Aspectual Contrasts in Tutrugbu (Nyagbo)

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1. Introduction

The Kwa languages of West Africa have been analyzed as either tenseless (Manfredi 1991) or aspect-prominent. For example Kropp Dakubu (1987: 60) notes that relations of tense or time sequence are not as important in the structure of the VP in Ga, a Kwa language spoken in Ghana, as relations of the kind commonly called aspectual: "whether or not an event or action is (or was or will be) actual and/or not."Osam (2008) also argues that most of the forms that were analyzed as tense in Akan are actually aspectual forms that are becoming grammaticalized into tense. In the introduction to their edited volume of Aspect and Modality in Kwa, Ameka and Kropp Dabuku (2008) write:

> The idea that aspect is more important in some languages 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] 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
> (Ameka and Kropp Dakubu 2008:1).

Several papers in the volume substantiate this claim, including one by Essegbey which shows that a morpheme, *(l)a* in Ewe, a Kwa language spoken in southeastern Ghana and Togo, which had been analyzed earlier as a future-tense morpheme rather expresses potential meaning. Essegbey argues therefore that *(l)á-* is best analyzed as a modal morpheme. Ameka and Kropp Dakubu (2008) propose therefore that the Kwa languages are aspect prominent languages. In the present paper, I explore the tense-aspect categories in Tutrugbu in order to determine how one should characterize the language. I argue that some forms which can potentially be analyzed as tense have primarily modal or aspectual meanings and, therefore, are not tense morphemes. This would suggest that Tutrugbu is also a tenseless language.[1]

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: in section 2, I discuss briefly the Tutrugbu language and its people. Section 3 provides general typological characteristics of the language while section 4 discusses the verbal markers. This section is sub-divided into the forms that are non-controversially aspectual and those that could be analyzed as tense. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. The language and its people

Tutrugbu is spoken in 9 townships along the mountain ranges bordering Ghana and Togo. It has a total population of 4405 out of which 2176 live in areas where the language is not spoken. Tutrugbu is one of the 14 Ghana-Togo Mountain (GTM) languages, and belongs to Heine's (1968) Ka-branch. GTM belongs to the Kwa language family. Speakers of Tutrugbu call themselves *Batrugbu* (*Atrugbu* for singular). However, the official name of the language, which is also the name which people also use when they describe themselves to non-Batrugbu, is Nyagbo.

3. Some typological properties

Tutrugbu is a tonal language with three level tones (High, Mid, and Low) and two contour tones (i.e. Rising and Falling). Contrast between High and Low are illustrated by *shɔ* 'urinate' and *shɔ* 'stab', while that between High and Mid is illustrated by *anɔ́* 'it is black' and *anɔ̄* 'person'. High tone on a preceding word shifts to a following word and spreads to the next High tone. An example is *anyέ* 'man' and *tenukpó* 'one' which becomes *ānyε̄ ténúkpó* 'one man'. An example of a word with a falling tone is *pɛ̂* 'to have sex with' which contrast with *pɛ̀* 'to like', while the rising tone is exemplified by *mɛ̌* 'be non-existent' which contrasts with *mɛ* 'inside'.[2]

Tutrugbu has 7 oral vowels [i,e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u] and 6 nasalized vowels [ĩ, ẽ, ɛ̃, ã, ɔ̃, ũ]. These vowels undergo ATR and labial harmony. ATR harmony is determined by the initial syllable of the root. Class markers and pronominal prefixes, for example, vary depending on the initial syllable, as in *kɛ̄-pɔ̃̃dzeḍέ* 'scar' and *ke-kplimɛ* 'palm'. Labial harmony is determined by the subject prefix. Thus the affix *ba-* in *a-ba-bá* 'he will come' becomes *bɔ-* in *ɔ-bɔ-bá* 'you will come' under the influence of the pronominal prefix, *ɔ*. Most of the TMA affixes that I discuss in the subsequent sections are influenced by root and pronominal prefixes.

The discussion in the previous paragraph indicates that Tutrugbu has a nominal class system. There are nine classes in all, namely *a-, ba-, ɔ-, ɛ-, kɛ-, a2-, ka-, bɔ-,* and *tɛ-*. These forms and their variants are realized as nominal and pronominal prefixes, as well as noun-head-demonstrative and subject-verb agreement. Although the noun class system in the language is still active it is undergoing decay (Essegbey 2009).

Finally, like all Kwa languages, Tutrugbu has serial verb constructions. These are monoclausal constructions containing two or more lexical verbs which share at least one argument and are not conjoined by any overt coordinating morpheme (cf. Aboh and Essegbey 2010). An example is provided below:

(1) *A-lɔ́kɔ̄*   *kɛ-vɔbɔ́*   *á-kpέ*   *ki-tsikpi*   *nɔ́*   *mɛ̃̀*[3]
      3SG-take   CM-frog   SCONN-put   CM-pot   DEF   inside
      'He put the frog inside the container.'

In (1) there are two verbs, namely *lɔkɔ́* 'take' and *kpέ* 'put inside'. The two verbs occur in a single clause where they share the same Agent and Theme and, together, express a putting event. Note that the *a-* prefix on the second verb which I gloss as 'serial connector' does not agree in number with the subject number. As such, it is not a pronominal subject.

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[2] Low tone is not marked.

[3] The following abbreviations are used: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, AM = agreement marker, CM = class marker, DEF = definite, FUT = future, PERF = perfect, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, PROG = progressive, REL = relativizer, SCONN = serial connector, SG = singular, TP = terminal particle

4. The tense-aspect forms

In this section I discuss 8 tense-aspect categories. While 6 of the verbal markers are non-controversially aspectual, the remaining two can potentially be characterized as tense. I show that the two are not primarily tense forms.

4.1. Aspectual forms

This section looks at the forms that are non-controversially aspectual. These are morphemes that primarily open a window to the "internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976:3).

4.1.1. The progressive aspect

The progressive frames a state of affairs as ongoing. Additionally, like a number of languages in Ghana, including Ewe, the morpheme which expresses progressive also expresses habitual state of affairs. It is marked by a preverbal high-tone vowel followed by a floating mid-tone which anchors on the vowel of the first syllable. This is invariably the first syllable of the verb. The vowel of the progressive takes the same form as that of the prefix, pointing to assimilation by the latter. Thus, in example (2a) below, the vowel is realized as ɔ́- because that is the form of the second person singular prefix. In (2b) it is é- because of the vocalic segment of the third person plural pronoun:

(2a) *kliso   ónúpɛ   ɔ-vɛ   pɛ   ɔ-ɔ́-bā̄̄   álɛ   nɔ́ gā   bleobleo   aná*
       Therefore if   2SG-go   then   2SG-PROG-come   thus TP   walk gently   thus
       'Therefore as you (go and) are coming move gently' (Funeral_QML_June_29_2007.072)

(2b) *Batrugbu-ɔ   be-dzí   be-é-pō̄   wɔ́*
       Batrugbu-DEF   AM-stand   3PL-PROG-wait_for   2SG
       'The Batrugbu are waiting for you' (Funeral_QML_June_29_2007.073)

Sentences (2a & 2b) are taken from a libation that was being poured at the funeral ceremony of the spokesperson of the Nyagbo queen mother.

When it occurs with achievement verbs, the progressive can express an iterative state of affairs while, with accomplishment verbs, it expresses moving to an end-state. Consider the sentences below:

(3)   a.   *Ki-shi   nɔ́   ki-í-dyī̄́ní*
           Stick   DEF   AM-PROG-break
           'The stick is breaking (over and over again)'

      b   *Kɛpɔté-ɛ   kɛ-ɛ́-kpā̄*
           cloth-DEF   AM-PROG-dry
           'The cloth is drying'

Sentence (3a) refers to iterative break of the stick while (3b) indicates that the cloth is moving towards the state of dryness. When the progressive occurs with the achievement verb, *tsí* 'die', it also expresses the state of being ill. Thus *i-í-tsī̄* which literally means 'I am dying' is often used by people who simply want to say they are ill.

The progressive does not occur with stative verbs. This is shown by the unacceptability of (4a) below where it occurs with *nyí* 'to know'. Tutrugbu has a few stative/dynamic pairs to which *nyí* 'to know' and *tǐ* 'get to know' belong. Sentence (4b) shows that *tǐ*, the dynamic counterpart of *nyí*, can occur with the progressive:

(4)   a.   **I-í-nyī̄*
           1SG-PROG-know

    b.   *I-í-tī́*
          1SG-PROG-get_to_know
          'I am realizing (it)'

As happens in most Kwa languages (e.g. Ewe), the progressive in Tutrugbu can be used to express a state of affairs that occurs habitually:

(5)   *Bɔ-lɛ*   *ba-á-bhɛ̄ɛ́*   *kɔ́*   *ɔlɔ́*   *gbǎ́*
        CM-3PL   3PL-PROG-do   give   1PL   first
        'That is what is worked on first' (Odumase_Herbs_July_6_2008.245)

In (5), a herbalist is explaining that all illnesses are accompanied with fever. For this reason healers have to treat the fever first before proceeding to the real illness. Thus, although the progressive morpheme is used, reference is to an event that occurs habitually.

4.1.2. The perfective

Another aspectual marker is the perfective marker *tɛ́*. This morpheme occurs with the underlying tone of the verb and expresses a state of affairs that has already occurred. Because of the meaning it expresses, clauses containing this marker are best translated with 'already'. Sentence (6) with the relevant segment underlined, illustrates the use of *tɛ́*:

6.   *Pɛ* *ba-á-ka*   *a-sɛ́m*   *ɔ́*   *pétéé*
    then 3PL-PROG- say   CM-matter   DEF   all
    yɛ *xɔ̌nɔ́* <u>*a-tɛ́-lɔ̌kɔ̄*</u>   *kɛ-dɔ̌*   *nɔ́* *gɛ* *á-pɛ*   *nɔ́*
    3SG as_for 3SG-PFV-take   CM-thing DEF REL 3SG- look_for   TP
    'As they were talking, for him he had already taken the thing he wanted.'
    (Focus1-July-20-2007.483-484)

This sentence is about a man who steals a watch which was placed on a table by a colleague. He then sits down to converse with the person whose watch he stole and another colleague. *Tɛ́* indicates that the taking of the watch was already completed before the conversation. It occurs with dynamic verbs only and, therefore, cannot occur with *nyí* 'to know'.

4.1.3. The repetitive

The repetitive morpheme in Tutrugbu expresses a state of affairs that occurs again. The morpheme that realizes this aspect is *zɛ-* in the default form. The best translation for *zɛ* is 'again' and, like it English equivalent, it can be ambiguous between a plain repetition of a state of affairs or a restitution (cf. Gruender 2011). That is to say when it occurs with accomplishment and achievement verbs, it could express either the repetition of an entire state of affairs, or its result state only. This does not occur with activity verbs, as the contrast between (7a) and (7b) illustrates:

(7)   a.   *Adzɛ̃-ɛ́*   *a-zɛ-dɛ́lɛ*   *buvũ-ɔ*
            Woman-DEF   AM-REP-open   room-DEF
            'The woman opened the door (to the room) again'

        b.   *E-ze-bhǒ*   *bɔ-tramɛ* *ko* *kɛlɛ*   *ya-sɛ*   "*ehɛ́*".
            3SG-REP-knock   CM-third just   then   3SG-say "ehɛ"
            'He knocked (on the door) again the third time and she said "ɛhɛ"'

Sentence (7a) is ambiguous between the woman opening a door for a second time or her restoring the open state of the door. By contrast, sentence (7b) simply refers to a male participant repeating the act

of knocking on a door (in the latter case the woman does not need to be the one who opened the door the previous time). The example sentences show that the repetitive morpheme does not express iteration.

Like the progressive and perfective, the repetitive morpheme occurs with dynamic verbs only. As shown below, it can occur with *tĭ* 'get to know' but not *nyí* 'know':

(8)   a.   *i-zi-tĭ*
         1SG-REP- get_to_know
         'I know it again'

       b.   **i-zi-nyí*
          1SG-REP-know

Some speakers, mostly the older ones, sometimes use *dzɛ* as a variant for *zɛ*. An example is provided below:

(9)   *Otsiɛ́ tsɔ́ɔ́   nɔ́   o-dzo-tí-sí*
        now   IND   TP   2SG-REP-PFV-flee
        'Right now you've disappeared off again.' (Odumase_Herbs_July_6_2008.310)

The one who utters this statement is an old man who was trying very hard to recollect the name of a plant. Just when he taught he had got it, the name disappeared again. In his frustration, he utters (9) as if his memory was an animate entity that had escaped again. The change of *dzɛ* to *dzo* is as a result of a combination of ATR and labial harmony (see discussion of labial harmony in section 3). In (9), the repetitive combines with the perfective.

As in Ewe, the repetitive in Tutrugbu can, depending on the context, be translated as 'also'. This is shown below:

(10)   *Bɔ-dɔ̃   túlí   zɛ-plɛ́nɔ*
        CM-thing   certain   REP-add
        'Some things are also added' (Odumasi customs_2006_32)

The one who utters this sentence begins by listing a number of things that are needed to pacify ancestors when someone breaks a taboo. He then adds sentence (10) to indicate that there are additional items to list.

4.1.4. The habitual

I stated in section 4.1.1 that the progressive can be used to express habitual states of affairs. Tutrugbu does have a dedicated morpheme for expressing this meaning. It is realized by a mid tone on both the verbs and their subject prefixes, and expresses a state of affairs "which is characteristic of an extended period of time" (Comrie 1976: 27-28), and. This is illustrated below:

(11)   a.   *bā-fɔ̃̄   nɛ́   klɛ́*
          1SG-defecate   PREP   there
          'They defecate over there'

       b.   *Ī-mōlē̄*
          1SG-rest
          'I rest (habitually)'

Sentence (11a) is a complaint by a man that students defecated habitually on a part of his property. Next a woman who was being admonished for working too hard and not getting any rest said (11b) to indicate that she rested regularly.

The habitual is used to express customary practices, such as the one below:

(12)　　*Agbeɖi sheshe*　*bā-lɔ̄kɔ́*　　　*gbã*　　*galí*　　*nɔ́*
　　　　Cassava grown　3PL-take　　　fry　　gari　　DEF
　　　　'(It is) matured cassava (that is) used to prepare gali'

The habitual morpheme occurs with dynamic verbs only. As such, it cannot occur with *nyí* 'to know'.

4.1.5. The factative

Welmers (1973) proposed the term factative to account for an aspectual phenomenon in West African languages in which, according to him, the most obvious fact about a verb is expressed. In his words, this "in the case of active verbs [means] that the action took place, but for stative verbs [it means] that the situation obtains at present (Welmers 1973:346)." The critical thing about the factatives then it often involves the default or least marked form of the verb and it distinguishes between the stative and dynamic verbs). In Tutrugbu also verbs in their underlying form without overt marking of TAM express past or present state of affairs, depending on their lexical aspect. However, the division is not between stative and dynamic verbs. Instead, inchoative verbs pattern together with stative verbs in expressing a state of affairs that obtains in the present. Other dynamic verbs, particularly activity verbs, express a past state of affairs. Examples (13a, 13b and 13c) illustrate this:

(13)　　a.　　*A-táfá*　　　*yɛ̄*　　　　*ē-dzīnī*
　　　　　　　3SG-cheat　　3SG:POSS　　CM-wife
　　　　　　　'He cheated his wife'

　　　　b.　　*Wɔ*　　　　　*a-tāmá*　　　*á-pɛ̃̄*
　　　　　　　2SG:POSS　　　CM-tobacco　　AM-become_good
　　　　　　　'Your snuff is/was good'

　　　　c.　　A-hũ　　　a-dzã
　　　　　　　CM-eye　　AM-become_red
　　　　　　　'Eyes have become red/eyes are red.'

While the dynamic verb *táfá* 'cheat' refers to a past state of affairs the stative verb *pɛ̃̄* 'be good' refers to a state of affairs that is present. Note however, that in the right context, the stative verb in the factative can also express a past state of affairs. Sentence (13c) shows that inchoative verbs also express a present state of affairs in the factative. Focus, in such cases, is on the end state. Note that despite examples like (13c), I do not analyze this form as the perfect. There are two reasons: first, the verb is unmarked and, second, dynamic verbs like activity verbs do not express the present relevance of a past state of affairs, the way the perfect does.

4.1.6. The Imperative + Progressive

The final aspectual category straddles the modal domain since it refers to an imperative that is in the progressive. The underlying form is *dza* although it undergoes labial assimilation. Consider the examples below:

(14)　　a.　　*Dzō- klǔ*　　　*á-lɛ́*　　*zi*　　*ɖeká*　　*bladzǒ*　*kuráte*　*ke-litakpú*
　　　　　　　IMP:PROG-call　CM-3PL　time　one　　plantain　banana　CM-palm_fruit_bunch
　　　　　　　'Be listing them at once, plantain, banana bunch of palm fruit'

b. *Bá-dzā̄-vɛ̄*
IMP:PROG-go
'They should be going'

In (14a), three people are discussing some Nyagbo taboos and one of them mentions that they are not allowed to bring plantains from their farms into town in large bunches. The bunches have to be cut up into smaller ones first. She hesitates after mentioning plantain. Sentence (14a) is an exhortation from a second speaker for her to go on listing the crops which fall under the taboo, including bananas and palm fruits.

The imperative progressive can be contrasted with the simple imperative which is expressed with the verb alone in the second person singular, and the verb + pronominal prefix in the first person plural. It occurs in other Ghanaian languages such as Ewe although, in the case of Ewe, there is no dedicated morpheme for expressing it. Instead, Ewe uses the non-present progressive form. This is illustrated below:

(15)　　*Mi-nɔ*　　　　　*yi-yi-ḿ*　　　*me-gbɔ́-na*
1PL-be_at:NPRES　　RED-go-PROG　1SG-arrive-HAB
Lit. 'be going, I am coming'

Sentence (15) is used by a person who wants to ask people waiting for him/her to go ahead. It is the way to say 'go ahead, I will come in a while'. In fact the imperative progressive has become a part of Ghanaian English such that in addition to the literal translation provided in (15), Ghanaians would say 'be waiting for me here' instead of 'wait for me here.'

Thus far the discussion has been concerned with markers that can be analyzed as aspectual without controversy because they express different ways of looking at the temporal constituency of a state of affairs. Note, however, that the final morpheme contains a modal component. The morphemes discussed in the next sub-section can be analyzed as registering temporal distinctions. However, I argue that they are aspectual/modal.

4.2. Tense or aspectual/modal

In this section I discuss *ka-* which expresses a persistive state of affairs and *ba-* which can be translated with the future. I argue that *ka-* is aspectual while the *ba-* is modal.

4.2.1. The "still" aspect

Among the tense categories discussed by Comrie (1985:54) is the still-tense which he characterizes thus: "it is presupposed that a situation held in the past, and asserted that it holds in the present." Tutrugbu also has a morpheme *ka-* which expresses a state of affairs that persists. *Ka-* expresses this meaning when it occurs with stative verbs, e.g., *lɛ* 'be located' and *kpasɛ* 'be contained' This is illustrated by the sentences below:

(16)　　　a　*A-ka-lɛ́*　　　　*bɔpá̄-m*
3SG-still-be_at　　CM-house-inside
'He is still at home'

b　*Yē-nú　sɛ　ɔ-mɔpɔɛ　nɔ́　lɔ-kɔ-kpasɛ　　　　yɛ　shú　mɛ　kokoko*
3SG-be　that CM-anger　DEF　AM-still- be_contained 3SG　skin　inside by_all_means

　sɛɛ- be-poé
　that　3SG-come- wait_for
'That is to say he was still very angry that he had come and waited for her.'

Some three friends had planned to go to a neighboring village to attend a funeral. They arranged to meet at the roadside to catch a bus to the place. Two of the friends met at the roadside and waited for a few minutes but the third person did not show up and so one of them called him on his cell phone. After talking to him, he uttered (16a) to his companion. Sentence (16b) is about a man who spent a long time waiting for his girlfriend at a bar and got angry as a result. According to the narrator, the man was still angry when his girlfriend showed up later and tried to mollify him. The change from *ka-* to *kɔ-* is because of the preceding rounded vowel. Both sentences describe stative states of affairs that persist over a certain time, usually the time of speech.

Interestingly *ka-* alone does not express a persistive state of affairs when it occurs with dynamic verbs. In such cases it rather expresses a state of affairs that has not yet taken place. Consider the example below:

(17)   *Ɛ-ka-klŭ*   *ki-nyé*   *wō̄*   *lū̄*   *ʤi?*
         1SG –not_yet- call   CM-name   2SG   hear   look_at
         'Haven't you heard me mention the name before?' (Odumase_Herbs_July_6_2008.302)

In order for *ka-* to express the persistive meaning with dynamic verbs, it has to occur with a lengthened vowel which carries a high tone. This high-tone vowel, as we discussed in section 4.1.1, is the progressive. Consider the sentences below:

(18)   a. *Kofi*   *a-ka-á-tsɛ̄*   *biskwit*
            Kofi   AM-still-PROG-pick   biscuit
            'Kofi is still taking biscuit'

         b. *Kofi*   *e-ke-é-tsuru*   *a-hɔɛ*
            Kofi   AM-still-PROG-wash   hand
            'Kofi is still washing his hands'

An alternative way to look at *ka-* is that it enables one to view the internal temporal constituency of the state of affairs expressed by the verb, starting from a time it started through the time the speaker uttered the sentence. According to this position, dynamic verbs have to take the progressive morpheme when they occur with *ka-* because it is only then that the internal constituency of the state of affairs that they express become available. Note that this would make *ka/kaá* aspectual rather than tense.

Comrie (1985: 54) notes that the negated form of this category expresses a no-longer meaning. This is what happens when *kaá-* is negated in Tutrugbu. Consider (19) below:

(19)   *Kofi*   *a-tɛ́-ka-á-tsɛ̄*   *biskwit*
         Kofi   AM-NEG-still-PROG-pick   biscuit
         'Kofi is no longer taking biscuit'

Unlike dynamic verbs, there is some dialectal variation in the negation of stative verbs. Speakers from Sroe, the biggest and most populous Nyagbo township, negate stative verbs with *tɛ́-* just as they do dynamic verbs. The rest of the Nyagbo use *bhamá* which consists of *bha-* and the negative existential verb *má* 'be not located'. These speakers complain that the Sroe way of negating the stative verbs is strange.[4]

Although it appears to straddle tense, *kaá* also expresses a state of affairs that is ongoing. As such, we can argue that rather than expresses tense (solely), it (also) expresses aspect.

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[4] The expression one consultant used is that the Sroe people are "twisting" the language.

4.2.2. The future

The final morpheme which I discuss occurs underlyingly as *ba*-and could potentially be analyzed as a future marker. I argue that such an analysis would not be tenable because ba does not have a temporally deictic meaning. Instead, it is has a primarily modal meaning. However, *ba*- yields a future interpretation in specific contexts. I follow Comrie (1985:46) that in order to establish that a grammatical form is the future form, one has not only to establish that it is used for future time reference but also that it cannot be treated as a special use of a grammatical category with basically non-tense meaning. In other words, it should not be a modal morpheme masquerading as tense.

The temptation to analyze treat *ba*- as future tense is due to the fact that speakers generally translate sentences like (20) below with a future:

(20)   *ɔ-bɔ-bá*
         2SG-FUT-come
         'You will come'

There is no suggestion of possibility reading in the interpretations given to this sentence. It simply makes the prediction that the addressee will be moving to a deictic center at a certain time in the future. One question though is whether the primary function of the morpheme is to locate a state of affairs in a time posterior to the moment of speech (cf. Fleischman 1982). There are indications that this is not the case. First of all, ba- can be used to refer to a possible state of affairs in the past as well as present. Consider the sentences below:

(21)   a.   *A-ba-zã   kepí   kivũ   gɛ   ba-flá*
            3SG-FUT-stay   hometown   one_day_removed   REL   come-pass
            'He would have been at home yesterday'

       b.   *A-ba-zã   bɔ-pã̂   mɛ   ótsíɛ́*
            3SG-FUT-stay   CM-house   inside now
            'He will be at home'

       c.   *ónúpɛ̄   ɛ-ba-mɔ   Amí,   ɛ-ba-klu   wɔ́*
            if   1SG-POT-see   Ami,   1SG-FUT-call   2SG
            'If I see you I will call you'

Sentence (21a) is part of a conversation that transpired between two women following a trip to their hometown and back the previous day. Lady B. asked lady A. who had gone to the village whether she saw her ex-boyfriend. Lady A. responds that she didn't even ask of him because she assumed he was in the city. Lady B. then reports that he would have been in the town that day. This is the clearest instance that *ba*- simply codes possibility, and not a state of affairs that is posterior to the moment of speech. Sentence (21b) is an elicited sentence. I was informed it could be used if one thought the person is at home at the moment of speech. Finally, in (21c) *ba*- occurs in two clauses here: the subordinate if-clause, and the main (then) clause. The ability of *ba*- to occur in the if-clause where it does not express future is future indication that this is not the primary meaning of the word.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have described 8 tense-aspect categories in Tutrugbu, a GTM language spoken in Ghana. This is with the view to finding where the language belongs in the context of the position that many Kwa languages of West Africa are tenseless or aspect prominent. I considered whether the markers expressing some of the tense-aspect categories have tense semantics. 6 of them are non-controversially aspectual. These are the progressive, perfective, repetitive, habitual, factative and imperative + progressive. Two markers could potentially be characterized as tense. One is the *ka*-

morpheme which expresses a persistent state of affairs. I have argued that although it could be characterized as a *still*-tense following Comrie (1985), it refers to the internal constituency of a state of affairs. This explains why it cannot occur alone with dynamic verbs. Instead, in the latter case, it has to co-occur with the progressive. For this reason I have argued that the *ka*-form is aspectual. The second morpheme is *ba*- which is often translated with the future-tense. I have shown that this form is not primarily future because it can refer to states of affairs that occur at all times, the most telling of which is the past. Also, it can occur in a subordinate if-clause. These suggest that *ba*- is modal rather than tense.

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