken*)
- b) Mavuto went to the market (*Mavuto has returned from the market or gone to another place*)
- c) Timothy insulted the man (*Timothy has since apologized and the man has forgiven him*)
- d) Maureen closed the door (*The door is open*)
- e) Jennifer combed her hair (*The hair is dishevelled*)

* If your language has other forms of marking past situations over and above those indicated in B1 – B6, please indicate and provide examples following the pattern above.

C1. Using the same verb forms you chose for A1 state if it is possible to say that the event took place yesterday or the day before yesterday.

- a) Jack moulded a clay pot yesterday/the day before yesterday
- b) Mavuto went to the market yesterday/the day before yesterday
- c) Timothy insulted the man yesterday/the day before yesterday
- d) Maureen closed the door yesterday/the day before yesterday
- e) Jennifer combed her hair yesterday/the day before yesterday

C2. Using the same verb forms you chose for A2 and A3 state if it is possible to say that the event took place today.

- a) Jack moulded a clay pot today
- b) Mavuto went to the market today
- c) Timothy insulted the man today
- d) Maureen closed the door today
- e) Jennifer combed her hair today

C3. Using the same verb forms you chose for A5 state if it is possible to say that the event will occur tomorrow/the day after tomorrow/next week.

- a) Jack will wash his own dishes tomorrow/the day after tomorrow/next week
- b) Mavuto will go to the market tomorrow/the day after tomorrow/next week
- c) Timothy will insult the man tomorrow/the day after tomorrow/next week
- d) Maureen will ride a bicycle tomorrow/the day after tomorrow/next week
- e) Jennifer will draw pictures tomorrow/the day after tomorrow/next week

- C4. Using the same verb forms you chose for A7 state if it is possible to say that the events will take place today and translate each sentence with the intended meaning in mind.
- a) Jack will wash his own dishes today
 - b) Mavuto will go to the market today
 - c) Timothy will insult the man today
 - d) Maureen will ride a bicycle today
 - e) Jennifer will draw pictures today