

A PHONOLOGY AND GRAMMAR OF MBÓDÒMÒ

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A PHONOLOGY AND GRAMMAR OF MBÓDÒMÒ

by

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ABSTRACT

A PHONOLOGY AND GRAMMAR OF MBÓDÒMÒ

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This paper presents an overview of the phonology and grammar of Mbódòmò, a Gbaya language of the Adamawa-Ubangi group of the Volta-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family.

An overview of the phonological and morphological processes is presented with particular attention given to the structure of the verb and the vowel harmony occurring on the past tense suffix.

Of particular interest in the study of the grammar is the existence of two genderless third person singular pronouns, one of which is a topical pronoun that refers only to the central participant of the narrative. Discussed also are the various tense/aspects and their roles in the various segments of the narrative, in particular the occurrence of the past tense in background and in peak segments.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1sg	First person singular pronoun
1sgPOSS:alien	First person singular alienable possessive pronoun
1sgPOSS:inalien	First person singular inalienable possessive pronoun
2sg	Second person singular pronoun
2sgPOSS:alien	Second person singular alienable possessive pronoun
2sgPOSS:inalien	Second person singular inalienable possessive pronoun
3sg	Third person singular pronoun
3sgPOSS:alien	Third person singular alienable possessive pronoun
3sgPOSS:inalien	Third person singular inalienable possessive pronoun
3sgTOP	Third person singular topical pronoun
1pl	First person plural pronoun
1plPOSS	First person plural possessive pronoun
2pl	Second person plural pronoun
2plPOSS	Second person plural possessive pronoun
3pl	Third person plural pronoun
3plPOSS:alien	Third person plural alienable possessive pronoun
3plPOSS:inalien	Third person plural inalienable possessive pronoun
ACMP	Preposition of accompaniment
ADJ	Adjective
ADV	Adverb

AUX	Auxiliary
BEN	Benefactive preposition
CAUS	Causative
COMP	Complementizer
COP	Copula
DEM	Demonstrative
DEM:PL	Plural demonstrative
D.O.	Direct object
EXIST	Existential
EXCL	Exclamation
FOC	Contrastive focus marker
FUT	Future tense
gap	Gap, as found in relative clause gap strategy
HAB	Habitual marker
ImPN	Impersonal pronoun
IMP	Imperative
INSTR	Instrumental preposition
INT	Interrogative
INTR	Intransitive suffix
I.O.	Indirect object
k.o.	Kind of
lg.	Large
lit.	Literally
LOC	Locative
LOG	Logophoric pronoun

LOG:dual	Dual logophoric pronoun
LOG:PL	Plural logophoric pronoun
LOG:POSS	Logophoric possessive pronoun
LOG:REFL	Logophoric reflexive pronoun
N	Noun
NEG	Negation
NEG:COP	Copula of negation
NEG:INT	Negative interrogative
NOM	Nominal suffix
NP	Noun phrase
NUM	Number
O	Object
PAST	Simple past tense
PAUX	Passive auxiliary
PERF	Past perfect
PFV	Perfective
PL	Plural
PN	Pronoun
PnRet	Pronoun retention strategy
POSS	Alienable possessive marker
PR	Present tense
PREP	Preposition
PRO	Pronoun retention
PURP	Purpose
QUANT	Quantifier

REL	Relative clause marker
REFL	Reflexive pronoun
S	Subject
SEQ	Temporal sequence marker
SIM	Temporal overlap marker
Subj	Subject
TEMP	Temporal preposition
TRNS	Transitivizer
V	Verb
vi	Intransitive verb
vt	Transitive verb
VP	Verb phrase

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to present a brief phonological and grammatical description of Gbaya Mbódòmò, a language of eastern Cameroon. No extensive analysis of Mbódòmò has previously been undertaken, so this is an initial effort to depict the fundamental characteristics of the language. Consequently, many aspects must be left untouched or treated in a superficial manner. It is hoped that this description will lay a foundation for further research.

1.1 Demography

Gbaya Mbódòmò is one of the Gbaya languages found in Cameroon. It is spoken in the department of Lom-et-Djérem in the East Province. There are an estimated 5-8,000¹ speakers of Mbódòmò. There are three distinct Mbódòmò areas, and there is evidence that each has dialectal differences. The largest of these areas is along route N1 from approximately 50 to 140 kilometers north of Bertoua. The second region consists of several villages north of Ngoura, and the third is west of Bétaré Oya west of the Lom River (see figure 1). Minimal differences, mostly lexical, have been found between the first two of the above-identified regions. The third region was not visited, and any local features there are a matter of conjecture, although very likely. It should be noted that although the Mbódòmò people are

¹ Burnham (et al. 1986) does not number the population as more than 5,000. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC) places the population between 8,000-10,000 (Griffin et al. 1994). Mbódòmò themselves consider their population to be at least 10,000.

aware of these differences, they are quick to add that there is perfect intelligibility among Mbódòmò everywhere.



Figure 1. Cameroon.

Contrary to other Gbaya groups in Cameroon, the Mbódòmò consider themselves autochthonous to the general region they are currently located in. There is some documented support for this opinion as the earliest German sources and ethnic maps lend credence to the Mbódòmò claim that they have inhabited this territory for a long time and have not migrated from elsewhere (Burnham et al. 1986).

1.2 History and culture

Oral tradition holds that the Mbódòmò people originally dwelt in the forest some twenty kilometers west of their current location. During World War II, when

the main road, N1, was being cut, the Mbódòmò were forced to relocate out of the forest to the road. However, pockets of the population remain in the forest to this day. The forest area where the Mbódòmò originally lived is still considered their territory and is regularly used for fishing and hunting.

Like other forest dwellers and unlike original savanna dwellers, the Mbódòmò have a social structure that tends to be based on small family units and loosely structured clans rather than large structured hierarchical chieftaincies. There is a fair amount of autonomy between villages and within the village. The hierarchical chieftaincy as now practiced is a recent development dating back to the displacement from the forest to along the main road.

Unlike other savanna dwellers, the Mbódòmò are not herdsman. They prefer instead hunting, gathering, and currently, swidden agriculture. The general practice is for family units to seek out a tract of forest near a water source and establish a farm. These farms are customarily two to ten kilometers from the village. The principal crops are manioc, corn, peanuts, and yams. Wild yams and other tubers, mushrooms and fruit are gathered. Those who have the means hunt, although large game is becoming scarce. What is not needed for food is sold. The land is fertile and there are regularly surplus crops. The surplus is either transported to the provincial capital, Bertoua, or sold to truck drivers along the road who later resell it in more distant towns and cities at a considerable premium.

Lately the logging industry has increased in the surrounding area. Mbódòmò village chiefs have been approached by logging companies for logging rights in their territorial forests. The temptation for easy money has put their forests and their way of life at risk. With the consequent deforestation, the scarcity of big game will worsen and the rainy season cycle is threatened.

Half to three-quarters of the population of a small village will remain at their farms all week, returning to the village only on Sundays for church, selling the surplus of their crops, and when the corn crop is in and there is money, socializing with friends and family. A smaller number live year round on their farm plots, maintaining no village residence.

Education is not particularly valued among the Mbódòmò. There are only primary schools in their actual territory. Each of the principal towns has a primary school, but only some of the smaller villages have schools. There is a school in the village of Garoua Yaka, which draws children from the adjacent villages, Petit Belo and Déolé. However, because of the poor quality of the schoolmasters and the need for children's assistance on the farm, few children attended. Approximately 20 children attended school the 1994-1995 school year and less than 12 the 1995-1996 school year. The second school year was cut short after only a few months due to the long-term illness of the schoolmaster. While the majority of the adults in the twenty to forty age bracket learned French in school, very few of the children have learned that language. Many children will reach adulthood without acquiring French.²

Both Islam and Christianity have made inroads into the Mbódòmò area. The majority of Mbódòmò consider themselves Christian, but there are some Muslims in the northern part of the territory. Two Christian denominations are well established: Catholic and Lutheran. The Catholics are the most prominent and well-established denomination, with congregations in virtually every village. The Lutheran church is a more recent arrival, but is also well represented in the area,

² The East Province of Cameroon is officially a French-speaking province. English is not offered in the primary schools and virtually no one speaks it.

with almost as many congregations as the Catholics. The number of members tends to be less in the Lutheran than in the Catholic congregations. A third denomination, the Seventh Day Adventists, is present only in the southern part of the Mbódòmò territory.

The Mbódòmò have recently suffered some social and political marginalization. With the creation of a new district of Ngoura, the Mbódòmò no longer have an easily accessible route to their district headquarters. Ngoura is located approximately forty kilometers east across the savanna with no year-round passable road connecting the main Mbódòmò group and the town. The Mbódòmò people have been petitioning the government for the establishment of another district headquarters in one of their major towns, Guiwa Yangamo, Gandima Tongo or Garga Sarali. As of May 1996, this petition had been unsuccessful in part due to the greater political weight of the town of Bétaré Oya, north of the Mbódòmò territory, which fears further reduction in size and consequence.

1.3 Language classification

Gbaya Mbódòmò is classified in ALCAM (L'Atlas linguistique du Cameroun: 352) as :

Niger-Kordofanian,
 Niger-Congo,
 Adamawa-Ubangi,
 West Ubangi,
 Gbaya,
 Mbódòmò.

An alternative classification is presented in Williamson (1989: 21). It is adapted by the classification of the Gbaya languages from Burnham (1986:126); see figure 2.

- I. Niger-Congo
 - A. Atlantic-Congo
 - 1. Volta-Congo
 - a. North
 - 1. Adamawa-Ubangi
 - a. Adamawa
 - b. Ubangi
 - 1. Gbaya
 - a. North
 - 1. Yaayuwèe
 - b. Central
 - 1. Lai
 - 2. Dooka
 - 3. Mbódòmò ←
 - 4. Yaangere
 - 5. Buli
 - c. South
 - 1. Baṅgando

Figure 2. Classification of Gbaya Mbódòmò.

The largest of the Gbaya languages in Cameroon is Yaayuwèe, spoken in the Meiganga area. It is the only related language in Cameroon that has been analyzed. Although language surveys done in the region indicate that Mbódòmò is closely related to Yaayuwèe, there are differences, and the mutual intelligibility is considered to be about 70%.

1.4 Survey of previous published research

Very little scholarly work has published about Mbódòmò. It is referred to briefly in several articles concerning the Gbaya of Cameroon, and especially in Philip Noss's article *Four Gbaya Dialects* (Noss 1973), and Yves Moñino's

Dialectologie et parenté génétique des langues (Moñino 1980) which provides word lists of various Gbaya dialects including Mbódòmò. The article *Gbaya et mkako: contribution ethno-linguistique à l'histoire de l'est-Cameroun* (Burnham et al. 1986) gives some sociolinguistic and historical background about Mbódòmò and other related and neighboring languages of the East Province of Cameroon. Other than the above mentioned articles, the only other reference to the Mbódòmò is an unpublished survey report written by SIL in Cameroon in 1996 (Griffin, et.al: 1994).

1.5 Research and data

This study has been done for the most part on location in the largest Mbódòmò region along route N1, and in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, with Mbódòmò speakers from that same region. The data used include my own field notes collected in Garoua Yaka, a village in the largest Mbódòmò region, from 1994 to 1995, and in Yaoundé from 1995 to 1996. Also included in the data used are ten texts that were recorded in the village of Gandima Tongo, transcribed and translated into French by Bagoutou Djembélé Sylvain. Seven of these ten texts are cited in this thesis, with the majority of citations coming from three texts that are included in the appendix. A lexicon of approximately 1,300 words has been developed from these sources. This lexicon has been reviewed and revised with the assistance of Bagoutou Djembélé Sylvain and Ngezéré Guillaume of Yaoundé.

1.6 Overview

In this thesis, some of the basics of Mbódòmò phonology, grammar, and discourse are discussed. In chapter 2 various aspects of the phonology are

discussed. This includes the consonant and vowel systems in sections 2.1 and 2.2, the syllable structure in 2.3, tone in 2.4, and various phonological and morphological processes in sections 2.5 and 2.6.

An overview of the Mbódòmò grammar is provided in chapter 3. The basic grammatical categories (section 3.1), word order typology, (section 3.4) and clause combining (section 3.7) are outlined. Some attention is given to verb morphology, in particular the coding of tense and aspect in sections 3.5 and valency-changing devices in section 3.6. Finally, pragmatically marked structures, such as negatives, imperatives and questions, are addressed in section 3.8.

Chapter 4 considers the role of tense and aspect in narrative discourse and the system of participant reference, in particular the role of the two third person singular pronouns in Mbódòmò narrative.

The goal of this thesis is to introduce the basic structure of Mbódòmò in a descriptive framework that will be useful to readers from various theoretical backgrounds. However, my own background, which is functional-typological, does influence some the direction and observations.

CHAPTER 2

PHONOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the phonology of Mbódòmò. Discussed are the various phonemes and their distribution, the syllable structures and certain structural restrictions of nouns and verbs, lexical and grammatical tone, and some of the phonological and morphological processes discovered. Section 2.1 and section 2.2 cover the inventory of Mbódòmò phonemes. The syllable structure is presented in section 2.3 along with various syllable structure restrictions. Tone is briefly discussed in section 2.4 and an overview of the phonological and morphophonemic processes concludes the chapter.

2.1 Consonants

Mbódòmò has an inventory of twenty-three consonants at five points of articulation: labial, alveolar, alveo-palatal, velar and labio-velar. It includes voiced and voiceless stops, voiced implosives, fricatives, nasals, prenasalized stops and liquids. The inventory of Mbódòmò consonants is as follows:

Table 1. Mbódòmò consonants

| | | | | |
|----|----|----------|----|-----|
| p | t | | k | kp |
| b | d | | g | gb |
| ɓ | ɗ | | | |
| mb | nd | nz (ndz) | ŋg | mgb |
| f | s | | | |
| v | z | | | |
| m | n | ɲ | ɳ | |
| | l | | | |
| | r | | | |
| | | j | h | w |

2.1.1 The labials

The phonemes /p/, /b/, and /ɓ/ contrast in onset position.

- (1) [basi]³ *‘to sharpen’*
 [ɓasi] *‘to greet someone’*
- (2) [bàŋà] *‘palm tree’*
 [pàŋà] *‘bitter’*
- (3) [sóɓò] *‘soap’*
 [zóɓò] *‘prison’*
- (4) [kopi] *‘to escape’*
 [koɓili] *‘to hang up’*

The phonemes /f/ and /v/ are both found in the onset position, but /v/ occurs in only a few words and only word initially.⁴ /f/ contrasts with /p/, /b/ and /ɓ/ as shown below.

³In isolation verbs predictably have the same tone pattern, HL, and therefore are not marked for tone in citation form. Within the clause, verb tone is affected by grammatical features of tense, aspect and verb agreement. See section 3.4.2.

- | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|--|
| (5) | [vêr]
[fěp] | <i>'glass'</i>
<i>'paper'</i> |
| (6) | [bàrà]
[fàrà] | <i>'slave'</i>
<i>'priest'</i> |
| (7) | [pìrà]
[fìrò] | <i>'place'</i>
<i>'elephant'</i> |
| (8) | [ɓon]
[fɔm] | <i>'to remain'</i>
<i>'to curse'</i> |
| (9) | [bɛ̃ʔχdɛ̃] ⁵
[fɛ̃ʔχ] | <i>'knot'</i>
<i>'intelligence, spirit'</i> |
| (10) | [mbòbòdĩ]
[mbòfòlò] | <i>'brain'</i>
<i>'hemorrhage'</i> |
| (11) | [kófɛ̃]
[lòpè] | <i>'in-law'</i>
<i>'pipe'</i> |
| (12) | [huɓi]
[ufi] | <i>'to embrace'</i>
<i>'to blow'</i> |

2.1.2 The coronals

The phonemes /t/, /d/, and /d/ contrast in syllable onset positions.

⁴/v/ occurs only eight times in a lexicon of 1250 words. Two of the words are borrowed (/vámde/ "donkey" (Fulani), /vêr/ "glass" (French)), one is an ideophone (/vòp/ "sound of footsteps"), two are grammatical words (/vèlè/ 1pl.alien.poss., /vènè/ 2pl.alien.poss.), one is a number (/vák/ "two"), one is a noun (/vèrè/ "mange-mil - a type of bird"), and one is a verb (/vati/ "to tap with the hand").

⁵[ɛ̃ʔ] is an allophone of /e/, see section 3.5.2.3.

- (13) [daχ]⁶ *‘to pull’*
 [daχ] *‘to strip’*
 [taχdĩ] *‘to think’*

- (14) [ɲgàdĩ] *‘youth’*
 [ɲgàdĩ] *‘hill’*
 [ɲgàtĩ] *‘scabies’*

The phonemes /s/ and /z/ contrast in syllable onset positions.

- (15) [sàrà] *‘slingshot’*
 [zàrà] *‘ear’*

- (16) [gèsé] *‘type of ant’*
 [ɲgézè] *‘porcupine’*

The phoneme /r/ is never found in word initial position, although it may be found intervocalically, see example (17). It contrasts with the phoneme /l/ medially (example (18)) and in the syllable coda (examples (19) and (20)).

- (17) [árì] *‘catastrophe’*
 [fĩrò] *‘elephant’*

- (18) [bèlè] *‘savanna’*
 [bèrè] *‘breast’*

- (19) [dol] *‘to shape metal’*
 [dor] *‘to pick up one by one’*

⁶[ɑ] is an allophone of /a/, see section 3.5.2.4.

- (20) [dàlŋgèl] ‘*mirror*’
 [bòrkó] ‘*blanket*’

The phoneme /r/ also contrasts with /d/ (examples (21) and (22)) and /t/ (examples (23) and (24)) intervocalically. /t/ occurs in word-final positions rarely,⁷ see examples (25) and (26).

- (21) [fàdà] ‘*feast*’
 [fàrà] ‘*priest*’
- (22) [fòdò] ‘*famine*’
 [hóró] ‘*gizzard*’
- (23) [kìtà] ‘*judgment*’
 [kírà] ‘*enclosure*’
- (24) [bèté] ‘*drying basket*’
 [bèrè] ‘*breast*’
- (25) [fét] ‘*already (adv.)*’
 [far] ‘*to wash*’
- (26) [kòt] ‘*costume*’
 [tór] ‘*fresh (adj.)*’

2.1.3 The dorsal phonemes

The phonemes /k/ and /g/ contrast in syllable onset positions ([ɕ], voiced uvular fricative, is an allophone of /g/, see section 2.5.2.2).

⁷All three voiceless stops may occur word-finally, but only /k/ occurs frequently. /p/ occurs word-finally five times, /t/ occurs only twice in my lexicon, not counting onomatopoeic words.

- (27) [gasi] *'to praise'*
 [kasi] *'to measure, to put in piles'*
- (28) [lókó] *'taste (of wine)'*
 [lókó] *'animal track'*
- (29) [jékèlè] *'master'*
 [zígòrò]⁸ *'knee'*

The labio-velar phonemes /kp/ and /gb/ contrast in word initial position.

- (30) [kpa] *'to find'*
 [gba] *'to split or crack'*

/kp/ and /gb/ occur rarely intervocalically. Only three examples have been found, as listed in example (31).

- (31) [dògbò] *'lizard'*
 [zàgbà] *'plantain'*
 [kpókpò] *'heron'*

The phoneme /h/ is limited in its distribution occurring only in word initial positions. It contrasts word-initially with /k/ (see examples (32) and (33)), /s/ (see examples (34) and (35)) and /f/ (see examples (36) and (37)).

⁸This is one of only two monomorphemic words that I found with [g] in an intervocalic position. Normally [g] is found only across morpheme boundaries, but these examples may have originally been compound words.

- h/k
 (32) [hel] 'to cry'
 [kéɫí]⁹ 'embers'
- (33) [hór] 'parent-in-law'
 [kɔ́] 'hand'
- h/s
 (34) [hɔ́á] 'rash'
 [sɔ́á] 'diarrhea'
- (35) [hiɔ́χ]¹⁰ 'to burn'
 [siɔ́χ] 'to fall'
- h/f
 (36) [han]¹¹ 'to fry'
 [fan] 'to greet'
- (37) [hóró] 'gizzard'
 [fòdò] 'famine'

2.1.4 The nasals

Mbódòmò has four nasal phonemes, /m/, /n/, /ɲ/ and /ŋ/. All of them except /ŋ/ occur syllable initially, see examples (38) to (40). All four nasal phonemes contrast intervocalically, see examples (41) and (44). /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ contrast in syllable final position, see (45). The phoneme /ɲ/ is limited in its distribution, it

⁹[ɭ], retroflexed lateral flap, is an allophone of /l/, see section 2.5.1.

¹⁰[iɔ́] is an allophone of /i/, see section 2.5.2.3.

¹¹All vowels that are in the environment of a nasal consonant are nasalized. For the sake of simplicity this nasalization is not marked unless germane. Nasalization of vowels is discussed in section 2.2.3.

occurs only in syllable onset positions, and is never found in the syllable coda.¹² The only common environment in which /ɲ/ and /ŋ/ are found is the intervocallic position, see (43).

(38) /n/ [nú] 'mouth, language'
 /m/ [mús] 'cat'

(39) /m/ [màŋ] 'sea'
 /ɲ/ [ɲáŋá] 'horse'

(40) /n/ [náŋá] 'foot'
 /ɲ/ [ɲáŋá] 'horse'

(41) /n/ [dàná] 'bridge'
 /m/ [dámá] 'health'

(42) /m/ [tìmó] 'witness'
 /ɲ/ [sìɲò] 'sting'

(43) /ŋ/ [gbáŋá] 'type of pepper'
 /ɲ/ [sìɲò] 'sting'

(44) /n/ [gbànà] 'type of tree'
 /ŋ/ [gbáŋá] 'type of pepper'

¹²Another analysis of /ɲ/ mentioned in section 3.1.4 is that of a prenasalized glide [ɲj]. It patterns better with the other prenasalized consonants because of its distribution. However, unlike prenasalized glide which have both a [+nasal] and a [−nasal] feature associated to the same root node, [ɲ] seems to have only [+nasal] features. This is attested in that the vowels following [ɲ] are also nasalized ([ɲɛ̃] "to disapprove", [ɲɔ̃xti] "to crease"), while vowels following prenasalised consonants are not nasalized ([ndax̃] "to follow", [nded̃i] "to forget"). See section 2.1.5.

- (45) /m/ [tàm] 'lake'
 /n/ [tàn] 'umbrella'
 /ŋ/ [tán] 'attention'

2.1.5 Prenasalized consonants

There are no clear examples of syllable initial consonant clusters attested in Mbódòmò. Therefore the homorganic nasal—consonant sequences [mb], [nd], [nz] or [ndz],¹³ [ŋg], and [mgb] are considered prenasalized consonant units. Prenasalized consonants are limited in distribution to syllable onset positions.

mb/nd

- (46) [mbòlì] 'money'
 [ndólí] 'hare'

nd/ŋg

- (47) [ndíà] 'wax'
 [ŋgíà] 'blood'

- (48) [ndò] 'hunt'
 [ŋgô] 'pity'

nd/nz (ndz)

- (49) [ndámbà] 'slingshot'
 [nzàmbí] or
 [ndzàmbí] 'costume'

- (50) [ndo] 'to touch, to tap'
 [nzodí] or
 [ndzodí] 'to spank'

¹³[nz] and [ndz] seem to be in free variation. Among the people born in the village of Garoua Yaka where I lived for a year both pronunciations were common.

ɲg/mgb

- (51) [ɲgìlè] *‘gorilla’*
 [mgbíli] *‘waist’*

There are no examples of apparent prenasalized voiceless consonants in word-initial position. Occasionally in intervocalic positions nasal—voiceless consonant sequences do occur. However, in the majority there is a morpheme boundary, see examples (52) to (54). In the four mono-morphemic examples found, the intervocalic nasal—voiceless consonant cluster is as likely to be heterorganic as homorganic, see examples (55) and (56). Nasal—voiceless consonant clusters in intervocalic positions are not prenasalized units and should be considered as intervocalic consonant clusters.

- (52) [dɔŋ-si] *‘to push away’*
 behind-CAUS
- (53) [ɓon-si] *‘to delay’*
 remain-CAUS
- (54) [gò-gòm-ti] *‘woodpecker’*
 REDUP-chop-tree
- (55) [kimkidĩ] *‘to roll up’*
 [lúmکیدĩ] *‘twisted (adj.)’*
- (56) [tàmpá] *‘tired, fatigued’*
 [línkpòn] *‘vine for swinging’*

The prenasalized consonants contrast with other consonants at the same point of articulation.

- b/mb
 (57) [béŋ] *'child'*
 [mbéŋ] *'dew'*
- (58) [bìndì] *'fetish'*
 [mbìndí] *'antelope'*
- d/nd
 (59) [dax̣] *'to pull'*
 [ndax̣] *'to follow'*
- z/nz
 (60) [zi] *'to clean, to wipe'*
 [nzi] or
 [ndzi] *'to mutter'*
- g/ŋg
 (61) [gótó] *'loins'*
 [ŋgòtó] *'crab'*
- (62) [gùlá] *'jealousy'*
 [ŋgùrá] *'sugar cane'*
- gb/mgb
 (63) [gbɛŋ] *'to get hot'*
 [mgbɛnzi] *'to shake'*

Prenasalized consonants in at least one word occur in the syllable onset following a closed syllable

- (64) [dàl.ɲgèl] ‘*mirror*’

2.1.6 The semi-vowels

The semi-vowels /j/ and /w/ contrast in word initial position.

- (65) [jàrà] ‘*bed*’
 [wàrà] ‘*dibble*’

Both /j/ and /w/ are found intervocalically, but /w/ is the less common of the two.

- (66) [kòjɔ́] ‘*fish*’
 [sòwòr] ‘*epilepsy*’

2.2 Vowels

Mbódòmò has a seven vowel system which consists of three front and three back vowels and a low central vowel:

Table 2. Mbódòmò vowels

| | |
|---|---|
| i | u |
| e | o |
| ɛ | ɔ |
| a | |

The phoneme [i] is the default vowel, as will be established from its behavior in verbal forms (see section 2.6.2.) Although normally the low vowel [a] is treated as phonologically [+back], it is phonetically a central vowel and is neutral with respect to the back harmony of front vowels as discussed in section 2.2.2.1. Furthermore, it is backed in the environment of velar or uvular final

consonants as discussed in section 2.5.2.4. For these reasons, [a] has been left unspecified with respect to [back].

Table 3. Distinctive features of vowels

| | i | e | ɛ | a | ɔ | o | u |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| hi | + | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| lo | - | - | - | + | - | - | - |
| bk | - | - | - | | + | + | + |
| ATR | + | + | - | - | - | + | + |

2.2.1 The Mbódòmò vowel system

All the Mbódòmò vowels may occur in both open and closed syllables.

| | | |
|------|--------|---------------------------|
| (67) | [bi] | <i>‘to fight’</i> |
| | [biəχ] | <i>‘to burp’</i> |
| | [we] | <i>‘to taste, to try’</i> |
| | [jer] | <i>‘to dry’</i> |
| | [tè] | <i>‘body’</i> |
| | [tèn] | <i>‘thorn’</i> |
| | [tà] | <i>‘stone’</i> |
| | [tàm] | <i>‘lake’</i> |
| | [kú] | <i>‘thigh’</i> |
| | [kúχ] | <i>‘cry’</i> |
| | [tò] | <i>‘spider’</i> |
| | [tòm] | <i>‘message’</i> |
| | [gò] | <i>‘panther’</i> |
| | [góχ] | <i>‘serpent’</i> |

2.2.2 Vowel harmony

The Mbódòmò vowels are restricted in their distribution within polysyllabic morphemes according to two types of harmony.

2.2.2.1 ATR harmony of the mid vowels

Within the morpheme, the mid vowels agree with regard to [ATR]. The first vowel of the morpheme dictates the [ATR] of any other mid vowel in the morpheme. The high and low vowels do not seem to affect vowel harmony, but it is difficult to test this as there are few polysyllabic words that are monomorphemic. Across morpheme boundaries, vowel harmony does not apply.¹⁴

¹⁴The name of the people and of the language, Mbódòmò, does not seem to follow mid-vowel ATR harmony although it is perceived as one morpheme rather than two. It is possible that

- (68) [jéré] *'buffalo'*
 [jéré] *'(a) lie'*
- (69) [dògó] *'leprosy'*
 [dògɔ́] *'wine'*
- (70) [bòré] *'African wild cat'*
 [bònè] *'suffering'*
 [kòdɛ́] *'gazelle'*
 [lòpè] *'pipe'*

2.2.2.2 Back harmony of front mid vowels

Back harmony of [e] and [ɛ]. The front mid vowels are further restricted in distribution. When [e] or [ɛ] is the first vowel in a morpheme, no succeeding vowel may be a [+back] vowel, see example (71). The low central vowel [a] is the only vowel not marked [-back] that may follow a front mid vowel. [a] appears to be neutral in respect to the feature [back]; see example (72). As with ATR harmony, the high vowels do not affect the back harmony of the mid vowels.

- (71) [dèrè] *'weaving'*
 [bèlá] *'type of fish'*
 [lèmbè] *'sand'*
 [bèrè] *'breast'*
 [géli] *'fish hook'*
- (72) [jédá] *'animosity'*
 [jèríà] *'elder'*

the name was originally a compound word whose original etyma have been lost, but which still maintains evidence of its history in the surface structure.

2.2.2.3 Permitted vowel combinations

Vowel combinations in mono-morpheme words. The permitted vowel combinations are as follows. The "!" indicates an illegal vowel combination due to back harmony violation mentioned in 2.2.2.2, the "X" indicates an illegal vowel harmony due to an ATR harmony violation as mentioned in 2.2.2.1 and the dashes indicate where there are unexplained gaps in the inventory.

Table 4. Permitted vowel combinations in mono-morpheme non-verb words

| /i/_ | /i/C _ | /i/CC _ |
|---|--|--|
| (i) ¹⁵ --
-- o
ε --
a | i --
e o
ε ɔ
a | i u
-- o
-- --
a |
| /e/_ | /e/C _ | /e/CC _ |
| -- !
e !
X X!
-- | i !
e !
X X!
a | -- !
e !
X X!
-- |
| /ε/_ | /ε/C _ | /ε/CC _ |
| -- !
X X!
ε !
-- | i !
X X!
ε !
a | -- !
X X!
ε !
a |
| /a/_ | /a/C _ | /a/CC _ |
| i --
-- o
-- --
a | i u
e o
ε ɔ
a | i u
e ¹⁶ o
ε ɔ
a |

¹⁵ This combination has been found only in ideophones.

¹⁶ This combination has been found only in one loan word.

Table 4. Continued.

| /ɔ/_ | | /ɔ/C_ | | /ɔ/CC_ | |
|------|----|-------|----|--------|----|
| i | -- | i | u | i | u |
| X | X | X | X | X | X |
| -- | -- | ɛ | ɔ | ɛ | ɔ |
| a | | a | | -- | |
| /o/_ | | /o/C_ | | /o/CC_ | |
| i | -- | i | -- | i | -- |
| e | o | e | o | -- | o |
| X | X | X | X | X | X |
| a | | a | | a | |
| /u/_ | | /u/C_ | | /u/CC_ | |
| i | -- | i | u | i | u |
| e | o | e | o | e | o |
| ɛ | -- | ɛ | ɔ | -- | ɔ |
| a | | a | | a | |

The VV combinations shown in the above table are further discussed in section 2.3.2. There are several gaps in this table that are unaccounted for. It is not yet clear if these gaps are systematic or accidental. Further study is needed.

2.2.3 Nasalized vowels

In most cases nasalization of the vowel is completely predictable in the environment of a nasal consonant, see examples (73) to (75). However, there are some exceptions in which a nasalized vowel occurs where there is no nasal consonant apparent, as shown in example (76).

- (73) [hɔ̃ŋ]¹⁷ 'to run'
[zɔ̃ŋ] 'stomach'
- (74) [mɯ̃s] 'cat'
[nɔ̃] 'fat'
- (75) [tɪ̃nɛ̃r] 'onion'
[wɛ̃nɛ̃] '3sg PN'
- (76) [wá] 'leaf'
[hə] 'to give'
[kpɛ̃] 'flea'

Furthermore, in certain cases there is contrast in nearly identical environments between these nasalized and non-nasalized words, as shown in examples (77) and (78).

- (77) [bɪ̃á] 'brother/sister'
[bíà] 'hedgehog'
- (78) [sɪ̃à] 'sister-in-law'
[síà] 'chair'

It should be noted that such pairs tend to be rare and only the vowels /ɛ/ and /a/ have been found to be nasalized out of the environment of a nasal consonant.¹⁸

¹⁷ The cedilla (ȷ) is used to mark nasality on vowels instead of the more standard tilde (ĩ) to facilitate the marking of tone.

¹⁸ I am hesitant to consider [ɛ̃] and [ã] as phonemes but I have not yet been able to find a good interpretation for them. It has been suggested that they might be the result of a coalescence of V + N.

2.2.4 Long vowels

There are only a few examples of long vowels in Mbódòmò. Examples (79) and (80) shows those that are the most common. However, there are a number of VV sequences in Mbódòmò. A number of these are low and mid vowel sequences that may have contrasting tones on the two vowels, see example (81). Since heterogeneous VV sequences occur and are more common than long vowels, it seems that long vowels may be interpreted as VV sequences as well. Like VV sequences these are interpreted as belonging to different syllables.¹⁹ VV sequences will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.2.

- | | | |
|------|---------|----------------------------|
| (79) | [kpòó] | <i>'meat'</i> |
| | [kóókà] | <i>'toilet'</i> |
| | [dàá] | <i>'elder sister'</i> |
| | [wéè] | <i>'fire'</i> |
| (80) | [béeé] | <i>'since then (adv.)'</i> |
| | [ndóó] | <i>'fixedly (adv.)'</i> |
| (81) | [kàó] | <i>'uncle'</i> |
| | [bòá] | <i>'bee hive'</i> |
| | [sòà] | <i>'diarrhea'</i> |
| | [gòè] | <i>'cloth'</i> |

2.3 Syllable structure

The Mbódòmò syllable consists of a vowel with an optional onset and an optional coda. There are no clear examples of consonant clusters in the syllable

¹⁹While contour tone is found on clearly mono-syllabic words, as seen in section 2.4.1, it is not common and most often occurs across morpheme boundaries and as a result of vowel elision.

onset or coda positions attested in Mbóðòmò. The only consonant clusters found are hetero-syllabic. The basic syllable types are then as follows:

| | | | |
|------|-----|-------|-------------------|
| (82) | V | /i/ | <i>'to braid'</i> |
| | VC | /ɔl/ | <i>'to vomit'</i> |
| | CV | /bɔ/ | <i>'to say'</i> |
| | CVC | /dal/ | <i>'to raise'</i> |

2.3.1 Tone bearing unit

The vowel is the tone-bearing unit. Consonants, including nasals, do not bear contrastive tone. Vowels may have either register or contour tones, see section 2.4.1.

2.3.2 Vowel sequences

Mbóðòmò does permit vowel sequences. There are a number of low and mid vowel sequences that may have contrasting tones on the two vowels, see example (81) above. Long vowels as mentioned in section 2.2.4 and vowel sequences with the high vowels [i] and [u] also may be considered as vowel sequences. These are not glides since they may take contrasting tone on the vowels, see example (83). Although the high vowel in a VV sequence is often found to have a high tone and the mid or low vowel a low tone, this is not consistent; tone is not predictable from vowel height. Since high vowel VV sequences may carry contrastive tone and pattern similarly to vowel sequences consisting of low and mid vowels, they are likewise considered to belong to two different syllables.²⁰

²⁰However, native speaker intuition seems to interpret vowel sequences as one syllable. In an informal test [kùàrà] "chicken" was clapped out as two syllables rather than three, and the same is also true for [kàó] "uncle" and [sàà] "diarrhea" which were clapped out as only one syllable. It is possible that there was a misperception of the question at hand when these tests were conducted, however. This is an area that still needs further study.

- (83) [súè] *'today'*
 [zùén] *'chameleon'*
 [líò] *'eggplant'*
 [ndáì] *'cattle'*

Vowel sequences consisting of two mid or low vowels are considered to belong to two syllables. Mbódòmò reduplicates the first CV of the word, but in the case of geminate vowel sequences, only the first vowel of the geminate vowels is reduplicated, see examples (84) and (85). This supports the idea that geminate vowel sequences are perceived as belonging to two distinct syllables.

- (84) [ndóó] *'fixedly'*
 [nzòχ-mò-ndó-ndóó] *'(he who) stares fixedly, i.e. middle finger'*
 see-something-REDUP-fixedly
- (85) [saasidĩ] *'to rinse'*
 [sá-sáásídĩ] *'is rinsing'*

As discussed above in section 2.2.2.1, there is vowel harmony among the mid vowels and as such certain combinations are excluded. Table 5 summarizes the permitted vowel combinations mentioned above and gives examples. Illegal ATR combinations are marked by "X" in table 5. Illegal back harmony combinations (section 2.2.2.2) are marked by "!".

Table 5. Permissible vowel sequences

| C1\C2 | i | e | ɛ | a | ɔ | o | u |
|-------|--|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| i | (gbíí) ²¹
<i>thunder</i> | --- | líèŋ
<i>tapered</i> | bíá
<i>sibling</i> | --- | líò
<i>eggplant</i> | --- |
| e | --- | wéè
<i>fire</i> | X | --- | X | ! | ! |
| ɛ | --- | X | ḡéé
<i>since</i> | --- | ! | X | ! |
| a | ndáì
<i>cattle</i> | --- | --- | dàá
<i>elder sister</i> | --- | kàó
<i>uncle</i> | --- |
| ɔ | nóí
<i>bird</i> | X | --- | sòà
<i>diarrhea</i> | --- | X | --- |
| o | mbòì
<i>brother-in-law</i> | gòè
<i>cloth</i> | X | ḡòá
<i>bee hive</i> | X | kpòó
<i>meat</i> | --- |
| u | ndùì
<i>mouse</i> | zùén
<i>chameleon</i> | sùè
<i>today</i> | ḡùá
<i>mushroom</i> | --- | hùókó
<i>termite</i> | --- |

The types of VV combinations are very limited. It may be noted that not every vowel may occur in either position. The two front mid vowels, /e/ and /ɛ/, never occur in V1 position, except in geminates. The /u/ and /ɔ/ never occur in V2 position. Other than the holes accounted for by vowel harmony constraints, there are still several possible combinations that have not yet been found.

It is interesting to note that there are no examples of V[u] sequences and the semi-vowel /w/ does not occur syllable finally. Although V[i] sequences do occur, considering that there are many examples of VV sequences, the V[i] sequences are being interpreted as VV rather than V[j] especially since [i] does carry tone. The lack of a V[j] sequence parallels the lack of [w] in the same environment.

²¹There are only two examples of [ii] and both are suspect. /gbíí/, listed in the chart, is an ideophone, the second is the word for "yes", [íí], which has the additional feature of nasalization.

2.3.3 Nasal/consonant sequences

There are homorganic nasal/consonant sequences that occur word-initial. These must agree in both point of articulation and in voicing. There are no nasal/consonant sequences with voiceless consonants in word-initial positions. They may also follow closed syllables,²² see example (87). Since nasal consonants do not have contrastive tone, and since consonant clusters are not attested elsewhere in the language, nasal-consonant sequences are considered prenasalized consonant units.

- (86) CV /nzi/ ‘to mutter’
 CVC /mber/ ‘to sing’

- (87) [dàl.ŋgél] ‘mirror’

These homorganic nasal/consonant sequences respond in the same way as other consonants in reduplication. The first syllable, (C)V, of the verb reduplicates in the present progressive tense, see examples (88) and (89). This also indicates that nasal/consonant sequences are best interpreted as prenasalized consonants.

- | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|--------|-------------------|-----|-----------|-----------------------|
| (88) | [mí | bá] | ‘I catch’ | [mí | bá.bá] | ‘I am catching’ |
| | [mí | áχ] | ‘I ask’ | [mí | á.áχ] | ‘I am asking’ |
| | [mí | bélsí] | ‘I cause to burn’ | [mí | bé.bélsí] | ‘I’m causing to burn’ |
| | [mí | kpól] | ‘I shave’ | [mí | kpó.kpól] | ‘I am shaving’ |
| | [mí | ɲóŋ] | ‘I eat’ | [mí | ɲó.ɲóŋ] | ‘I am eating’ |
| | [mí | ndáχ] | ‘I follow’ | [mí | ndá.ndáχ] | ‘I am following’ |

²²I have only found this one example of a prenasalized consonant following a closed syllable within a morpheme.

- (89) [ŋgò-ŋgòŋ-lì] ‘*esophagus*’
REDUP-?-water

Prenasalized consonants, when they occur intervocalically, often appear to be ambisyllabic, see example (90). This same phenomenon occurs across morpheme boundaries also, see example (91).

- (90)
- | | | | |
|---------|--|----------|-------------------------------------|
| σ | | σ | |
| / \ | | / \ | |
| O R | | O R | |
| | | \ / | |
| [mb ò | | ŋ g à] | ---> [mbòŋ.ŋgà] ‘ <i>zebra</i> ’ |

- (91)
- | | | | | | |
|--------|--|---------|--|--------|--|
| σ | | σ | | σ | |
| / \ | | / \ | | / \ | |
| O R | | O R | | O R | |
| | | \ / | | | |
| [b é | | ŋ g á | | l í] | |

/bé/ + /ŋgálí/ ‘*small*’ ‘*youth*’ ---> [béŋ.ŋgá.lí] ‘*young man*’

2.3.4 Morpheme structure conditions

There are various restrictions on both the structure of the syllable and of the morpheme. Certain consonants never occur morpheme-initial, or in intervocalic positions, others may not occur in the syllable onset after a closed syllable. Less than a third of all consonants (28.5%) may occur in the morpheme-final coda. Only 14% of all consonants may occur in a non-final syllable coda. Furthermore, the permitted structures of nouns and verbs differ.

2.3.4.1 Morpheme-initial distribution

All Mbóðm̀ phonemes except /r/ and /ŋ/ are found in the syllable onset, morpheme-initial positions,²³ see table 6.

Table 6. Morpheme-initial consonants

| | | | | |
|----|-------|----|-------|-----|
| p | t | | k | kp |
| b | d | | g | gb |
| ɓ | ɗ | | | |
| mb | nd | nz | ŋg | mgb |
| f | s | | | |
| v | z | | | |
| m | n | ɲ | ----- | |
| | l | | | |
| | ----- | | | |
| | | j | h | w |

2.3.4.2 Intervocalic distribution

In monomorphemic words, all the consonants except /v/ and /h/ occur intervocalically, see table 7.

²³The one exception is recently borrowed words like "radio".

Table 7. Medial consonants, following vowel

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|------|-----|
| p | t | | k | kp |
| b | d | | g | gb |
| ɓ | ɗ | | | |
| mb | nd | nz | ŋg | mgb |
| f | s | | | |
| ---- | z | | | |
| m | n | ɲ | ŋ | |
| | l | | | |
| | r | | | |
| | | j | ---- | w |

2.3.4.3 Word-final distribution

The inventory of consonants permitted in the syllable coda is very limited. Only the voiceless stops, /s/, certain nasals and the liquids occur in the syllable coda, see table 8.

Table 8. Consonants in word-final position

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| p | t | | k = [χ] | ----- |
| ---- | ---- | | ----- | ----- |
| ---- | ---- | | | |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| ---- | s | | | |
| ---- | ---- | | | |
| m | n | ----- | ŋ | |
| | l | | | |
| | r | | | |
| | | ----- | ----- | ----- |

2.3.4.4 Word internal consonant clusters

Intramorphemic heterosyllabic consonants clusters are restricted. A very limited number of consonants may follow a closed syllable. Table 9 shows the permissible C₂ consonants in intramorphemic C₁C₂ clusters.

Table 9. C₂ consonants in C₁C₂ clusters

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ---- | t | | k | ----- |
| ---- | ----- | | ----- | ----- |
| ---- | dʰ | | | |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ŋg | ----- |
| ---- | s | | | |
| ----- | z | | | |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| | l | | | |
| | r | | | |
| | | ----- | ----- | ----- |

The consonants permitted in a non-final syllable coda are more restricted than word-final syllable codas. Only four consonants, /m/, /k/, /r/ and /l/ occur as C₁ in C₁C₂ clusters, see table 10. Of these, consonant clusters /kC/ occur about 45% , /rC/ occurs 28%, and /lC/ occurs 18% of the time not including loan words (loan words included brings the percentage of /lC/ clusters to 27%). Consonant clusters of /mC/ are the least frequent with only one example in a clearly monomorpheme non-verb word that is not a loan word. Four other cases of medial consonant clusters occur in verbs that are suspected to consist of more than one morpheme, and have not been calculated in the above percentages.²⁴

²⁴These statistics are based on the occurrence found in a 1250+ word lexicon.

Table 10. C₁ consonants in C₁C₂ clusters

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ----- | ----- | | k | ----- |
| ----- | ----- | | ----- | ----- |
| ----- | ----- | | | |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| ----- | ----- | | | |
| ----- | ----- | | | |
| m | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| | l | | | |
| | r | | | |
| | | ----- | ----- | ----- |

The permissible C₁C₂ Clusters are illustrated in table 11. Of the thirty-two possible combinations, only twelve (37.5%) have been actually found in monomorphemic non-loan words.

Table 11. Permitted hetero-syllabic clusters

| C ₁ \C ₂ | t | d | s | z | l | r | k | ŋg |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| l | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | múl <u>k</u> uà
<i>tears</i> | dàl <u>ŋ</u> gél
<i>mirror</i> |
| r | -- | --- | sðrsí
<i>in front</i> | --- | --- | --- | bòrkó
<i>lid</i> | --- |
| [χ] =
k | ɲuxti
<i>crease</i> | ḃèəχdê
<i>knot</i> | lìəχsí
<i>fraud</i> | bíəχzù
<i>fruit</i> | bàχlà
<i>hyena</i> | káχrá
<i>drynes</i>
s | --- | --- |
| m | --- | --- | ndàmsá
<i>cloud</i> | --- | --- | --- | kimkidí
<i>to roll</i>
up ²⁵ | --- |

2.3.4.5 Summary

The consonants and the positions in which they may be found are shown in table 12. Dashes indicate positions where the phoneme has not been found.

²⁵This has been found only in verbs, which may consist of two morphemes.

Table 12. Summary of consonant distribution

| Syllable onset | | | | Syllable coda | |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | # ____ | V. __ V | C. __ | __# | __.C |
| p | pádè
<i>sandal</i> | hòpèrè
<i>cold (virus)</i> | tàmpá ²⁶
<i>tired</i> | dàp
<i>scarification</i> | ----- |
| t | tárè
<i>pimple</i> | bétì
<i>chest</i> | dokti
<i>to tie</i> | fét
<i>completely</i> | ----- |
| k | kásà
<i>clearing</i> | mùkà
<i>mute</i> | mòrkó
<i>five</i> | zàχ
<i>horn</i> | tóχdò
<i>lg. wild cat</i> |
| kp | kpáná
<i>pot</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| b | bàrà
<i>slave</i> | ṅgábìrì
<i>k.o. disease</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| d | dàlè
<i>cut</i> | àdà
<i>machete</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| g | gàlà
<i>carp</i> | zígòrò
<i>knee</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| gb | gbàdí
<i>knot</i> | zàgbà
<i>plantain</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| ḃ | ḃàsà
<i>hot pepper</i> | díbèn
<i>leech</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| d̪ | d̪òŋ
<i>back</i> | ḃédí
<i>k.o. fruit</i> | d̪iᵛχd̪i
<i>to tickle</i> | ----- | ----- |

²⁶This is a loan word. The only other examples of /p/ following a closed syllable are /pàlàmpúlùm/ "butterfly" and /pàmpàm/ "mud brick". These are probably reduplicated words, although their pattern of reduplication is not the norm for the language.

Table 12. Continued.

| Syllable onset | | | | Syllable coda | |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| | # ____ | V. __ V | C. ____ | ____ # | ____.C |
| mb | mbìlè
<i>eagle</i> | fùmbí
<i>orange</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| nd | ndàrá
<i>leather</i> | kóndù
<i>banana</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| nz | nzáńá
<i>marimba</i> | bènzó
<i>k.o. grass</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| ŋg | ŋgóndé
<i>moon</i> | góngò
<i>strainer</i> | dàŋgél
<i>mirror</i> | ----- | ----- |
| mgb | mgbàr
<i>wild yam</i> | mgbòmgbótó
<i>hard rain</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| f | fàn
<i>handbag</i> | áfù
<i>corn beer</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| s | sàrà
<i>slingshot</i> | gèsé
<i>k.o. ant</i> | dalsi
<i>to wound</i> | mús
<i>cat</i> | ----- |
| h | hálàlà
<i>army ant</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| v | vàmdì
<i>donkey</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| z | zàrà
<i>ear</i> | ŋgézè
<i>porcupine</i> | bí ^o χzù
<i>k.o. fruit</i> | ----- | ----- |
| m | mám
<i>pus</i> | bùmó
<i>heart</i> | ----- | tàm
<i>pond</i> | ndàmsá
<i>cloud</i> |
| n | nám
<i>animal</i> | bònè
<i>suffering</i> | ----- | gbàn
<i>palm rat</i> | ----- |
| ɲ | ńáńá
<i>horse</i> | tíńèr
<i>onion</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| ŋ | ----- | múńò
<i>hornbill</i> | ----- | bàŋ
<i>father</i> | ----- |
| l | làbì
<i>initiation</i> | bélé
<i>leg</i> | ḃàχlà
<i>hyena</i> | bàbàl
<i>esplanade</i> | dàŋgél
<i>mirror</i> |
| r | ----- | árì
<i>accident</i> | tùχrí
<i>mixture</i> | kpár
<i>seed</i> | bòrkó
<i>blanket</i> |
| w | wàlá
<i>fruit</i> | dàwà
<i>monkey</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| j | jàrà
<i>bed</i> | fíjà
<i>avocado</i> | ----- | ----- | ----- |

2.3.5 Structure of nouns

Most of the examples in table 12 are nouns. This results from the fact that the Mbódòmè noun is less restricted in its phonological structure than the verb root. It does however, have a marked preference for onsets. The V and VC syllable structures are not found in one syllable noun morphemes. In two syllable noun morphemes an initial onsetless syllable is found but rarely.

| | | | |
|------|-------|------------------|--------------------------|
| (92) | *V | | |
| | *VC | | |
| | V.V | 1 example | [à.ó] <i>'friend'</i> |
| | VC.CV | 1 example (loan) | [ár.kì] <i>'alcohol'</i> |
| | V.CV | 8 examples | [à.dá] <i>'machete'</i> |
| | | | [ó.sí] <i>'flea'</i> |

2.3.6 Permitted structural types of verbs

The Mbódòmè verb structure is restricted in the types of syllables permitted, type of codas licensed and in vowel specifications. In polysyllabic verbs, only the first syllable may be a closed syllable and the phonemes that may close that syllable are more limited than those found in non-verb words. The uniqueness of the first syllable is further attested in that only in the first syllable may any vowel occur. All other syllables contain only the vowel [i] in the root form.

2.3.6.1 Coda restrictions

The Mbódòmè verb root has one, two or three syllables. In polysyllabic verb stems, only the first syllable may be closed.

| | | |
|------|-------------|----------------------|
| (93) | [bax.li] | <i>'to guard'</i> |
| | [ker.ki.dĩ] | <i>'to encircle'</i> |

Within the verb root, the consonants that may occur in the coda are very limited. In VC and CVC verbs only the nasals, liquids and /k/ may occur in the coda.

Table 13. Permitted coda consonants in the verb

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| ----- | ----- | | k = [χ] | ----- |
| ----- | ----- | | ----- | ----- |
| ----- | ----- | | | |
| ----- | ----- | | | |
| ----- | ----- | | | |
| m | n | ----- | ŋ | |
| | l | | | |
| | r | | | |
| | | ----- | ----- | ----- |

2.3.6.2 Vowel restrictions

In the Mbódòmò verb root only the vowel of the first syllable is distinctive. Any vowel may occur in the first syllable, but all other syllables in the root permit only the vowel [i], see example (94). See section 2.6.2. for further discussion of the vowels in the verb root.

- (94)
- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| [bi] | <i>'to fight'</i> |
| [mber] | <i>'to sing'</i> |
| [ɓerkiɗi] | <i>'to break, twist'</i> |
| [gati] | <i>'to remove'</i> |
| [kɔti] | <i>'to gouge out'</i> |
| [koɓili] | <i>'to hang up'</i> |
| [bɒfi] | <i>'to singe'</i> |
| [kɒtiɓi] | <i>'to engender, begin'</i> |

2.4 Tone

Mbódòmò has both lexical tone and grammatical tone. Lexical tone is predominately a feature of nouns and modifiers. The tone is lexical because it is manifested contrastively in identical environments. Verbs, unlike nouns and modifiers, do not have tone as a contrastive feature. All verbs in isolation have the same tone pattern, high-low. In the clause, tone on the verbs is determined by various grammatical features such as the imperative aspect, and person marking on verbs in declarative clauses, see section 2.4.2.

2.4.1 Lexical tone

There are two lexical tones in Mbódòmò, high and low. Some minimal and near minimal pairs are shown in examples (95) to (97).

- (95) [nú] *‘mouth, language’*
 [nù] *‘ground, land’*

- (96) [lémbé] *‘tongue’*
 [lèmbè] *‘sand’*

- (97) [ṅgálí] *‘youth’*
 [ṅgàḍí] *‘thunder’*
 [ṅgàḍí] *‘hill’*
 [ṅgáḍí] *‘gun’*

A limited number of words may have contour tones. While most words with contour tones are borrowed, not all of them are,²⁷ see examples (98) and (99).

²⁷As far as I am aware, none of the words in the two following examples is borrowed.

- (98) [ngĩ] ‘*DEM (very distant)*’
 [tũm] ‘*type of non-poisonous snake*’
- (99) [mbân] ‘*accomplice*’
 [mûr] ‘*flesh*’
 [tên] ‘*really, truly (adv.)*’
 [ngô] ‘*pity*’
 [kômbôn] ‘*log canoe*’

Downdrift is common in compound words (examples (100) to (102)) and in larger construction (examples (103) to (105)) where high tones following a low tone are lower in pitch than the high tones preceding the low tone.²⁸

- (100) /lé/ [˧] ‘*village*’
 /wàn-lé/ [˧ ˧] ‘*village chief (proprietor-village)*’
- (101) /kó/ [˧] ‘*hand*’
 /zàŋ-kó/ [˧ ˧] ‘*palm (inside-hand)*’
- (102) /sámí/ [˧ ˧] ‘*sheep*’
 /wàn dál sámí/ [˧ ˧ ˧ ˧] ‘*shepherd (master raises sheep)*’
- (103) [˧ ˧ ˧ ˧ ˧ ˧ ˧]
 /wílí tà bólsì pér/
 man FUT lengthen cord
 ‘*The man will lengthen the cord.*’

²⁸I suspect that low tones also lower in the same manner, but I do not have enough evidence to support this.

- (104) [ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ]
 /dɔk-gìlì-bén gbàn-à fèt/
 block-interior-child get.big-PAST already
'The youngest child is already big.'
- (105) [ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ ɲ]
 /mí nón-á tárè á tè mí dǎlsí/
 1sg scratch-PAST insect.bite LOC body 1sgPOSS wound
'I scratched the insect bite until I bled.'

2.4.2 Grammatical tone

Grammatical tone in Mbódòmò includes the tonal variations that occur when isolated words are put into the context of a clause. Discussed in this section are the following phenomena: Low tone dissimilation in the context of nouns and adjectives and of verbs in the verb phrase, tone on the verbs in isolation, and the tonal changes that occur on the verb marking subject agreement.

2.4.2.1 Dissimilation of low tones

Dissimilation of low tones occurs in certain contexts only. When two words are juxtaposed and have adjacent low tones, the low tone of the first word dissimilates becoming either a rising tone or a high tone as in the case of low tone dissimilation within the verb phrase, as will be illustrated in examples (119) and (120).

For example, in noun phrases consisting of a noun modifying another noun, with a final low tone on the head noun and an initial low tone on the modifying noun, the final low tone dissimilates. Consider the following nouns in isolation in example (106) and in noun-noun phrases in examples (107) to (111).

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------------------|---------|---------------------|
| (106) | [áɾì] | <i>'accident'</i> | [màtùà] | <i>'automobile'</i> |
| | [lì] | <i>'water'</i> | [tì] | <i>'tree'</i> |
| | | | [kóró] | <i>'rain'</i> |
| | | | [kpòó] | <i>'meat'</i> |
| | [tùà] | <i>'house'</i> | [kùàrà] | <i>'chicken'</i> |

| | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| (107) | [áɾĩ
accident] | màtùà]
automobile | <i>'automobile accident'</i> |
|-------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|

| | | |
|-------|------------|--------------|
| (108) | [lĩ tì] | <i>'sap'</i> |
| | water tree | |

| | | |
|-------|--------------|---------------------|
| (109) | [lì kóró] | <i>'rain water'</i> |
| | water rain | |

| | | |
|-------|--------------|---------------|
| (110) | [lĩ kpòó] | <i>'soup'</i> |
| | water meat | |

| | | |
|-------|----------------|-----------------------|
| (111) | [tùá kùàrà] | <i>'chicken coop'</i> |
| | house chicken | |

The same phenomenon occurs with some other types of constructions, among them adjective-noun phrases, see example (112), and inalienable possession noun phrases, see examples (113) and (114).

| | | |
|-------|-------------|----------------------------|
| (112) | [zídà] | <i>'hot, spicy (adj.)'</i> |
| | [ɓàsà] | <i>'pepper'</i> |
| | [zídǎ ɓàsà] | <i>'hot pepper'</i> |

| | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| (113) | [zàrà] | <i>'ear'</i> |
| | [kàó] | <i>'uncle'</i> |
| | [zàrà kàó bòn] | <i>'my uncle's ear'</i> |
| | 1POSS | |

- (114) [zù] 'head'
[dàwà] 'monkey'
[zǔ dàwà] 'monkey's head'

Dissimilation does not occur in several contexts. Briefly, low tones do not dissimilate between the noun and the proximal demonstrative *kè* (as shown in example (115)), nor between elements in long compound words (see example (116)), nor between a preposition and its pronoun (as shown in example (117)), nor between a head noun and the relative clause marker (seen in example (118)).

- (115) dàwà kè
 monkey DEM
'This monkey'

- (116) wàn-dòl-bòlò kè
man-fashion-iron DEM
'This blacksmith'

- (117) nán wà 6èl-à nè wènè
 mother 3sgPOSS:alien bear-PAST PREP 3sg
'Her mother gave birth to her.'

- (118) 6àklà kà zà nù
hyena REL dig earth
'Hyena who digs a hole...'

Dissimilation of low tones also occurs in the verb phrase when the verb ends in a low tone and is followed by a low tone initial object or oblique. In these examples, instead of a rising tone, the low tone is disassociated from the second vowel of the verb and only the epenthesized high tone resulting from dissimilation, is found in the surface structure, see examples (119) and (120).

- (119) H L
 | / \
 /béŋ hàl-à/
 baby crawl-PAST
 'The baby crawled'

 H L (H) L L H
 | / ‡ / | / \ ^
 /béŋ hàl- á nè ɲgòndè náár/
 baby crawl-PAST PREP month four
 'The baby crawled at four months old.'

- (120) L L H
 / \ / \ / \
 /wènè àŋ-à bíŋgó/
 3sg harvest-PAST peanut
 'S/he harvested peanuts.'

 L L (H) L
 / \ / ‡ / |
 /wènè àŋ-á m̀/
 3sg harvest-PAST something
 'S/he harvested something'

Also shown above, in example (120), dissimilation of low tones does not occur between the subject and the verb of a clause.

2.4.2.2 Verb tonal patterns

All Mbódòm̀ verbs have the same high-low tone melody in isolation, regardless of the number of syllables they have. The tones associate with vowels from left to right, with the low tone spreading to all remaining vowels, see examples (121) to (124).

- (121) [bâ] *'to stop, catch'*
 [déà] *'to do'*
 [bàsà] *'to sharpen'*
 [ḃáχlà] *'to protect, guard'*
 [kóḃàlà] *'to hang up'*
 [ḃérkàḃà] *'to break'*
 [ṣà] *'to warm oneself'*
 [ṣlà] *'to vomit'*
 [ísì] *'to lean on'*

- (122) HL
 ∨
 /ba/ *'to stop, catch'*

- (123) HL
 / \
 /ḃakla/ *'to protect, guard'*

- (124) H L
 / /\
 /ḃerkaḃa/ *'to break'*

Within the clause, verb tone is affected in the simple past and in the past perfect by person marking. The verb is marked for first and second persons by high tone, as shown in examples (125), (126), (129) and (130), and for third person by low tone, as shown in examples (127), (128), (131) and (132). The low tone is not merely low tone spread from the pronouns as is shown by example (132) where the verb is marked for low tone after a noun.

- (125) [mí nóŋ-á mè] *'I ate something'*
 1sg eat-PAST something

- (126) [éné nón-á m̀] *'You(PL) ate something'*
 2pl eat-PAST something
- (127) [wènè ǹn-á m̀] *'He/she ate something'*
 3sg eat-PAST something
- (128) [wâ ǹn-á m̀] *'They ate something'*
 3pl eat-PAST something
- (129) [mé kètírí só j̀mb̀] *'You(sg) had divided the manioc'*
 2sg eat PERF something
- (130) [élé kètára j̀mb̀] *'We divided the manioc'*
 1PL divide:PAST manioc
- (131) [wènè kètìrì só j̀mb̀] *'S/he had divided the manioc'*
 3sg divide PERF manioc
- (132) [kóé kètára j̀mb̀] *'The woman divided the manioc'*
 woman divide:PAST manioc

Person marking on the verbs is neutralized in the non-past tenses, see examples (133) to (126).

- (133) [mí tà nón m̀] *'I will eat something'*
 1sg FUT eat something
- (134) [wá tà nón m̀] *'They will eat something'*
 2sg FUT eat something
- (135) [wèně tà nón m̀] *'He/she will eat something'*
 3sg FUT eat something

- (136) [wènè nón m̀] *‘He/she eats something’*
 3sg eat something
- (137) [éné tà kètìrì jòmbò] *‘You (pl) will divide the manioc’*
 2PL FUT divide manioc
- (138) [mé tà kètìrì jòmbò] *‘You (sg) will divide the manioc’*
 2sg FUT divide manioc
- (139) [kóé tà kètìrì jòmbò] *‘Woman will divide the manioc’*
 woman FUT divide manioc

2.5 Phonological processes

Various phonological processes occur within the word in Mbódòm̀. The palatalization of consonants in the environment of /i/, the weakening of the velar consonants /k/ and /g/, and the backing of vowels in the environment of a velar consonant in the syllable coda are discussed in this section.

2.5.1 Palatalization

Various consonants submit to allophonic changes in the presence of the high front vowel /i/. The most pronounced change is to the lateral consonant, /l/. In this environment, it becomes a retroflex lateral flap [ɭ], see example (140).

- (140) [ɭí] *‘eye’*
 [lé] *‘village’*
 [ɭɛ] *‘to enter’*
 [là] *‘clothing’*
 [lun] *‘to fail’*
 [lo] *‘to throw’*
 [ɭón] *‘type of vine’*

The same phenomenon can be seen to a lesser extent with the voiced and voiceless stops in the environment of either /i/ or /u/. With the bilabial and velar voiceless stops it is manifested by a slight aspiration on the consonant (example (142)). In the case of the alveolars it is manifested by affrication, see example (141).

| | | | | |
|-------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------------|
| (141) | [t ^s i] | 'tree' | [d ^z i] | 'to interest' |
| | [t ^h è] | 'body' | [de] | 'to do' |
| | [t ^h à] | 'stone' | [dal] | 'to raise' |
| | [t ^h ò] | 'spider' | [dol] | 'to work metal' |
| | [t ^h òŋ] | 'salt' | [dɔ] | 'to burn' |
| | [t ^s ùà] | 'house' | [d ^z um] | 'to stab' |

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------------|------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| (142) | [p ^h i] | 'to dress' | [k ^h iní] | 'pill' |
| | [p ^h usi] | 'to push' | [k ^h un] | 'to attach' |
| | [p ^h er] | 'to dry' | [k ^h et ^s i] | 'to write' |
| | [p ^h ol] | 'to clear' | [k ^h ó] | 'hand' |

2.5.2 Velar phenomena

The velar consonants weaken in certain environments to uvular fricatives. /k/ weakens in the syllable coda to [χ] and in the verb to [ɣ] when the past tense suffix -a is added. In non-verb words [g] and [ɣ] are in complementary distribution.

2.5.2.1 Weakening of the phoneme /k/

In syllable final position the velar consonant /k/ weakens to a uvular fricative [χ]. This occurs even when it is followed by another consonant within the morpheme.

- (143) [bàχlà] 'hyena'
 [zàχ] 'horn'

In certain words, there is variation of [k] and [χ] between speakers, particularly between the old and the young respectively. Where vowel elision occurs, the /k/ loses its position in the onset and re-syllabifies as a coda.

- (144) [gbákátá] > [gbáχtá] 'falcon'
 [seki.li] > [seəχ.li] 'to trick'
 [jekili] > [jeəχ.li] 'to liquefy'

In the context of verbs the syllable final /k/ weakens to [ɸ] when followed by the past tense suffix -a.

- (146) [laχ] ---> [tà láχ] 'will leave'
 [laχ] + [-a] ---> [laɸa] 'left'
 [laχ-si] + [-a] ---> [laχsa] 'caused to leave'

2.5.2.2 Weakening of the phoneme /g/

In non-verb words, [g] is in complementary distribution with [ɸ]. [g] occurs in the morpheme-initial syllable onset position, [ɸ] occurs only intervocalically within a morpheme,²⁹ see example (147). In compound words, even intervocalically, [g] occurs, see examples (148) and (149).

²⁹There are two exceptions to this. The words [sígóló] "shadow" and [zígóró] "knee" do not follow this rule. They are considered to be one-morpheme words, but [sígóló] in particular is suspect. Although the tone is different, [sígóló] could be a compound of [sí] "under" and [gòlò]

- (147) [ḡàḡà]³⁰ *'shoulder'*
 [zìḡà] *'fufu'*
 [ḡóḡó] *'corner'*
- (148) [zí-gòrò] *'bee'*
 fly-honey
- (149) [gò-gòm-tì] *'woodpecker'*
 REDUP-chop-tree

2.5.2.3 Diphthongization of front vowels

The front vowels diphthongize in the presence of a back consonant in tautosyllabic environments. This is most evident with the phoneme /k/ which becomes a uvular fricative in the syllable coda.

- (150) [si^əχ] *'to fall'*
 [ze^əχ] *'to sift'*
- [zim] *'to wean'*
 [senzi] *'to change, replace'*

2.5.2.4 Backing of the low vowel

The low vowel is affected in similar environments. It becomes backed when followed by the phonemes /ŋ/ and /k/ in tautosyllabic environment.

"granary" Mbódòmò granaries are often built up high on stilts and the open area underneath is sometimes used as a shelter or as a cooking area.

³⁰Many of the people of the village of Garoua Yaka in helping me learn the language would exaggerate the pronunciation of verbs like the one in section 2.5.2.1., emphasizing the [k] as [la.ka] "left" while emphasizing non-verb words like "fufu" as [zì.gà].

- (151) [tàn] *'umbrella'*
 [tàn] *'root'*

- (152) [dàp] *'scarification'*
 [dàχ] *'bottle, receptacle'*

2.6 Morphophonemic processes of verbs

The Mbódòmò verb has a peculiar structure that renders it susceptible to morphophonemic processes when the past tense suffix *-a* is added. The suffix undergoes [+high] vowel harmony when the first vowel of the root verb is [+high].

2.6.1 Verb types

Only the first syllable of a verb may be a closed syllable and the phonemes that may close that syllable are more limited than those found in non-verb words. Furthermore, the first syllable is the only syllable in which any vowel may occur. All other syllables contain only the vowel [i] in the verb root form. See section 2.3.6.

Mbódòmò verbs may be divided into two classes determined by their phonological structure. Those that are one syllable and which have either an open syllable or contain a permitted consonant in the coda position (see section 2.3.6.1. and table 14), and those that do not have a licensed coda (see tables 15, 16 and 17).

Table 14. Verbs with open syllables or permitted codas

| | | |
|-----|-------|-------------------------------|
| V | [a] | <i>'to put, to cry'</i> |
| | [i] | <i>'to braid'</i> |
| VC | [ɔl] | <i>'to vomit'</i> |
| | [aχ] | <i>'to ask'</i> |
| CV | [ba] | <i>'to catch, to stop'</i> |
| | [gi] | <i>'to prepare, to cook'</i> |
| | [ku] | <i>'to cross'</i> |
| | [hɛ] | <i>'to buy'</i> |
| CVC | [far] | <i>'to wash'</i> |
| | [hel] | <i>'to weep'</i> |
| | [biχ] | <i>'to burp'</i> |
| | [kun] | <i>'to tie up'</i> |
| | [duŋ] | <i>'to exist'</i> |
| | [gom] | <i>'to chop with machete'</i> |
| | | |

The second class of verbs usually have one or more consonants in the syllable coda where the verb syllable structure constraints require resyllabification. In these cases the extra consonants are syllabified as onsets with empty vowel slots, which are then filled in by epenthesis with the vowel /i/.³¹ The peculiarity of Mbódòmò verbs is that only the first vowel is distinctive. Due to the consistency in which all other vowels in the verb root are /i/ and that in verb roots consisting of only two consonants the second consonant is an illegal coda consonant, the /i/ seems to be an epenthesized default vowel required for producing acceptable syllable structures, see table 15.

³¹There are two verbs in which a permissible syllable coda consonant /k/ is re-syllabified, /dɔk/ "to block" and /tok/ "to insist". These both follow the pattern of verbs derived from either an intransitive verb or an adjective. [toki] is derived from [toχ] "to throw" and [dɔki] is derived from [dɔχ] "below". See sections 3.1.3 and 3.6.

Table 15. Verbs with illegal codas

| syllable structure | underlying form | surface form | gloss |
|--|-----------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| $\sigma \quad \sigma$
$/ \quad / $
(C)VC_ | bas | basi | <i>'to sharpen'</i> |
| | buf | bufi | <i>'to singe'</i> |
| | kpɛɖ | kpɛɖi | <i>'to jump'</i> |
| | ɓot | ɓoti | <i>'to clean cassava'</i> |
| | is | isi | <i>'to press'</i> |
| | ɓid | ɓidi | <i>'to detach'</i> |
| | kɔt | kɔti | <i>'to gouge out'</i> |

Some verbs underlyingly have codas consisting of two or three consonants. If the second consonant may be syllabified as a coda it usually is,³² see tables 16 and 17.

Table 16. Verbs with consonant cluster codas

| syllable structure | underlying form | surface form | gloss |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|
| $\sigma \quad \sigma \quad \sigma$
$/ \quad / \quad / $
CVC_C_ | kutk | kutiki | <i>'to commence'</i> |
| | kɛtr | ketiri | <i>'to write'</i> |
| | kɔɓl | kɔɓili | <i>'to hang up'</i> |
| | katt | katiti | <i>'to dry'</i> |
| | ndaɓr | ndaɓiri | <i>'to pursue'</i> |

The preference is for the fewest number of syllables possible. A verb with an underlying CVCC structure is preferably resyllabified as CVC.CV if the consonant following the first vowel is an acceptable coda consonant. Only if it can not be a coda, will it be resyllabified as CV.CV.CV.

³²The verb "to liquefy" and the verb "to trick" are somewhat exceptions to this rule. They vary freely between forms with a closed syllable and forms without, although the second consonant is a permitted coda. In normal speech the closed syllable construction is most common.

Table 17. Verbs with consonant cluster codas with legal codas

| syllable structure | underlying form | surface form | gloss |
|--|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| $\sigma \quad \sigma \quad \sigma$
$/\backslash \quad / \quad /$
CVCC_(C_) | dals | dalsi | 'to wound' |
| | ʁakl | ʁaxli | 'to guard' |
| | ɲukt | ɲuxti | 'to crease' |
| | berkdʁ | berkidĩ | 'to break' |
| | kimkdʁ | kimkidĩ | 'to roll up' |

Verbs with an underlying CVCCC structure require that the consonant following the first vowel be an acceptable coda consonant. There are no examples of verb roots with more than three syllables.

There are some verbs that vary freely in how they resyllabify. These verbs have /k/ as the second consonant. Sometimes they are syllabified with the /k/ as an onset, other times they are syllabified with /k/ in the coda of the first syllable, see example (153). Both forms are acceptable.

(153)

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------|
| $\sigma \quad \sigma$
$/\backslash \quad /$
CVC.C_ | | $\sigma \quad \sigma \quad \sigma$
$/\backslash \quad / \quad /$
CVC_.C_ | |
| jɛkl ----> [jɛχli] | ~ | [jɛkili] | 'to liquefy' |
| sekl ----> [seχli] | ~ | [sekili] | 'to trick' |

2.6.2 Vowel harmony + past tense suffix -a

There is a [+high] vowel harmony that occurs in the context of the verb when the past tense suffix -a is attached to the verb. When the past tense suffix is attached to a verb root with a low or mid vowel, it retains its features as a low vowel. When it is attached to a verb root containing a high vowel, the suffix -a assimilates to the same features, [+high], [αback], as the root vowel, see table 18.

Table 18. Open syllables or permitted coda verbs with past tense suffix

| | verb root | past tense | gloss |
|-----|-----------|------------|------------------------|
| V | ɔ̃ | ɔ̃ɔ̃ | 'to put, to cry' |
| | i | ì | 'to braid' |
| VC | ɔl | òlà | 'to vomit' |
| | ak | àkà | 'to ask' |
| CV | ba | bàà | 'to catch, to stop' |
| | gi | gì | 'to prepare, cook' |
| | ku | kù | 'to cross' |
| CVC | hɛ | hèà | 'to buy' |
| | far | fàrà | 'to wash' |
| | hel | hèlà | 'to weep' |
| | bik | bìkì | 'to burp' |
| | kun | kùnù | 'to tie up' |
| | duŋ | dùŋù | 'to exist' |
| | gom | gòmà | 'to chop with machete' |

In the case of verbs roots with illegal codas, where the first vowel is [–high], the suffix *-a* spreads leftward filling in all empty slots, see table 19.

Table 19. Illegal coda verbs with past tense suffix

| | verb root | past perfective | gloss |
|---|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|
| $\begin{array}{c} \sigma \quad \sigma \\ / \quad / \\ (C)VC_ \end{array}$ | bas | bà.sà | 'to sharpen' |
| | bot | bò.tà | 'to clean cassava' |
| | kpɛɖ | kpè.ɖà | 'to jump' |
| $\begin{array}{c} \sigma \quad \sigma \quad \sigma \\ / \quad / \quad / \\ CVCC_ (C_) \end{array}$ | dals | dàl.sà | 'to wound' |
| | ɓakl | ɓàk.là | 'to guard' |
| | yambl | yàm.bà.là | 'to disappear' |
| $\begin{array}{c} \sigma \quad \sigma \quad \sigma \\ / \quad / \quad / \\ CVC_ C_ \end{array}$ | ndaɓr | ndà.ɓà.rà | 'to pursue' |
| | kɛtr | kè.tà.rà | 'to write' |
| | koɓl | kò.ɓà.là | 'to hang up' |

[+high] vowel harmony occurs in verbs with illegal codas as well as in verbs with legal codas, but with a difference. When the root vowel is [+high], the suffix assimilates to [+high]. However, the suffix does not assimilate all the

features of the root vowel. The [+back] feature of /u/ is not assimilated, compare table 20 to table 18 above.

Table 20. [+high] illegal coda verbs with past tense suffix

| verb root | past perfective | gloss |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------|
| is | ĩ.sì | 'to lean upon' |
| wis | wĩ.sì | 'to hide' |
| ḡid | ḡĩ.dì | 'to detach' |
| kurs | kũr.sì | 'to remove' |
| kimkɗ | kĩm.kĩ.dĩ | 'to roll up' |
| kutk | kũ.tĩ.kĩ | 'to commence' |

2.6.3 Summary

The Mbóðòmò verb resyllabifies illegal coda consonants as onsets of syllables whose nuclei are filled by epenthesis with a default vowel. When the past tense suffix *-a* is added, it fills in the empty vowel slots instead of the default vowel /i/, and spreads leftward. Even when the past tense suffix is added, the suffix undergoes [+high] vowel harmony assimilating to the [+high] feature of the main vowel of the verb root when that vowel has the feature [+high]. However, only the [+high] feature is assimilated. When the main vowel is /u/, the [+back] feature is not assimilated.

2.7 Morphophonemic processes of degemination

When two similar phonemes are adjacent across morpheme boundaries, they degeminate. Both vowel geminates and consonant geminates simplify.

- (159) /wènè hò-à á lé/--> [wènè hòǎ lé] 'S/he arrived at the village'
 3sg arrive-PAST LOC village

It should be noted that the contour tone caused by degemination shown in example (159) differs from the dissimilation of low tones shown in section 2.4.1, examples (119) and (120). The preservation of the tone of the reduced vowel remains even though the tone of the word following is high.

Contour tones therefore, come from one of three sources. Certain contours seem to be lexical, as seen in section 2.4.1, examples (98) and (99), other contours are derived from low tone dissimilation as discussed in section 2.4.2.1, and contour tones may be derived by degemination as shown above.

2.8 Conclusion

The first two sections of this chapter presented the Mbódòmò consonant and vowel phonemes and argued the case of prenasalized stops to be treated as units and vowel clusters to be treated as vowel sequences. Section 2.3 introduced the syllable structure and the various structural restrictions of nouns and verbs. Tone is briefly discussed in section 2.4. Sections 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 presented various phonological and morphophonemic processes, focusing in particular on the verb structure and the morphophonemic processes of vowel harmony in the past tense suffix.

CHAPTER 3

GRAMMAR

This chapter consists of an overview of Mbódòmò grammatical structures and syntax. The basic grammatical categories are discussed in section 3.1, and the basic constituent order is discussed in section 3.2. Copular constructions including predicate nominals, locationals and possessive constructions are addressed in section 3.3. Section 3.4 concerns the relations between the constituents in the clause. Mbódòmò is a nominative-accusative language which distinguishes case primarily by word order. Various aspects of verb morphology are discussed in section 3.5 on tense and aspect, and section 3.6 on voice and valency. In section 3.7, I survey various clause combining structures ranging from combining independent clauses, to embedded clauses, to serial verb structures. Finally, in section 3.8, various pragmatically marked structures are presented including negation, imperative structures, and questions.

3.1 Grammatical categories

Mbódòmò has four open grammatical categories, nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Nouns (section 3.1.1) include concrete nouns, mass nouns, compound nouns and pronouns. The basic, underived verbs (section 3.1.2) include intransitive and transitive verbs. Adjectives (3.1.3) are distinct from both nouns and verbs in that they do not have either nominal or verbal characteristics. However, adjectives are nominalized when they occur in the predicate. Adverbs (section 3.1.4) typically modify the clause and are invariant.

Mbódòmò also has three closed grammatical categories, copulas, conjunctions and prepositions. The copulas are invariant particles that primarily function in predicate nominal construction types, but also occur as focus markers and prepositions. Conjunctions and prepositions join clauses or clause constituents. Certain prepositions are derived from other words, as is the case with the benefactive preposition *há* which is derived from the verb ‘give’ in serial constructions.

3.1.1 Nouns

Nouns are prototypically words that encode concrete, time-stable entities. They may be marked for plurality, take possession markings, demonstratives and modifiers.

3.1.1.1 Number

Nouns may be either singular or plural. Plurality may be marked by the prefix *é-* on the noun. However, in normal speech the plural marker is often omitted, even when the sense is plural.

- (160) bẹ̀n nẹ̀ (é-)mbódì náár
 child has (PL-)goat four
 ‘The child has four goats’

- (161) wílí jòn-à (é)-dúgèsè vāk
 man eat-PAST (PL-)papaya two
 ‘The man ate two papayas.’

- (162) wènè hà-à (é)-kùàrà há-m
 3sg give-PAST PL-chicken BEN-1sg
'He gave chickens to me.'

The indefinite quantifier *dógà* 'many' seems to preclude the use of the plural marker. When it is used for count nouns, it implies a large number.

- (163) béwílí nè dógà kùàrà
 boy has many chicken
'The boy has many chickens'

- (164) wílí kè sì-ì dógà kóé
 man DEM marry-PAST many wife
'That man married many wives.'

- (165) wènè kòt-à dógà tíbàtí á náná bèn.
 3sg remove-PAST many jiggers LOC foot child
'She removed many jiggers³³ from the child's foot.'

3.1.1.2 Compound nouns

Certain entities are referred to by compound nouns. Compound nouns may be comprised of N-N combinations (examples (166) and (167)), Adj-N combinations (examples (168) and (169)) or N-V-N combinations (examples (170) and (171)). When two low tones occur across morpheme boundaries, the low tone of the first word dissimilates becoming either a raising tone or a high tone as mentioned above in section 2.4.2.1.

³³"Jigger" is the Cameroonian English term for a small insect the size of a pin-prick that burrows under the surface of the skin preferably around the toenails and lays a mass of eggs. They remain imbedded in the foot until the eggs hatch or until removed with a sharp object. If not removed they reproduce and infest the whole area.

- (172) ?yàrà mé lí
 bed POSS:alien eye
 ‘bed of the eyes’ or ‘the eyes’ bed’

3.1.1.3 Mass nouns

Nouns that are either abstract concepts or amorphous quantities differ marginally from prototypical concrete nouns. They do not take the plural prefix nor are they quantifiable by numbers, see example (173). Mass nouns may be modified by the indefinite quantifier *dógà*, see examples (173) to (175).

- (173) a) kóé nè dógà tòn
 woman have many salt
 ‘The woman has a lot of salt.’

- b) *kóé nè tòn náár
 woman have salt four

- (174) é-kóé gí-ì dógà árki
 PL-woman prepare-PAST many distilled alcohol
 ‘The women prepared a lot of distilled alcohol.’

- (175) wènè hèn-à dógà hùk mbòngò
 3sg buy-PAST many flour corn
 ‘She bought a lot of corn flour.’

As with concrete nouns, mass nouns may modify other nouns or be modified by other nouns. These associative constructions are distinct from compound nouns mentioned above. Compound nouns have meanings that are not predictable from the meanings of their constituents, while associative noun phrases are fully predictable.

- (176) hùk mbòṅgò ‘*corn flour*’
 flour corn
- (177) pàpó gòrò ‘*honeycomb*’
 row honey

3.1.1.4 Pronouns

The personal pronouns in Mbódòmò are not generally marked for case. Nominative and non-nominative personal pronouns are identical with one exception. The third person singular pronoun *wènè* is often abbreviated to *nè* in the non-nominative position.

Table 21. Pronouns

| | Personal pronouns | Reflexive pronouns ³⁴ |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 singular | mí | |
| 2 singular | mé | |
| 3 sing. | (wè)nè (abr. non-NOM. only) | |
| 3 sing. (TOPIC) | à (NOM. only) | |
| 3 sing. indefinite | é | |
| 1 plural | élé | |
| 2 plural | éné | |
| 3 plural | wâ | mùá |
| logophoric sg/pl | é | vé |
| logophoric dual | óló | vòló |

There is also an alternative third person singular pronoun *à*. The pronoun *à* marks the most topical participant in the discourse only.³⁵ It is used when the previous mention of the participant is within the last two clauses. In example

³⁴ These are the only reflexive pronouns found so far. Since they most often occur in indirect and direct speech, it is possible that only the third person and logophoric reflexive pronouns exist. More research is needed in this area.

³⁵ See chapter 4 for a more complete presentation of the role of the topical pronoun in discourse.

(178), the previous mention of the topical participant is the immediately preceding clause. In example (179) the previous mention of the participant is two clauses back.

- (178) *kà wènè mà né-à mé ná nzók kpòó mbòngá*
 when 3sg SEQ go-PAST PURP FOC see meat zebra
à kpà-à ndé kpòó 6óná sék
 3sgTOP find-PAST COMP meat remain little
'When he went to see the zebra meat, he found that little of the meat remained.'

- (179) *...à tí sì mà wílí 6é ná*
 ...3sgTOP must marry IMP man since NEG
kà wílí té, à³⁶ sèn-à
 when man come 3sgTOP refuse-PAST
'...she absolutely refused to marry any man since (her birth). When a man would come, she refused him.'

If the participant referred to is not the most topical participant, *wènè* is always used even when following a previous mention of that participant in the preceding clause, see example (180).

³⁶This is in the introduction of the folktale "The young woman and the serpent" in which the character of the young woman as one who refused all her suitors is established. While the 3sg pronoun is genderless, in the context of the story it is clear that the pronoun *à* refers to the woman refusing the man rather than the man refusing.

- (180) wènè má òsí pírà dùŋ-né á zù dùk fèt,
 3sg PFV show place stay-INTR LOC head tribe all
 kè wènè má pì wèé á bèlè
 when 3sg PFV throw fire LOC savana
'He showed the place they were going to stay to the chief of each tribe, then he set fire to the savana.'

The topical pronoun *à* is further limited in its distribution, however. It primarily occurs in the second clause of clause combinations (see section 3.7). *à* does not occur in simple clauses, in preposed dependent clauses, or in the first of two coordinate clauses. The topic pronoun *à* may occur as a same subject or as a different subject in relationship to the preceding clause in combined clause sentences, see examples (181) and (182).

Different subjects

- (181) kà wílí té, à sèŋ-à
 when man come 3sg refuse-PAST
'When(ever) a man came, she (would) refuse (him).'

Same subject

- (182) kà bé-kóé kè pí lí, à nzók
 when young-woman DEM throw eye 3sgTOP see
 ná gók
 FOC serpent
'When this young woman glances (lit. throws the eye), a serpent, she sees.'

Occasionally the pronoun *à* occurs after a conjunction coordinating independent clauses (section 3.7.1), as is illustrated in example (183).

- (183) kpòó mbòṅgá kè wâ má ɲòŋ;
 meat zebra DEM 3pl PFV eat
- àsê à dè-à bé zím mbòṅgá kè
 but 3sg do-PAST small taboo zebra DEM
- 'This zebra meat they all ate, but he put a taboo on a portion of this zebra (lit. small taboo zebra).'*³⁷

Mbódòmò also has logophoric pronouns which are used for the quoted speaker in reference to himself (Noss 1988: 102). *é* is used for both singular and plural referents which are mentioned in the immediate context, see examples (184) and (186). *óló* is used as a dual form when the speaker is referring to himself and some other participant in the discourse, see example (185).

- (184) bé-kóé kè ndé é kédí vé
 young-woman this COMP LOG wait herself
- ná wílí vë
 COP man LOG:POSS
- 'The girl_i (said) that she_i herself_i awaits her_i husband.'*
- (185) gók ndé òlò lák vóló
 serpent COMP LOG:dual:IMP depart LOG:REFL
- 'The serpent_i (said) let's_{i&j} go, us_{i&j}'*
- (186) kè wâ ndé é tòṁ wílí kùàrà.
 then 3pl COMP LOG send male chicken
- 'Then they_i (said) that they_i (would) send the rooster.'*

³⁷ Among the Mbódòmò it is common for a hunter to reserve a portion of the meat for himself alone. He puts a taboo on it preventing anyone else eating it. Certain portions, especially the liver, are prohibited to women in general. Often the meat that the hunter taboos is the liver, which is considered one of the best cuts. On a personal note, I was offered a portion of the liver from a "hunt" I participated in, so this prohibition does not apply to outsiders.

Reflexive pronouns most often occur in indirect and direct speech, as is seen in example (185), reproduced here, and in example (187).

- (185) gók ndé òlò lák vòlò
 serpent COMP LOG:dual:IMP depart LOG:REFL
'The serpent_i (said) let's_{i&j} go, us_{i&j}'
- (187) zùbèlà kífìdî-ì á wâ ndé wâ 6ón
 Zubela respond-PAST LOC 3pl COMP 3pl remain
- kà mùá ná ɲòŋ-à kpòó
 HAB 3pl:REFL FOC eat-PAST meat
'Zubela responded to them that they habitually stayed put, them, eating meat.'

Possessive pronouns differentiate between alienable possessives and inalienable possessives (the 2d person singular possessive shows a distinction in tone only, with high tone when it marks inalienable possession and low tone when it marks alienable possession). Inalienably possessed nouns are limited to body parts and names; all other nouns, including kinship terms, are considered alienable.

Table 22. Possessive pronouns

| | inalienable possession, /tè/ 'body' | alienable possession, /béŋ/ 'child' |
|--------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 sg | tè mí 'my body' | béŋ bòn 'my child' |
| 2 sg | tè mé 'your body' | béŋ mèn 'your child' |
| 3 sg | tè nè 'his/her body' | béŋ wà 'his/her child' |
| 1 pl | tè élé 'our body' | béŋ vèlè 'our child' |
| 2 pl | tè éné 'your body' | béŋ vènè 'your child' |
| 3 pl | tè wá 'their body' | béŋ mùà 'their child' |
| log.sg | tè é 'his/her (log) body' | béŋ vè 'his/her (log) child' |

3.1.2 Verbs

Verbs are prototypically words that code action, process or state. They are sometimes nominalized in certain structures such as passives (section 3.6.1), adverbial phrases (3.7.3.4), and complement clauses (section 3.6.4). There are two basic verb types, intransitive and transitive verbs.

3.1.2.1 Intransitive verbs

Intransitive verbs may have an agent-like subject, where the subject is a “deliberate initiator of events” (Givón 1984:126). They may have optional locative phrases and prepositional phrases as adjuncts.

- (188) kóé tà sí ((á hò) nè sìdǐ)
 woman FUT return LOC field PREP tomorrow
 ‘The woman will return ((from the field) at tomorrow).’

- (189) wílí zìr-ì (né tì)
 man descend-PAST PREP tree
 ‘The man descended (from the tree).’

- (190) kóé làk-à (nè sárásó)
 woman leave-PAST PREP yesterday
 ‘The woman left (at yesterday).’

Intransitive verbs may also have no overt agent and use a non-agent or patient-like subject. The subject is patient-like in that it does not initiate the action of the verb but rather is affected by it. These are often verbs of movement or change of state.

(191) kó mí gbèṅ-à
 hand 1sgPOSS:inalien burn-PAST
'My hand (got) burned (sensation of burning).'

(192) màtúà dāṅ-à
 vehicle break:down-PAST
'The vehicle broke down.'

(193) líṅ lé hùr-ù
 name village (is)known-PAST
'The village's name was known.'

Both types of intransitive verbs may have their valency increased by adding a causative suffix. This will be addressed in more detail in section 3.6.

3.1.2.2 Transitive verbs

Transitive verbs are structurally similar to intransitive verbs except that they take an obligatory object.

(194) wílí gbè-à gók.
 man kill-PAST serpent
'The man killed a serpent.'

(195) béṅ nòṅ-à m̀d̀
 child eat-PAST something
'The child ate something.'

3.1.3 Adjectives

Mbódòm̀d̀ has a grammatically distinct class of adjectives that express some quality or attribute of nominals. Adjectives are a distinct class separate from nouns and verbs. This is made evident in that they do not exhibit the characteristics of

either nouns or verbs. Table 23 shows that *pàŋ* ‘bitter’ does not demonstrate any of the characteristics of a noun or a verb. All of these forms are ungrammatical.

Table 23. Adjective characteristics

| <i>Nominal characteristics</i> | | <i>Verbal characteristics</i> | |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Plurals: | *é-pàŋ | Future Tense: | *tà páŋ |
| Demonstratives: | *pàŋ kè | agreement(1 & 2): | *mí páŋ só |
| Possessives: | *pàŋ bòŋ | 3d person /perf): | *wènè pàŋ só |

Adjectives occur primarily in the noun phrase, modifying a noun, as seen in example (196).

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|---------------|----------------|--------------------------|----|---------------|---------------|------------------------|
| (196) a) | pàŋ
bitter | wàlá
fruit | ‘ <i>bitter fruit</i> ’ | b) | zílí
heavy | tòlì
basin | ‘ <i>heavy basin</i> ’ |
| c) | só
sharp | àdá
machete | ‘ <i>sharp machete</i> ’ | d) | wè
hot | lì
water | ‘ <i>hot water</i> ’ |

When adjectives occur in the predicate, they take the nominal suffix *-à* and follow the copula *nè*, which is used also in possessive constructions (section 3.3.3). In unambiguous possessive constructions, *nè* is always followed by a concrete or abstract noun, see examples (197) and (198).

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|-----|------|
| (197) | Kòéké | nè | tòló |
| | Koeke | COP | dog |
| | ‘ <i>Koeke has a dog.</i> ’ | | |

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-----|-----------|
| (198) | tòló | nè | nzín |
| | dog | COP | dirtiness |
| | ‘ <i>The dog has dirtiness.</i> ’ | | |

Adjectives in the predicate are nominalized into abstract nouns by the nominal suffix *-à*, and follow the possessive copula *nè*, see example (199).

- (199) a) wàlá nè pàŋ-à 'The fruit has bitterness.'
fruit COP bitter-NOM
- b) tòlì nè zílí-à 'The basin has heaviness.'
basin COP heavy-NOM
- c) àdá nè só-à 'The machete has sharpness.'
machete COP sharp-NOM
- d) lì nè wè-à 'The water has hotness.'
water COP hot-NOM

Some adjectives are structurally and semantically similar to intransitive verbs, see example (200). Some intransitive verbs take nonagentive subjects that are affected by the action of the verb (section 3.1.2.1). Example (201) illustrates the adjective and the related verb.

- (200) tàmpá (adj) 'tired' tampi (vi) 'to get tired'
yégá (adj) 'wet' yek (vi) 'to get wet'
kèrkàdǎ (adj) 'round' kerkidǐ (vt) 'to encircle, to surround'
yámbálá (adj) 'confused'³⁸ yambili (vi) 'to disappear'

³⁸ The correspondence of meaning between the adjective and the verb is not evident, but the correspondence of form is clear and there does seem to be a correlation between the two in the minds of at least some native speakers.

- (201) a) tàmpá yí
 tired people
 'tired people'
- b) mí nè tàmpâ
 1sg COP tired:NOM
 'I have tiredness.'
- c) mí támp-á fêt
 1sg get.tired-PAST already
 'I got tired already.'

Causative verbs may also be derived from adjectives. The causative suffixes *-si* or *-sidĩ* can be added to adjectives in the same way as they can be added to intransitive verbs to increase their valency (see section 3.6).

- (202) gásá³⁹ (adj) *'big'* gasi (vt) *'to praise, to make big'*
 bôlá (adj) *'long'* bôlsi (vt) *'to lengthen, to make long'*
 dāṅá (adj) *'bad'* dāṅsi (vt) *'to destroy, to make bad'*
 yéká (adj) *'wet'* yeksi (vt) *'to wet, to make wet'*
 wèlà (adj) *'cooked'* welsi (vt) *'to cook, to make cooked'*
 gá (adj) *'cold'* gasidĩ (vt) *'to chill, to make cold'*
- (203) a) gásá tùà *'big house'*
 big house
- b) tùà nè gásá-à *'The house has bigness.'*
 house COP big-NOM
- c) yí tà gási Sò *'The people will praise God'*
 people FUT praise God

³⁹ Some adjective inherently end in /a/. When the nominal suffix *-à* is added, the vowels elide, see section 2.7.2.

- (204) a) yéká là 'wet clothes'
 wet clothes
- b) là nè yéká-à 'The clothes are wet.'
 clothes COP wet-NOM
- c) là tà yék 'The clothes will get wet.'
 clothes FUT wet
- d) wâ tà yék-sì là 'They will make the clothes wet.'
 3pl FUT wet-CAUS clothes

3.1.4 Adverbs

Adverbs are prototypically words that modify non-noun words. In Mbódòmò, adverbs usually modify the entire clause. Generally they occur in the clause final position (examples (205) and (206)), but occasionally they also occur clause medially (example (207)). Unlike adjectives, adverbs are invariable.

- (205) wènè nè-à dògó ḍán
 3sg drink-PAST cornbeer too:much
 'He drank too much cornbeer'

- (206) mí nój-á fét
 1sg eat-PAST already
 'I ate already.'

- (207) yí fét ná sì káfé
 people all COP marry denial
 'The people all embraced denial (e.g., denied it).'

3.1.5 Prepositions and conjunctions

Mbódòmò has a small category of prepositions and conjunctions. These include the coordinating conjunctions such as *tò* ‘but’, *kè* ‘and then’ (section 3.7.1) and subordinating conjunctions such as *kà* ‘when’ and *â-* ‘after’ (section 3.7.3.3).

Prepositions are historically derived from other grammatical categories. The verb *ha* ‘give’ grammaticalizes as a benefactive preposition, as is shown in examples (208) to (210).

- (208) wènè tà kètì kálàtá há bíḡ wà
 3sg FUT write letter BEN sibling 3sgPOSS:alien
‘S/he will write a letter to her/his sibling.’

- (209) ná sónsí mề kà sò há
 COP chance 2sgPOSS:alien REL God give:PR

há mé
 BEN 2sg
‘(It) is your chance that God gives to you.’

- (210) mí há-á kpòó há kóé
 1sg give-PAST meat BEN woman
‘I gave meat to the woman.’

The copula of location *á* ‘to be at’ (see section 3.3.1) also functions as a locational preposition. In examples (211) to (213), *á* functions as a locative preposition since it follows an active verb and does not join two noun phrases as a copula does.

- (211) wâ má nè á zàŋ gbára
 3pl PFV go LOC bowels savanna
'They went into the savanna.'
- (212) wènè má pì wèé á bèlè
 3sg PFV throw fire LOC bush
'He threw fire into the bush.'
- (213) mè dúŋ nù á kè
 2sg:IMP sit ground LOC here
'Sit down here!'

One of the more common and versatile prepositions is *nè*.⁴⁰ *nè* is widely used as a temporal, instrumental preposition or as a preposition of accompaniment, see examples (214) to (217).

- (214) bíá bòn tà kètì mò
 sibling 1sgPOSS:alien FUT write something
 nè sìdĩ
 TEMP tomorrow
'My sister will write a letter (at) tomorrow.'
- (215) wílí gòm-à kògò nè àdá
 man chop-PAST bamboo INSTR machete
'The man chopped (down) the bamboo with a machete.'
- (216) wènè sì á lé nè wílí wà
 3sg return:PR LOC village ACMP man 3sgPOSS:alien
'She returns to the village with her husband.'

⁴⁰ It is possible that the preposition *nè* is really the copula of possession *nè*. The use of copulas as prepositions is established with the copula of location *á* functioning as a preposition.

- (217) dùṅ-ú òṅ wílí nè dógà kóé.
 stay-PAST certain man ACMP many wife
'There once was a man with many wives.'

nè is often used also as a conjunction connecting nouns or noun phrases, see example (218).

- (218) dùṅ-ú nè zí nè gbàdèrè ná
 stay-PAST ACMP fly ACMP toad COP
 àó.
 friend
'Once Fly and Toad were friends.'

When *nè* is used to connect nouns and noun phrases, it always occurs in pairs, preceding the noun phrases thus connected. This does not occur when *nè* connects verbs or clauses.

Verbs (example (219)) and clauses (example (220) and (221)) also are joined by the conjunction *nè*, but unlike noun phrase coordination, *nè* is not repeated. In examples (219) and (220), the verb following *nè* is unmarked for tense and aspect, but in example (221), the verb following *nè* is marked for tense.

- (219) òṅ kóé *nè-à* nè ǵérkìdî kpòó.
 certain wife go-PAST CONJ break.off meat
'A certain wife came and broke off some meat.'

- (220) kókùàrà òòṅ-à né á sòrsí nè mbér
 hen go.away-PAST go LOC forward and sing
 ndáṅ òìṁà.
 same song
 'The hen continued to go forward and sang the same song.'

- (221) wâ sí màì, tè kál màì si
 3pl marry each.other CONJ gather each.other return
 nè nè-à á ṅgò gbà gók
 CONJ go-PAST LOC place big serpent
 'They married each other, then gathered their things to return and went to the big serpent's home.'

3.2 Basic constituent order

Gbaya Mbódòmò is an SVO language with predominantly Head-Initial features. According to Greenberg (1966:110-113), Mbódòmò, being a head initial language, will also display other head-initial features in the relation of the obligatory head to its constituent(s) in verb phrases, noun phrases and prepositional phrases. A pure head-initial language, according to the universals Greenberg posited, would have prepositions instead of postpositions, the genitive or the adjective would follow the noun and a relative clause would follow the noun it modifies. For the most part Mbódòmò does agree with Greenberg's predictions. The only exception is that the adjective precedes the noun in Mbódòmò rather than following the noun.

3.2.1 Constituent order of main clauses

The basic word order of simple declarative clauses in Mbódòmò is subject, verb, object as illustrated in examples (222) and (223). The object follows its verb in the verb phrase. The Mbódòmò verb phrase is therefore head-initial.

- (231) bé-wílí nè QUANT N
 young-man has many chicken
'The boy has many chickens.'
- (232) a) N DEM b) N DEM
 tòló kè é-dàwà ndòkè
 dog this PL-monkey these
 'this dog' *'these monkeys'*

In associative constructions, where a noun modifies another noun, the modifying noun follows the head noun. Like the prepositional phrase, and unlike adjective noun constructions, associative constructions are head-initial. See examples (233) to (235).

- (233) tò mbòṅgá
 tale zebra
'the zebra tale'
- (234) kùàrà ndòkè lá kà á zàṅ tùà kùàrà
 chicken DEM:PL sleep HAB LOC insides house chicken
'These chickens habitually sleep in a chicken coop.'
- (235) tòló kè hìn-ì é-mús lé
 dog DEM chase-PAST PL-cat village
'This dog chased the village cats.'

Although associative constructions are syntactically similar to genitive constructions in some ways, there are important differences. Mbódòmò has both an alienable and inalienable genitive construction. Alienable genitive constructions are always marked with the possessive marker *mé*. If the construction *tùà kùàrà*

from example (23534) were a genitive construction it would have the possessive marker, as is seen in examples (236) and (237).

(236) tùà mé kùàrà
 house POSS chicken
 'chicken's house'

(237) é-mús mé lé
 PL-cat POSS village
 'village's cats'

Inalienable possession, while syntactically similar to the associative construction (examples (233) to (235)), is semantically distinct from it. These genitive constructions may occur only where the relationship between the two nouns is considered inalienable, that is to say, limited to parts of the body or names, see example (240). Unlike many languages with an alienable/inalienable distinction, Mbóðmò does not include kinship terms in inalienable possession.

The distinction between alienable and inalienable possession is illustrated in example (238) with the possessive pronouns and in examples (239) and (240) with the lack or presence of the possessive marker *mé*.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>(238) a) N POSS
 zígòrò mí
 knee 1sgPOSS:inalien
 <i>'my knee'</i></p> | <p>b) N POSS
 béŋ bòŋ
 child 1sgPOSS:alien
 <i>'my child'</i></p> |
| <p>c) líŋ mí
 name 1sgPOSS:inalien
 <i>'my name'</i></p> | <p>d) tùà bòŋ
 house 1sgPOSS:alien
 <i>'my house'</i></p> |

- (239) N possessive NP
 é-kóé mé wàn-lé
 PL-wife POSS chief-village
 'The chief's wives'

- (240) N possessive NP
 zàrà kàó
 ear uncle(brother-of-mother)
 'The uncle's ear'

In noun phrases with more than one modifier, the descriptive adjective precedes the noun and all other modifiers follow the noun in the expected order.

- (241) é-mús lé ndòkè
 PL-cat village DEM:PL
 'These village cats'

- (242) tùà mé báy wậ
 house POSS father 3sgPOSS:alien
 'The house of her father' or 'her father's house'

- (243) gásá tùà bòn
 big house 1sgPOSS:alien
 'my big house'

- (244) gásá tùà kè
 big house DEM
 'This big house'

- (245) gásá tùà táár
 big house three
 'Three big houses'

The relative clause is marked by a relative marker *ká* which immediately follows the noun it modifies as seen in examples (246) and (247). The relative clause construction will be addressed in more detail in section 3.7.7.

Relativized subject

| | | | |
|-------|-------|----------------------|------------|
| (246) | N | relative clause | VP |
| | kóé | [ká là Mbélémbèkè] | ná àó |
| | woman | REL sleep Mbelembeke | COP friend |

bòŋ

1sgPOSS:alien

'The woman who lives in Mbelembeke is my friend.'

Relativized object

| | | | | |
|-------|---|-------------|--------------------|------|
| (247) | | N | relative clause | |
| | tòló zù-ú | kúlí-kùàrà | [ká kó-kùàrà | 6èl] |
| | dog steal-PAST | egg-chicken | REL female-chicken | lay |
| | <i>'The dog stole the chicken egg that the hen laid.'</i> | | | |

3.2.4 Verb phrases

In sentences containing an auxiliary verb, the auxiliary precedes the verb as shown in examples (248) and (249). According to Greenberg (1966: 84-5), languages with a verb-object word order also tend to have an AUX-verb order, and hence are head-initial.

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| (248) | AUX | V | |
| | békóé dùŋ-ù | wór | mò |
| | girl stay-PAST | speak | something |
| | <i>'The girl was speaking'</i> | | |

The verb *wór* 'speak' is a transitive verb and requires an object.

- (249) AUX V
 élé dúŋ-ú yámbì nú mbódòmò
 1PL stay-PAST learn tongue mbódòmò
'We were learning Mbódòmò.'

3.3 Copular constructions

Languages tend to treat existentials, predicate nominals, predicate adjectives, locational and possessive constructions alike grammatically (Payne 1997: 111). Although they are functionally different they tend to be structurally very similar. All are propositions that state some attribute or relation.

3.3.1 Predicate nominal, adjective locational constructions

Predicate nominal constructions establish a relationship between two entities such that one is equated with the other or belongs to the category of the other. Equative predicate nominals state that **a** equals **B**, or '**a = B**'; for example:

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--------|--------------------|
| <u>'The woman in the red dress</u> | | is | <u>my sister.'</u> |
| a | | = | B |
| subject | | copula | predicate nominal |

In the example above, even though 'I' might have more than one sister, the one 'in the red dress' is being equated with 'my sister'.

Predicate nominals may also express proper inclusion in a particular set, **a** is a member of the set **B**, or '**a ∈ B**'; for example:

| | | | | | |
|-------------|--------|---|-------------------|----|---------------|
| 'That woman | is | a | stock broker | on | Wall Street.' |
| a | ∈ | | B | | |
| subject | copula | | predicate nominal | | |

Mbódòmò uses the invariant particle *ná* 'be' as a copula in predicate nominal constructions. Both equative and proper inclusion predicate nominal constructions are formed this way. Equative predicate nominals equate the subject with a specific nominal, while proper inclusion predicate nominals equate the subject with a class of nominals. In such constructions, past and future tenses differ from the present tense. The auxiliary verb *duŋ* 'sit, stay' takes the past and future tense markings (examples (252) and (255)). When the auxiliary is not present, the sense is present tense.

Proper inclusion predicate nominals:

(250) wílí ná yérlè
 man COP teacher
'The man is a teacher.'

(251) béngádí ná wàn-zú
 youth COP chief-steal
'The youth is a thief.'

(252) kóé dùŋ-ù ná tómbá-í
 woman stay-PAST COP old-person
'The woman was an old person.'

Equative predicate nominals:

- (253) wènè ná wàn-lé nè yákà
 3sg COP chief-village PREP Yaka
 'He is the village chief of Yaka.'

- (254) kóé kè ná náŋ bòŋ
 woman that COP mother my
 'That woman is my mother.'

- (255) wènè bé dùŋ ná wàn-lé nè yákà
 3sg FUT stay COP chief-village PREP Yaka
 'He will be the village chief of Yaka.'

The copula *ná* 'be' also occurs in other constructions. It functions as a focus marker in contrastive focus constructions (section 3.8.1) and in interrogative constructions (section 3.8.4).

Locationals state that something exists in a particular place. As with predicate nominals, no movement or action is expressed. The invariant particle *á* 'to be at' is used in locational constructions in Mbódòmò. It follows the same pattern as predicate nominals using *dụŋ* 'sit, stay' to form past and future tense clauses (example (258)).

- (256) kóé á hò
 woman COP field
 'The woman is in the field.'

- (257) mbódĩ á tùà
 goat COP house
 'The goat is in the house'

- (258) mí dùŋ-ù á yákà
 1sg stay-PAST COP Yaka
'I lived in Yaka.'

3.3.2 Existential constructions

Existential constructions state simply that some entity exists. Nothing is expressed as to its attributes or qualities. The particle *hàŋáŋ*, often abbreviated to *áŋ*, is used to express the existence of something. Most commonly it is used as a question or as the response to a question. When it occurs as a response, it is usually preceded by the affirmative, *íí* 'yes'. It may occur with or without a locational adjunct.

- (259) (íí) wàlá hàŋáŋ
 (yes) fruit EXIST
'Is there fruit?' or 'Yes, there is fruit.'

- (260) (íí) kpòó áŋ á zù tébèlè
 (yes) meat EXIST PREP head table
'Is there meat on the table?' or 'Yes, there is meat on the table.'

3.3.3 Possessive constructions

Possessive constructions state a 'possessive' relation between two entities. In many languages these are expressed as something existing in relationship to some entity or as something being located at some entity, following the pattern of either existential or locational constructions. Mbódòmò uses the invariant particle *nè* as a copula in possessive constructions. As with predicate nominals and locationals, non-present tenses are marked on the auxiliary verb *duŋ*.

- (261) béŋ nè yàrà
 baby COP bed
'The baby has a bed.'
- (262) Odile dùŋ-ù nè mús vák
 Odile stay-PAST COP cat two
'Odile had two cats.'
- (263) kóé nè dógà kùàrà
 woman COP many chicken
'The woman has many chickens.'
- (264) Rosa bé dùŋ nè é-bé-í
 Rosa FUT stay COP PL-child-person
'Rosa will have children.'

As mentioned above in section 3.1.3, Mbódòmò adjectives, when they occur in copular constructions, take a nominal suffix –à. The possessive copula *nè* is used in these constructions. The sense expressed is that of possession of the abstract quality of the adjective. Compare example (265), a clear possessive with a concrete noun, and example (266), a possessive with an abstract noun, with examples (267) to (269).

- (265) kóé nè béŋ
 woman COP baby
'The woman has a baby.'
- (266) tòló nè nzíŋ
 dog COP dirtiness
'The dog has dirtiness.'

- (267) a) bú tùà
white house
'white house'
- b) tùà nè bú-à
house COP white-NOM
'The house has whiteness.'
- (268) a) kátá kpòó
dry meat
'dried meat'
- b) kpòó nè kátâ⁴¹
meat COP dry:NOM
'The meat has dryness.'
- (269) a) tàmpá yí
tired people
'tired people'
- b) yí nè tàmpâ
people COP tired:NOM
'The people have tiredness.'

3.3.4 Summary

Predicate nominals, adjectives, locationals and possessives have similar grammatical structures, using invariant particles as copulas, but the copulas differ according to the semantic role, see (270).

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| (270) | Pred. Nom. | Nominalized Adj | Possessives | Locationals | Existentials |
| | ná | nè | nè | á | (hàŋ)án |

⁴¹ Certain adjectives end with the vowel /a/. In these cases, the final /a/ of the adjective elides, with its tone attaching to the suffix, see section 2.7.2.

Predicate adjective constructions that equate some attribute or quality to a certain entity in Mbóðm̀ are not syntactically similar to predicate nominals as is commonly found in languages. Rather the adjective is made into an abstract noun and takes the possessive copula.

Both predicate adjectives and possessive constructions characterize an entity in terms of its relationship to something else. In predicate adjective constructions, an entity is characterized by some quality it displays while in possessive constructions the entity is characterized by something it possesses. Mbóðm̀ accentuates this similarity by nominalizing the attribute or quality expressed by an adjective and making it a possessable thing.

3.4 Grammatical relations

Languages tend to formalize grammatical relations between arguments and predicates either by case marking, person marking on the verb or by constituent order (Payne 1997: 129). Mbóðm̀ is a fairly rigid SVO language that primarily codes grammatical relations by constituent order. The subject is normally the argument which precedes the verb and the object the argument which follows the verb. There is no case marking on either nouns or pronouns.

3.4.1 Constituent order

Nominative-accusative languages make no distinction between the subjects of intransitive verbs and subjects of transitive verbs. Objects are distinguished from subjects of both transitive and intransitive verbs.

Mbódòmò is a nominative-accusative language that has a fairly rigid word order.⁴² Subjects of intransitive clauses and of transitive clauses are not distinguishable from each other. All occur preceding the verb. Objects of transitive verbs always follow the verb. There is no morphological coding to distinguish one argument from another. A comparison of examples (271) and (272) shows that the common nouns *gók* and *wílí* are the same in both subject or object positions.

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| (271) | S | V | O |
| | wílí | gbè-à | gók |
| | man | kill-PAST | serpent |
| | <i>'The man killed a serpent'</i> | | |

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------|-----------|------|
| (272) | S | V | O |
| | gók | gbè-à | wílí |
| | serpent | kill-PAST | man |
| | <i>The serpent killed a man</i> | | |

Constituent order marks the grammatical relations of pronouns as well as nouns. Like nouns, pronouns are not marked for case. Subject and object pronouns are identical as is seen comparing the subject of examples (273) and (274) with the subject and object of example (275). One marginal exception to this is the third person singular pronoun, *wènè*. As mentioned above, it is often contracted to *nè* in the object position, see example (276).

⁴² The word order does vary from SVO in certain contexts. In narrative, the object is often fronted at peak episodes (section 4.2.2).

(273) S V
 élé lák-á
 1pl leave-PAST
 '*We left.*'

(274) S V
 wâ fè-à
 3pl die-PAST
 '*They died.*'

(275) S V O
 wâ sèkàlà élé
 3pl trick:PAST 1pl
 '*They tricked us.*'

(276) S V O
 gók gbè-à (wè)nè
 serpent kill-PAST 3sg
 '*The serpent killed him*'

3.4.2 Verb agreement

Grammatical relations between the constituents in a clause may also be encoded by person marking on the verb. In Mbódòmò, only in the simple past and past perfect are verbs marked for subject agreement. First and second person is marked as high tone on the verb, and third person is marked as low tone on the verb, see examples (277) and (278).

and aspect have in the discourse. This section gives an overview of the various forms of tense and aspect in Mbóðòmò. The function of Mbóðòmò tense and aspect in narrative will be discussed in the context of a narrative in chapter 4.

The tenses in Mbóðòmò may vary in expression depending on their aspect. The past tense may be marked for perfective aspect, marked for imperfective aspect (progressive or stative) or unmarked for aspect, as seen in examples (279) to (282). The past tense is the only tense that is marked for perfective aspect.

past perfective

- (279) tòló má yàr kó mí
 dog PFV lick hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
 'The dog licked my hand.'

past (unmarked for aspect)

- (280) tòló yàr-à kó mí
 dog lick-PAST hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
 'The dog licked my hand.'

past imperfective (stative)

- (281) kóé dùŋ-ù á hò
 woman stay-PAST COP field
 'The woman was at the farm.'

past imperfective (progressive)

- (282) tòló dùŋ-ù yár kó mí...
 dog stay-PAST lick hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
 'The dog was licking my hand...'

The present tense is either marked for imperfective aspect or unmarked for aspect. Three imperfective aspects are found in present tense verbs: habitual, progressive and stative, see examples (283) to (285). The present tense has no perfective form.

present (unmarked for aspect)

- (283) tòló yár kó mí
 dog lick hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
'The dog licks my hand.'

present imperfective (habitual)

- (284) tòló yár kà kó mí
 dog lick HAB hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
'The dog habitually licks my hand.'

present imperfective (progressive)

- (285) tòló á yár kó mí
 dog AUX lick hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
'The dog is licking my hand.'

present imperfective (stative)

- (286) kóé á hò
 woman COP field
'The woman is at the farm.'

The future tense is generally unmarked for aspect except in copular constructions such as predicate nominals where it is stative, see examples (287) and (288).

- (287) tòló tà yár kó mí
 dog FUT lick hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
'The dog will lick my hand.'

- (288) kóé bé dùŋ á hò
 woman FUT stay COP field
'The woman will be at the farm.'

3.5.1 Tense

The concept of markedness is important to the description of tense and aspect in Mbódòmò. The concept of markedness is that of an opposition between two or more members such that one member of the opposition is considered more normal, or less specific (the unmarked) than the other (the marked) (Comrie 1976: 111). Markedness may vary with different languages, and most importantly, in the case of Mbódòmò, the marked category may be specified for a particular feature, for example, perfective aspect, while the unmarked category is unspecified for that feature. “The unmarked category can always be used, even in a situation where the marked category would also be appropriate” (Comrie 1976: 112).

Only two tenses, past and future, are overtly coded. The present is unmarked for tense. When a verb unmarked for tense occurs in an independent clause, it has a present sense, see examples (289) and (290).

- (289) kóé nóŋ zàgbà
 woman eat plantain
 ‘The woman eats plantain’

- (290) tòló bòn gbú m̀̀
 dog 1sgPOSS:alien barks something
 ‘My dog barks’

When the verb unmarked for tense occurs in a dependent clause, it has no tense and derives its tense from its context, see (291) to (294).

Temporal subordinate clause

- (291) *kà wènè hó á sòrsí, gók mà gbán-à*
 as 3sg arrive LOC in.front serpent SIM grow-PAST
'As she advanced, the serpent grew.'

Complement clause

- (292) *mí ɲgól-á wènè ɲón tór mbòngò*
 1sg want-PAST 3sg eat fresh corn
'I wanted him to eat fresh corn.'

Relative clause

- (293) *tòló zù-ù kúlí-kùàrà ká kó-kùàrà ɓèl*
 dog steal-PAST egg-chicken REL female-chicken laid
'The dog stole the egg that the hen laid'

Serial verbs⁴³

- (294) *Tò kàɲ-à ló á nù*
 To pick.up-PAST throw LOC ground
'To picked up and threw (him) to the ground.'

The marked tenses in Mbóðòmò are the future and past tenses. The future tense is encoded by the future tense marker *tà* which precedes an active verb, see examples (295) and (296).

- (295) *kóé tà tó yòmbò*
 woman FUT pound manioc
'The woman will pound manioc.'

- (296) *bé-í tà ɲón kpòó*
 young-person FUT eat meat
'The child will eat meat.'

⁴³ Serial verbs are discussed in detail in section 3.7.5.

The future tense marker *bé* encodes the future tense in predicate nominal and other copular constructions (see section 3.3). *bé* precedes the auxiliary *dùŋ* ‘stay’ and the copula, as illustrated in examples (297) and (298).

- (297) wènè bé dùŋ ná wàn-silà
 3sg FUT remain COP proprietor-liver
 ‘He will remain a glutton.’

- (298) kóé bé dùŋ á hò
 woman FUT remain COP farm
 ‘The woman will remain at the farm.’

Mbódòmò has three past tense forms which reflect different aspectual distinctions. These are the past perfective, the simple past tense, which is completely unmarked in regards to the perfective aspect, and the past perfect. The different aspects of the past tense will be discussed in section 3.5.2. The simple past is formally encoded by the past tense suffix *-a* which may occur on both active verbs and on auxiliaries, see examples (299) and (300).

- (299) tòló yàr-à kó mí
 dog lick-PAST hand 1sgPOSS:inalien
 ‘The dog licked my hand’

- (300) mí dùŋ-ú kètì mò mús bòŋ
 1sg remain-PAST write something cat 1sgPOSS:alien

 mà kpéd-à á kú-m
 SEQ jump-PAST LOC thigh-1sgPOSS:inalien
 ‘I was writing something, my cat jumped on my lap.’

In predicate nominal and other copular structures, the auxiliary *duŋ* ‘stay, remain’ takes the past tense suffix, see examples (301) and (302).

- (301) Abá dùŋ-ù ná wàn-lé
 Aba stay-PAST COP chief-village
‘Aba was the village chief’

- (302) tòló dùŋ-ù nè nzín
 dog stay-PAST COP dirtiness
‘The dog had dirtiness.’

3.5.2 Aspect

The concept of markedness is relevant also in the discussion of aspect in Mbódòmò. As mentioned above, the past tense in Mbódòmò has two marked aspects, perfective (the event as a whole) and imperfective; and one unmarked aspect which is unspecified as to the presence or absence of the perfective aspect.

The past perfective consists of the perfective marker *má* preceding the verb root, as illustrated in examples (303) and (304).

- (303) bé-kóé kè má dè náŋá á yù
 young-woman DEM PFV abandon feet LOC flight
‘This girl abandoned her feet in flight (i.e., picked up her feet and fled).’

- (304) gók má hìn wènè gó nè bâ
 serpent PFV chase 3sg like.that CONJ catch
‘The serpent chased her like that and caught (her).’

The simple past tense mentioned above in section 3.5.1 is unmarked with respect to aspect as it pertains to the perfective. Often in conversation it has a

perfective sense, as illustrated in examples (305) and (306) where the event referred to is a single complete action.

- (305) mātúà ngànd-à á mbótókó nè sárásó
 vehicle stick-PAST LOC mud PREP yesterday
'The truck got stuck in the mud yesterday.'

- (306) yí mé lé yòñ-à yùlà sóé
 people POSS village dance-PAST dance day
 sòndè kà làk-à kí.
 week REL leave-PAST DEM
'The people of the village danced dances last Sunday.'

The simple past may also have an imperfective sense. In example (307) the sense of the sentence is habitual. Furthermore, in the first clause of example (308), the simple past suffix is attached to the auxiliary and the sense of the auxiliary/verb combination is continuous (indicated by double underlined verbs), but in the second clause, the past tense suffix has a perfective sense (indicated by single underlined verb).

- (307) kà wílí té, à sèn-à
 when man come 3sg refuse-PAST
'When men came, she would refuse them.'

- (308) élé dún-ú wór mò Odile mà hó-à
 1pl stay-PAST talk something Odile SIM arrive-PAST
'We were talking when Odile arrived.'

There is also a past perfect which consists of the verb root followed by a past perfect marker *só*, see examples (309) to (311).

- (309) Kòékè dàṅsì só tùà, Dàṁmò mà
 Koeke construct PERF house Dagmo SEQ
 tè-à tè túkrì símò.
 come-PAST for turning cement
'Koeke had constructed the house and Dagmo came for turning the cement.'
- (310) ndé à nòṅ só mbóḍì bòn
 COMP 3sgTOP eat PERF goat 1sgPOSS:alien
 ná mò kí kà mí lík nè wènè
 COP thing DEM REL 1sg hit:PR PRO 3sg
'That he had eaten my goat is the thing (reason) for which I hit him.'
- (311) kóé pí là kà wènè fàr só fèt
 squirrel put.on:PR clothes REL 3sg wash PERF already
'Squirrel puts on the clothes that he had already washed.'

As mentioned above in section 3.5.1. when the verb is unmarked for tense and occurs in an independent clause, it has a present tense sense. There are certain aspectual distinctions marked for this non-specified tense. The marked aspects are the habitual and the progressive, the unmarked aspect is the perfective.

The present habitual consists of the verb with high tone followed by the habitual marker *kà*, illustrated in examples (312) to (314).

- (312) mús bòn lá kà á lí yàrà
 cat 1sgPOSS:alien sleep HAB LOC top bed
'My cat habitually sleeps on the bed.'
- (313) wílí mé lé dé kà sàkà bàlòn
 man POSS village do HAB game ball
'The village men habitually play soccer (lit. do game ball).'

- (314) wènè kétí kà kálàtà há bíà wà
 3sg write HAB letter BEN sibling 3sgPOSS:alien
'S/he habitually writes a letter to her/his sibling.'

The present progressive varies according to whether the verb is transitive or intransitive. Present progressive transitive clauses use the auxiliary *á* preceding the verb, see examples (315) and (316).

Transitive verbs

- (315) bɛŋ á nɔ̀ŋ zìgà
 baby AUX eat fufu
'The baby is eating fufu.'

- (316) kóé á gì sùgà
 woman AUX cook manioc.greens
'The woman is cooking manioc greens.'

With intransitive verbs, the present progressive consists of the auxiliary *á* and a progressive suffix *-né*, see examples (317) (318).

Intransitive verbs

- (317) mātúà á lāk-né
 vehicle AUX leave-INTR
'The car is leaving.'

- (318) kóró á òr-né
 rain AUX rain-INTR
'It is raining.'

Certain transitive verbs may be de-transitivized by the omission of their implicit objects. When the object is omitted, these verbs form the progressive in the same manner as intransitive verbs, with the auxiliary *á* and the suffix *-né*.

However, this does not happen with all transitive verbs; only when the object is clearly understandable from the context can the suffix *-né* be used. The suffix *-né* never occurs with an overt object, see examples (319) and (320) and compare with examples (315) and (316) above.

Detransitivized verbs

- (319) *béŋ* *á* *nòŋ-né*
 baby AUX eat-INTR
 ‘*The baby is eating.*’

- (320) *kóé* *á* *gì-né*
 woman AUX cook-INTR
 ‘*The woman is cooking.*’

Present tense clauses which are unmarked for aspect seem to be perfective. These clauses have a sense of the totality of the action rather than focusing on any part of it. In examples (321) to (323) the present tense clauses that are unmarked for aspect are contrasted with clauses that are marked for either habitual or progressive aspect.

- (321) a) *mús* *bòŋ* *lá* *á* *lí* *yàrà*
 cat 1sgPOSS:alien sleep LOC top bed
 ‘*My cat sleeps on the bed.*’

- b) *mús* *bòŋ* *lá* *kà* *á* *lí* *yàrà*
 cat 1sgPOSS:alien sleep HAB LOC top bed
 ‘*My cat habitually sleeps on the bed.*’

- (322) a) wílí mé lé dé sàkà bàlòn
 man POSS village do game ball
'The village men play soccer (lit. do game ball).'
- b) wílí mé lé á dè sàkà bàlòn
 man POSS village AUX do game ball
'The village men are playing soccer (lit. do game ball).'
- (323) a) wènè kétí kálàtà há bíǎ wà
 3sg write letter give sibling 3sgPOSS:alien
'S/he writes a letter to her/his sibling.'
- b) wènè kétí kà kálàtà há bíǎ wà
 3sg write HAB letter give sibling 3sgPOSS:alien
'S/he habitually writes a letter to her/his sibling.'

3.5.3 Summary

Excluding the past perfect, Mbódòmò has two marked aspects, perfective and imperfective, and two marked tenses, past and future. In addition there is an aspect category that is unmarked for perfectivity which may carry either a perfective or imperfective sense. In a similar way there is a tense category that is unmarked. When the unmarked form occurs in an independent clause, it has a present tense, if it occurs in a dependent clause, it takes its tense from the context. Table 24 summarizes the tenses and aspects, excepting the past perfect. The unmarked categories are marked with 0 indicating that they are not specified for either the presence or the absence of the germane feature.

Table 24. Summary of Mbódòmò tenses and aspects

| | perfective | 0 | imperfective | | |
|--------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | | | habitual | progressive | stative |
| past | má + $\check{V}$ | V-a | ---- | dùṅ-à + V | dùṅ-à + COP |
| 0 | ---- | $\check{V}$ | $\check{V}$ + kà | á + $\check{V}$ (-né) | COP |
| future | ---- | tà + V | ---- | ---- | bé dùṅ + COP |

3.6 Voice and valency

Voice is a grammatical system for indicating the status of a subject as either a controller or as an affected entity (Klaiman 1988). In the prototypical active voice, the agent of the verb is the grammatical subject of the clause. The agent is not the subject in the passive voice construction, rather a non-agent participant is the grammatical subject. In prototypical passive voice constructions, the verb is stativized, but a non-prototypical impersonal passive is proposed as well. This construction is considered semantically a passive, but syntactically it is an active voice construction using an impersonal pronoun as the grammatical subject (Givón 1990). In middle voice constructions the grammatical subject is affected by the action of the verb (Klaiman 1991), but the verb remains as active voice.

Valency refers to the number and the type of arguments a particular verb requires (Klaiman 1991). Passive and middle voice constructions tend to reduce the valency of the verb while causative constructions tend to increase the valency of the verb.

Of the different types of voice found, Mbódòmò has three: Active voice, passive voice and middle voice. The active and middle voices are the most common and productive. Both the prototypical passive and the semantic, impersonal passive constructions are found in Mbódòmò. The passive voice

constructions will be discussed in section 3.6.1 and the middle voice construction will be discussed in section 3.6.2. Causative constructions, which increase the valency of the verb by adding a causer of the verb action, will be discussed in section 3.6.3.

3.6.1 Passive voice

As mentioned above, Givón (1990:576) proposes two syntactic constructions of the passive voice, a prototypical passive which promotes the non-agent to the grammatical subject and demotes or omits the agent, and an impersonal passive which reduces the agent to an impersonal pronoun.

Mbódòmò has both types of passive construction. The so called “impersonal passive” construction posited by Givón is the most productive. Any verb can express a passive sense by reducing the subject to the impersonal pronoun *é* ‘(some)one.’ The word order remains the same and verb stays active. The prototypical, or promotional, passive is rarely found in Mbódòmò. It has only been found in elicited data. In these constructions, the agent is omitted, and the non-agent is promoted to the grammatical subject of the clause.

3.6.1.1 Promotional passive constructions

The promotional passive construction in Mbódòmò omits the agent and promotes the patient to the subject position. The passive auxiliary *sóá* is used and the verb takes the nominal suffix *-à*. Examples (324) to (327) illustrate the promotional passive construction.

- (324) tòló bòn sáá kùn-ú-à
 dog 1sgPOSS:alien PAUX tie-PAST-NOM
 'My dog was tied up.'
- (325) kálàtá wà sáá kèt-â
 letter 3sgPOSS:alien PAUX write-PAST:NOM
 'His/her letter was written.'
- (326) là mé kóé sáá fâr-â
 clothes POSS:alien woman PAUX wash-PAST:NOM
 'The woman's clothes were washed.'
- (327) mbòngò sáá gbìn-í-à
 corn PAUX harvest-PAST-NOM
 'The corn was harvested.'

3.6.1.2 Impersonal passive constructions

The impersonal passive construction is formed when the agent is reduced to an impersonal pronoun *é* '(some)one'. Although the verb remains active in form, this construction semantically has a passive sense in that the patient is the emphasized argument of the verb. Often this structure is used when the main topic or participant of a discourse is a patient of the clause, rather than an agent. Examples (328) and (329) come from a text which lists the procedure of preparing manioc for consumption from the time it is harvested to being ready to eat. It is the steps of the procedure that are important, not the agent of the action.

- (328) é nzúk-ú yòmbò
 ImPN unearth-PAST manioc
 'One unearthed the manioc.'

- (329) é wúl-ú gò sáásìdî nè té dèà
 ImpPN sweep-PAST rock clean:CAUS 3sg very well
 ‘One swept and cleaned the rock very well.’

3.6.2 Middle voice construction

The middle voice expresses a semantically transitive event from the point of view of the patient rather than of the agent (Payne 1997: 216). The middle voice construction in Mbòdòmò, like the passive voice, omits the agent and promotes the patient to the subject position. The verb is detransitive in that it no longer has two arguments, but it does not take the passive auxiliary or nominal suffix of the passive construction. Compare the active, transitive clauses with their corresponding middle voice clauses in examples (330) and (331).

- (330) a) wílí hër-à gúá
 man tie.together-PAST wood
 ‘The man tied together the wood.’
- b) gúá hër-à fêt
 wood tie.together-PAST already
 ‘The wood was/is already tied together’
- (331) a) wílí tül-ù pòndò
 man set-PAST snare
 ‘The man set the snare.’
- b) pòndò tül-ù fêt
 snare set-PAST already
 ‘The snare is already set.’

Middle voice constructions unlike prototypical passives do not stativize the verb either by the use of the passive auxiliary *sóá* or by the nominal suffix *-à*. The verb remains active. Unlike the impersonal passive, the agent is completely

omitted rather than being reduced to an impersonal pronoun. Furthermore, the verb in the middle voice loses an argument, which does not occur in the impersonal passive.

3.6.3 Causative constructions

In general Mbódòmò increases valence morphologically by adding suffixes to the verb. Two suffixes are used, *-si* and *-dĩ*. In certain contexts, both are used.

Recall that intransitive verbs may have non-agentive subjects (section 3.1.2.1); they differ from verbs in the middle voice in that they are never transitive, while verbs in the middle voice are detransitivized transitive verbs (section 3.6.2). Causative constructions are derived from intransitive verbs by adding the suffix *-si*, see examples (332) to (337).

(332) a) kó mí tà gbéṅ
 hand 1sgPOSS:inalien FUT be.hot
 'My hand will be burned.'

 b) mé tà gbéṅ-sì ò
 2sg FUT be.hot-CAUS water
 'You will heat the water.'

(333) a) dàk mē tà dón
 bottle 2sgPOSS:alien FUT be.full
 'Your bottle will be full.'

 b) mí tà dón-sì kpáná-ò
 1sg FUT be.full-CAUS pot-water
 'I will fill the water pot.'

- (334) a) líŋ lé tà húr
 name village FUT be.known
'The name of the village will be known.'
- b) mé húr-sí líŋ lé
 2sg be.known-CAUS name village
'You will make known the name of the village.'
- (335) a) mí tà kúr á ɲgón
 1sg FUT rise LOC up
'I will stand up.'
- b) wàn-lé tà kúr-sì síà
 chief-village FUT rise-CAUS chair
'The village chief will raise the chair.'
- (336) a) mé tà zír né tì
 2sg FUT descend PREP tree
'You will descend from the tree.'
- b) mé tà zír-sì tòlì á zù
 2sg FUT descend-CAUS baggage LOC head
 nè
 3sgPOSS:inalien
'You will lower the baggage from her head.'
- (337) a) mí tà nzól á lì
 1sg FUT wash LOC water
'I will wash (myself).'
- b) mí tà nzól-sì bɛŋ
 1sg FUT wash-CAUS baby
'I will wash the baby.'

The second suffix *-dĩ* also increases valency.⁴⁴ In example (338) the verb *kífi* which normally means ‘to become’ or ‘to change one’s self’, with the causative suffix *-dĩ* becomes ‘to change’ or ‘to turn into’ something else.

- (338) a) wènè tà kífi wàn-lé
 3sg FUT become chief-village
 ‘He will become the village chief.’
- b) wílí tà kífi tè ná
 man FUT change body NEG
 ‘The man will not change himself.’
- c) kóé tà kífi-dĩ zìgà
 woman FUT change-CAUS fufu
 ‘The woman will stir the fufu.’

Likewise in example (339) the adjective *dúfí* ‘bent’ is made into a transitive verb by the causative suffix *-dĩ*. The sense of the derived *dúfídĩ* is ‘cause to be bent’ is non-volitional. It may also be used in a volitional manner, see example (340).

⁴⁴ There does not seem to be a semantic, syntactic or phonological reason for the use of one suffix over the other.

- (339) a) dúfí tì
bent tree
'bent tree'
- b) tì nè dúfí-à
tree have bent-NOM
'The tree is bent (lit. The tree has bentness).'
- c) kóé tà dúfí-dî ɓèkɗè-náǵá nè
woman FUT bent-CAUS knot-foot 3sgPOSS:inalien
'The woman will sprain her ankle.'
- (340) kóé tà dúfí-dî yéká là
woman FUT bent-CAUS wet clothes
'The woman will wring the clothes.'

The suffix *-dî* is sometimes added to the suffix *-si*. In example (341) the intransitive verb *gbo* 'exit', adds the suffix *-si*, to mark direct causation (where the causer is closely responsible for the action in a physical or temporal manner). Likewise, *gbo* 'exit' adds both suffixes *-si* and *-dî* to mark indirect causation (where the causer is less closely involved either physically or temporally). If both suffixes are used, they always occur in this order.

- (341) a) mí tà gbó
1sg FUT exit
'I will exit.'
- b) élé tà gbó-sì pàk
1PL FUT exit-CAUS weeds
'We will pull up the weeds.'
- c) mí tà gbó-sì-dî kùàrà
1sg FUT exit-CAUS-CAUS chicken
'I will make the chickens exit.'

However, this is not completely consistent in all circumstances. In example (342) the suffix *-si* adds a causer, but with the addition of the suffix *-dĩ* the verb no longer has a causative sense.⁴⁵

- (342) a) à tà dóŋ né⁴⁶ á sòrsí
 3sg FUT move.away go LOC ahead
 ‘He will go ahead.’
- b) à tà dóŋ-sì wènè
 3sg FUT move.away-CAUS 3sg
 ‘He will push (lit. cause him to move away) him away.’
- c) à tà dóŋ-sì-dĩ lé wà
 3sg FUT move.away-CAUS-CAUS village 3sgPOSSalien
 ‘He will leave his village behind.’

Furthermore, there are two verbs *kpa* ‘find’ and *kpasi* ‘survive’ that syntactically seem to follow the pattern of causation by adding the suffix *-si*. However, the change in meaning is noteworthy enough to suppose that *kpasi* is not derived from *kpa*. It is clear though that *kpasidĩ* is derived from *kpasi*, see example (343).

⁴⁵ Unless a village can be caused to move away in the same manner that chickens are caused to exit in the previous example.

⁴⁶ Often verbs of movement are found in series with the verb *ne* ‘to go’, see section 3.7.4.

- (343) a) wènè tà kpá mbòlì wà
 3sg FUT find money 3sgPOSS:alien
 'He will find his money.'
- b) wènè tà kpàsì á zàŋ àrí-màtúà
 3sg FUT survive LOC bowels accident-vehicle
 'He will survive the auto accident.'
- c) wènè tà kpàsì-dì wílí
 3sg FUT survive-CAUS man
 'He will save the man.'

Certain intransitive verbs require the use of both causative suffixes, see examples (344) and (345). The verbs *le* 'enter' and *ma* 'explode,' unlike *gbo* 'exit' in example (341) do not occur with only one suffix.

- (344) a) mí tà lé á tùà
 1sg FUT enter LOC house
 'I will enter the house.'
- b) mí tà lé-sì-dì kùàrà
 1sg FUT enter-CAUS-CAUS chicken
 'I will cause the chickens to enter.'
- (345) a) zàŋ gbàdèrè tà má
 stomach toad FUT explode
 'Toad's stomach will explode.'
- b) mí tà má-sì-dì hámò
 1sg FUT explode-CAUS-CAUS abcess
 'I will cause the abcess to burst.'

As shown above in example (339), causative verbs may also be derived from adjectives. Most adjective-derived verbs use both causative suffixes, see examples (346) and (347).

- (346) a) gá búk
 cold wind
 'cold wind'
- b) mí nè gá-à
 1sg have cold-NOM
 'I have coldness.'
- c) mí tà gá-sì-dî zìgà
 1sg FUT cold-CAUS-CAUS fufu
 'I will cause the fufu to cool.'
- (347) a) sá bɛŋ
 clean baby
 'clean baby'
- b) bɛŋ nè sá-à
 baby have clean-NOM
 'The baby has cleanness.'
- c) kóé tà sá-sì-dî gò
 woman FUT clean-CAUS-CAUS rock
 'The woman will clean the rock (e.g., sweep the rock).'

Transitive verbs may also express causation by adding a suffix to the verb, see example (348).

- (348) a) mí tà dán tì
 1sg FUT climb tree
 'I will climb a tree.'
- b) mí tà dán-sì tùà
 1sg FUT climb-CAUS house
 'I will build a house (lit. cause the house to mount).'

The transitive verb *hin* ‘chase to catch’ seems to take the causative suffix *-si* but the change in meaning seems to be less that of adding a controlling agent but rather changing the goal of the action. *hin* ‘chase to catch’ has the goal of achieving closer physical proximity, while *hinsi* ‘to chase away’ has the goal of achieving greater distance, see example (349).

- (349) a) mí tà hín mbóǎi
 1sg FUT chase.to.catch goat
 ‘I will chase down the goat.’
- b) mí tà hínsì kùàrà
 1sg FUT chase.away chicken
 ‘I will chase away the chickens.’

Certain transitive verbs seem to be derived in form, but they do not have related or connected meanings, neither is there an increase of valency, see examples (350) and (351).

- (350) a) mí tà gél là
 1sg FUT hang clothes
 ‘I will hang up the clothes.’
- b) mí tà gélsì kpáná
 1sg FUT empty pot
 ‘I will empty the pot.’
- (351) a) wènè tà dál kùàrà
 3sg FUT raise chicken(s)
 ‘He will raise chickens.’
- b) wènè tà dalsì mé
 3sg FUT wound 2sg
 ‘He will wound you.’

The transitive verb *tom* ‘to send’ is increased in valency from two to three arguments by adding the suffix *-si*, as seen in example (352). This form does not have a causative sense. Unlike causative forms which add an agent, this form adds a benefactor. In either case, valency is increased. While certain verbs inherently take three arguments, this is the only example of a derived ditransitive verb found so far.

- (352) a) mí tà tóm nè (mé hé mò)
 1sg FUT send 3sg (CONJ buy something)
 ‘I will send him (to buy something).’
- b) wènè tà tóm-sì kálàtà há mí
 3sg FUT send-TRNS letter BEN 1sg
 ‘He will send a letter to me.’

3.7 Clause combinations

Simple clauses may be combined to form larger structures. Some of these combinations consist of clauses containing fully inflected verbs, others consist of clauses one of which has an uninflected verb. Independent clauses in which both clauses contain inflected verbs may be joined either by a conjunction or by juxtaposition (section 3.7.1). The dependent clauses discussed here are dependent adverbial clauses (section 3.7.3), complement clauses (section 3.7.6) and relative clauses (section 3.7.7).

Another structure that is closely related to clause combinations is the serial verb. Serial verbs are two or more verbs that are not compounded and are not in separate clauses. They represent a unified intonational pattern, as they express different facets of a complex unit and are common in languages with little verb morphology. Normally the second verb has no separate tense, aspect or agreement

coding (Susan Herring, personal communication). Mbóðòmò has a serial verb construction that resembles other clause combining strategies, but with certain distinctions.

In section 3.7.5 serial verbs are discussed, juxtaposed adverbial clauses are discussed in section 3.7.3.2, and in section 3.7.6.2 paratactic complement clauses are addressed.

3.7.1 Independent clause conjunctions

Independent clauses may be joined either with a conjunction or by juxtaposition. The most common conjunctions that combine two independent clauses are *tò*, which expresses a contrast between the two clauses connected (example (353) and (354)), and *à* and *àsê* which also express a contrast but these usually contrast sentences or larger units of discourse (examples (355) to (357)).

- (353) é-yí ndòkò má gbè é-nám, dé gbàk
 PL-people DEM:PL PFV kill PL-animal make shelf

 kátìtì nè kpòó tò wò-lì má kpò
 dry PREP meat but hunger-water PFV start
 ‘Those people killed animals, made drying shelves (and) dried meat, but
 thirst started.’

- (354) wènè ná òŋ yí nè dé tè, tò zù
 3sg COP another people have good body but head

 nè gò líèŋ
 3sgPOSS:inalien like.that narrow
 ‘He is (of) another people (who) have a good body but his head is narrow
 like that (e.g., very narrow).’

- (355) *kà wílí hó á ɲgò mé mé tà sì*
 if man arrive LOC place 2sg:POSS PURP FUT marry
'If a man comes to your house for marrying you,

mé, ná sónsí mèn kà sò há há mé.
 2sg COP chance 2sg:POSS REL God give BEN 2sg
it is your chance that God gives to you.

á wílí kà té mé ná sèngá kè, mé kék ná
 but man REL come 2sg FOC refuse DEM 2sg search FOC
But the man that comes, (if) you refuse that one, you seek

gènzákà ndé zúná gáná mbòrà fè-à fìyò tà
 that.same that girl reject counsel die-PAST death without
the same thing that the girl-rejected-counsel (sought) died an ignoble
death (lit. died a death without head).'

zù.
 head

- (356) *é ɓò ndé kóé tà ɲgán mé dām*
 ImpPN say that squirrel FUT ride 2sg throughout
'Someone said that "Squirrel will ride you throughout

zàŋ-lé á sòndè kè kà tè ná?
 insides-village LOC week DEM REL come NEG.INT
the village on next Sunday, isn't that so?"

à ɓàklà kífídí é kè kóé lèamá
 but hyena respond EXCL then squirrel able
But (or then) Hyena responded "Well then? Squirrel is able

mé ɲgàn é?
 CONJ ride INT
to ride (me)?"'

- (357) wènè á kù dùk wâ né né á ngò.
 3sg AUX take tribe 3sgPOSS:alien go go LOC place
àsê wènè 6ó ndé é wé ná zùbèlà.
 But 3sg say that LOG imitate FOC zubela
'He is taking his tribe and going to his house. But he said that he (would) imitate Zubela.'

The conjunction *kè* 'and then' connects two clauses in which the second clause follows the first in time, see examples (358) and (359). Both have fully inflected verbs.

- (358) wâ má jòn kpòó, kè wǒ-li hìn
 3pl PFV eat meat and.then hunger-water chase
 lém ná
 satisfy NEG
'They ate meat, and then thirst was not satisfied.'

- (359) wènè má òsí pìrá dùn-né á zù dùk
 3sg PFV show place stay-INTR LOC head tribe
 fét, kè wènè má pì wèé á bèlè
 all and.then 3sg PFV throw fire LOC savana
'He showed the place they were going to stay to the chief of each tribe, and then he set fire to the savana.'

3.7.2 Juxtaposed independent clauses

Independent clauses may also be juxtaposed. These clauses have a semantic relationship closer than two adjacent clauses in a discourse, but the relationship expressed may be one of either contrast (example (360)) or coordination (examples (361) and (364)).

- (360) à wènè tè 6ó á kóé kè ndé,
 then(but) 3sg come says LOC woman DEM that
'Then(but) he came and said to the woman that

kpòó gók kè mè ɲóɲ, mè tí kù
 meat snake DEM 2sg:IMP eat 2sg:IMP must take
'This snake meat, you must eat, (but) you must definitely

mà gbàlà gók kè lák nè ná.
 IMP bone snake DEM leave go NEG
not take a snake bone and leave.'

- (361) mí á fàr là, mí á wòr mò
 1sg AUX wash clothes 1sg AUX speak something.
'I am washing clothes and talking.'

Sentences with juxtaposed independent clauses may express temporal overlap or temporal succession also. In these sentences, the word *mà* marks the temporal relationship between two past tense clauses. In sentences which consist of a clause which has an auxiliary-verb sequence which indicates a durative action, and a clause with a non-durative verb, the sense is of overlapping occurrence, event 2 occurs during event 1, see examples (362) and (363).

- (362) mí dúɲ-ú lá lá, zífà mà ɲóɲ-à
 1sg stay-PAST sleep sleep mosquito SIM bite-PAST

mí
 1sg
'I was sleeping, (when) a mosquito bit me.'

- (363) élé dúŋ-ú yámbì nú mbódòmò,
 1PL stay-PAST learn language mbodomo
 fàrà mà hó-à
 priest SIM arrive-PAST
'We were learning Mbódòmò, (when) the priest arrived.'

If, however, the verb of the first clause is past perfective and the second verb is in past tense, the temporal relationship between the two clauses is affected and the sense of the sentence is one of sequence, see example (364).

- (364) Kòékè dàŋsì sọ tùà, Dàŋmò mà
 Koeke construct PERF house Dàŋmò SEQ
 tè-à tè túkrì símò.
 come-PAST for turning cement
'Koeke had constructed the house (and) Dagmo came for turning the cement.'

Juxtaposed temporally related clauses in the other tenses, or between different tenses, do not use the marker *mà*. Temporal succession and overlap are marked either by different tenses or by the use of conjunctions, see examples (365) to (367).

Present tense overlap

- (365) Carole á gí jòŋàmò, Odile á fàr là
 Carole AUX cook food Odile AUX wash clothes
'Carole is cooking food, Odile is washing clothes.'

Past/present succession

- (366) Kòékè dàŋ-s-à tùà, Dàŋmò á túkrì símò
 Koeke climb-CAUS-PAST house Dàŋmò AUX turn cement
'Koeke built the house, Dagmo is mixing the cement (for the floor).'

Future succession

(367) Kòékè tà dáj-sì tùà, kè Dàṇmò tà
 Koeke FUT climb-CAUS house and.then Dàṇmò FUT

té túkrí símò
 come turn cement

'Koeke will build the house, and then Dàṇmò will come mix the cement.'

3.7.3 Subordinate clauses

Mbódòmò has both temporal succession and temporal overlap in subordinate, adverbial clauses. There are several different ways of coding each of these distinctions, as is illustrated in table 25 (in which *SS* refers to same subject, and *DS* refers to different subject). While the subordinate conjunction *kà* 'when' occurs in all categories, there are some noteworthy aspects. The most common structure, {*kà* S V, S V} (numbers 1, 5 and 7 in table 25), has not yet been found in temporal overlap clauses with different subjects. Furthermore, subordinate clauses that start with *kà* may also contain the particle *mà* either in the subordinate or in the independent clause. The presence of *mà* in the subordinate clause indicates temporal succession (see numbers 4 and 8 in table 25). When *mà* occurs in the independent clause, it marks temporal overlap (number 10 in table 25). These distinctions are discussed further in section 3.7.3.1.

Table 25. Types of subordinate clauses.

| | Same subject | | Different subject | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Temporal
succession | clause 1 | clause 2 | clause 1 | clause 2 |
| | 1) <i>kà</i> + S V, | SS V | 7) <i>kà</i> S V, | DS V |
| | 2) <i>â</i> + S V <i>dóŋ</i> , | <i>mé</i> V | 8) <i>kà</i> S <i>mà</i> + V, | DS V |
| | 3) S V(<i>dóŋ</i>), | SS V | 9) <i>kà</i> + adv phrase | S V |
| | 4) <i>kà</i> S <i>mà</i> + V, | SS V | | |
| Temp.
overlap | 5) <i>kà</i> + S V, | SS V | 10) <i>kà</i> S V, | DS <i>mà</i> + V ⁴⁷ |
| | 6) V + NOM | S V | | |

3.7.3.1 The temporal conjunction *kà*

The conjunction *kà* seems to be a general temporal conjunction. It always introduces the subordinate clause, in which the verb is uninflected for tense and aspect. *kà* is referred to as a generic conjunction in that it may be used in both temporal succession and temporal overlap clauses with either same subjects or different subjects in relation to the following clause. Example (368) shows the use of *kà* in temporal succession clauses with the same subjects, and example (369) shows temporal succession clauses with different subjects.

Temporal succession with the same subject

- (368) *kà*-m *pél* *nè* *hò*, *mí* *tà* *dóŋí* *ná* *bíngó*
 when-1sg return PREP field 1sg FUT sell FOC peanut
'When I return from the field, I will sell the peanuts.'

⁴⁷While I do not have any examples of this construction for same subject temporal overlap constructions, I suspect it is there due to the fact that *mà* in the dependent clause may be used for either same or different subjects.

Temporal succession with different subjects

- (369) *kà wènè ák, yí fèt ná sì-ì káfè*
 when 3sg ask people all COP espouse-PAST denial
'When he asked, all of them denied it (lit. espoused denial).'

The conjunction *kà* may also be used for temporal overlap clauses with the same subject, see examples (370) and (371), or with different subjects, see example (372).

Temporal overlap with the same subject

- (370) *kà é-yí mé lé dé lí á*
 when PL-people POSS village leave eye LOC
dóló hò, wà nzók ná kóé á zù bàklà
 path field 3pl see FOC squirrel LOC head hyena
'When the village people look toward the field path, they see Squirrel on Hyena's head.'

- (371) *kà mí né á kálà-sóé, mí tà né á Waza*
 when 1sg go LOC up.there-sun 1sg FUT go LOC Waza
'When I go to the north, I will go to Waza Reserve.'

Temporal overlap with different subjects

- (372) *kà wènè hó á sòrsí, gók mà gbán-à*
 as 3sg arrive LOC in.front serpent SIM grow-PAST
'As she advanced, the serpent grew.'

When the word *mà* occurs in the independent clause it marks temporal overlap as is seen in example (372). If *mà* occurs in the same clause as the conjunction *kà*, it marks succession, see (373) to (375). When the temporal marker *mà* occurs with the conjunction *kà* the verb in that clause is inflected for tense.

- (373) ká wènè mà né-à á hò á sèndè
 when 3sg SEQ go-PAST LOC arrive LOC middle
 lì, lì má hikí tè wènè ɗáŋ
 water water PFV burn body 3sgPOSS:inalien badly
'When she went (and) arrived in the middle of the water, the water burned her body badly.'

- (374) kà wènè mà né-à mé ná nzók kpòó
 when 3sg SEQ go-PAST CONJ FOC see meat
 mbòŋgá, à kpà-à kpòó ɓòn-à sék
 zebra 3sg find-PAST meat remain-PAST little
'When he came to see the zebra meat, he found that little meat remained.'

- (375) kà mé mà né á Bértóuà, mé tà hé
 when 2sg SEQ go:PR LOC Bertoua 2sg FUT buy
 wán-tì há-m⁴⁸.
 leaves-tree give-1sg
'When you go to Bertoua, you will buy leaves for me.'

The present tense is often hard to distinguish from uninflected verbs. Example (375) comes from a personal conversation with a neighbor shortly before a trip to town. The whole dialogue was in present tense.

The conjunction *kà* also occurs in formulaic adverbial phrases with a verb or adverb but no subject, see examples (376) to (378).

⁴⁸This is a case of the verb "give" grammaticalizing into the benefactive preposition. This form is actually a contraction. Many conjunctions and prepositions contract with the first person singular pronoun.

- (376) kà mà kàrà, òŋ kóé nè-à nè 6érkìdî
 when SEQ later certain wife go-PAST and break

kpòó mbòŋgà kè ɲôŋ.
 meat zebra DEM eat

'Then later on, a certain wife went and cut off (some of) this zebra meat, and ate it.'

- (377) ká hó yàrà mòrkó, wènè á kù dùk
 when arrive day five 3sg AUX take tribe

wâ né né á ɲgò wâ
 3sgPOSS:alien go go LOC place 3sgPOSS:alien

'When five days had passed, he is taking his tribe back to his place.'

- (378) kà kátí, kè é wúlú
 when dry then ImPN sweeps
'When dry, then one sweeps (it up).'

3.7.3.2 Adverbial temporal succession clauses

Temporal succession may also be expressed by a subordinate adverbial clause and an independent clause. There are two conjunctions that mark the adverbial phrase, *â* and *mé*. *â* always occurs sentence initially. In this construction, the adverbial clause precedes the independent clause and often ends with the adverb *dóŋ* 'first'. The verb is uninflected for tense, see examples (379) and (380).

- (379) â wènè nó ɲínà dóŋ à tà lá nù
 after 3sg drink medicine first 3sg FUT sleep ground
'After he drank the medicine first, he will sleep.'

- (380) â-m gí zìgà dóŋ, mí tà fâr là
 after-1sg prepare fufu first 1sg FUT wash clothes
'After I prepare the fufu first, I will wash the clothes.'

The adverbial conjunction *mé* occurs when the subordinate adverbial clause follows the independent clause. The subordinate clause does not have an overt subject, see example (381).

- (381) mí gí-í zìgà dón, mé fár là
 1sg prepare-PAST fufu first CONJ wash clothes
 'I prepared the fufu first, then washed clothes.'

3.7.3.3 Adverbial temporal overlap clauses

Verbs may be nominalized with the addition of the nominal suffix *-à* which is different than the past tense marker which it resembles. This form resembles the passive construction mentioned above in section 3.6.1.1. The verb is clearly nominalized since it takes a possessive pronoun *wà* '3sg possessive, alienable.' The nominalized verb phrase functions as an adverb before independent clauses, as is seen in examples (382) and (383). This structure is a common device in narrative used for cohesion especially near the peak of the episode (section 4.2.2). The examples below are adjacent sentences and occur at the beginning of the peak episode.

- (382) hð-â⁴⁹ wà á dóló, à bür-ù
 arrive-PAST:NOM 3sgPOSS:alien LOC road 3sg untie-PAST
 gòè
 wrapped.skirt
 '(At) her arrival at the road, she untied her wrapped skirt.'

⁴⁹This is an elision of the two /a/ in /hð-á/ + /à/.

- (383) *bùr-ú-à wà, à nzók ná bé-gók*
 untie-PAST-NOM 3sgPOSS:alien 3sg see FOC small-serpent
‘(At) her untying (it), she sees a baby serpent.’

3.7.4 Chaining clauses

Both temporal succession and temporal overlap clauses may chain with an independent clause. These chaining structures consist of an independent clause followed by a series of verbs that are not marked for tense and do not have overt subjects. Longacre (In press) calls this sort of structure “initial-consecutive chaining structures.” Consecutive verbs in the chain continue the same sense and function of the initial clause of the chain. In examples (384) and (385) the main clause verb is underlined and the chaining clause verbs are italicized. While this structure is similar to serial verbs (section 3.7.5) it differs in that the verbs in chaining clauses may have different objects, while serial verb constructions share an object.

- (384) *é-yí ndòkò má gbè é-nám, dé gbàk*
 PL-people DEM:PL PFV kill PL-animal make shelf
kátìtì nè kpòó tò...
 dry PREP meat CONJ...
‘Those people killed animals, made drying shelves (and) dried meat, but...’

- (385) *wènè má dàn tì mbér gìmà kè...*
 3sg PFV climb tree sing song CONJ...
‘He climbed a tree, sang the song, then...’

3.7.5 Serial verbs

Serial verb constructions are common in Mbódòmò. They express different facets of a complex action. Unlike juxtaposed clauses where both verbs are fully

inflected, the second verb in a serial construction is not marked for tense, aspect or for verb agreement. In the serial verb construction, if both verbs are transitive, they must both have the same subject and the same object. The object follows the first verb in the series, see examples (386) to (388).

- (386) Tò kàŋ-à ló á nù
 To pick.up-PAST throw LOC ground
'To picked up and threw (him) to the ground.'

- (387) Mbádímbáŋ má kàŋ Tò lò á nù
 Mbadimbaŋ PFV pick.up To throw LOC ground
'Mbadimbaŋ picked up To and threw (him) to the ground.'

- (388) kóé kù-ù tòlì né né á lé
 woman take-PAST basin go go LOC village
'The woman brought (lit. took and went) the basin to the village.'

In an intransitive and a transitive verb series or in a series of two intransitive verbs, both verbs in the series must have the same subject, see example (389).

- (389) gbàlà mé gbìn-ì gbó dèr
 bone 2sgPOSS:inalien break-PAST exit outside
'Your bone is broken and is sticking out (complex fracture).'

The verbs *ne* 'go' and *te* 'come' often occur after a verb of movement, see examples (390) to (394).

- (390) wâ má làk nè á ngò ào wậ.
 3PL PFV leave go LOC place friend 3sgPOSS:alien
'They left going to his friend's place.'
- (391) é tà sí nè á ngò báy vè
 LOG FUT return go LOC place father LOG:POSS
'She will return going to her father's place.'
- (392) Tò sì-ì né á tùà wậ
 To return-PAST go LOC house 3sgPOSS:alien
'To returned going to his house.'
- (393) kó-kùàrà òò-à né á sòrsí
 female-chicken go.away-PAST go LOC forward
'The hen advanced going forward.'
- (394) Mbádímbáy hò-à tê á nú
 Mbadĩmbay arrive-PAST come LOC mouth
 tùà mé Tò
 house POSS To
'Mbadĩmbay arrived coming to the door of To's house.'

The verb *tɛ* 'come' often occurs as the first verb in a series. This form has a definite sense of movement involved in the action of the verb, see examples (395) to (397).

- (395) wènè tè-à wór á kóé ndé
 3sg come-PAST say LOC woman COMP
'He came saying to the woman that....'
- (396) Dàṁmò tà tè túkrí símò
 Daṁmɔ FUT come turn cement
'Daṁmɔ will come turn the cement.'

- (397) òŋ kóé má tè mbér ndán gìmà
 another wife PFV come sing same song
'Another wife came singing the same song.'

Verbs of movement are also found in constructions with the verb *tɛ* 'come' followed by another verb. In this construction, *tɛ* seems to grammaticalize as a subordinate conjunction denoting purpose, see examples (398) to (402).

- (398) Dàŋmò tè-à tè túkrì símò
 Daŋmò come-PAST PURP turn cement
'Daŋmò came to turn the cement.'

- (399) Báfiá tè-à tè kpá Tò
 Bafia come-PAST PURP find To
'Bafia came to find To.'

- (400) Báfiá gbò-à tè ák mò
 Bafia exit-PAST PURP ask something
'Bafia left to ask something.'

- (401) Báfiá hò-à tè ák Tò
 Bafia enter-PAST PURP ask To
'Bafia entered to ask To (something).'

- (402) é pél-á tè gí nè
 ImpN return-PAST PURP prepare 3sg
'One returned to prepare it.'

3.7.6 Complement clauses

A complement clause is an embedded clause that functions as an argument of the verb. Not all verbs can take a clause complement. Those verbs that do fall into one of three categories: cognition/utterance verbs (say, see, know, believe),

manipulative verbs (make, order, cause, let), and modal verbs (can, intend, try, manage, avoid) (Givón 1990).

Generally, languages have several different methods for encoding complements. These methods differ in the degree of integration between the main clause and the complement clause. Givón's hypothesis is that the stronger the semantic bond between the two events, the more syntactically integrated are the main clause and the complement clause (Givón 1990: 515-6). Complement types vary in integration from minimally integrated or sentence-like to maximally integrated or participles.

Mbódòmò uses four different encoding techniques for complement clauses: Indicative, paratactic, infinitive and nominalized complements.

Indicative complement clauses are sentence-like. They are structurally similar to independent clauses. They are marked by the complementizer *ndé* and follow a cognition/utterance verb. *Paratactic complement* clauses are slightly more integrated and less sentence-like than indicative complements. The verb is inflected for tense and aspect, but the subject of the complement is normally deleted when it is co-referential with the subject of the main clause. Paratactic complements usually follow modal or manipulative verbs, but may also follow a cognition/utterance verb like *iŋ* 'to know.' The *infinitive complement* clause is formed with the conjunction, *mé*, and the root form of the verb. *mé* complements, like paratactic complements, follow modal or manipulative verbs. *Nominalized complements* are formed by a complement clause following a main clause verb with an object focus marker.

3.7.6.1 Indicative complementation

Indicative complement clauses are introduced by the complementizer, *ndé*. These clauses include indirect speech and direct discourse as well as complements of other cognition/utterance main verbs. The complement clause is sentence-like with a fully inflected verb.

In indirect discourse, the personal pronoun of the complement clause is a logophoric pronoun (see section 3.1.1.4), see examples (403) and (404).

- (403) wènè 6ó ndé é lé tùà mé
 3sg_i say COMP LOG_i return house POSS
 bán wâ⁵⁰
 father 3sgPOSS:inalien_i
'She said that she returns to the house of her father.'

- (404) gók gà kà 6ó á nè ndé
 serpent_i like.that REL say PREP 3sg_j COMP
 òlò lák
 LOG:IMP_{i&j} leave
'... like that (appears) a serpent who says to her that they must go now.'

In certain circumstances, when the subject of the complement clause is identical to that of the main clause, the complement subject is deleted. This seems

⁵⁰In most of the other texts with indirect discourse, I found that instead of the regular possessive pronoun as used in this text, a logophoric possessive pronoun is used, for example:

à Tò 6ó á Báfiá ndé zòp Báfiá kè dùn sọ ná
 then To_i say PREP Bafia_j COMP nose Bafia DEM stay PERF COP
 mgbér mọ mé bàbá vé.
 ancient thing POSS grandfather LOG:POSS_i
 "Then To_i said to Bafia_j that this nose of Bafia's had been an ancient thing of his_i grandfather's."

to occur typically with first or second person pronouns rather than third person pronouns, see example (405).

- (405) mí 6́s ndé hèn ná 6́ásà
 1sg say COMP buy FOC hot.pepper
 'I say that (I) buy hot peppers.'

The indicative complement clause is not limited to indirect discourse. It is also found in conjunction with other cognition/utterance verbs. As with indirect discourse, these complement clauses are sentence-like, examples (406) and (407).

- (406) à kpàá ndé kpòó 6̀òn-à sék
 3sg find COMP meat remain-PAST little
 'He found that little meat remained.'

- (407) kà mèn nzók ndé m̀ò kà àó mèn
 if 2sg see COMP something REL friend 2sgPOSS:alien

 dé lém lí mé ná...
 do please eye 2sgPOSS:inalien NEG
 'If you see that something that your friend does, it is not good...'

Direct discourse is also finite and marked by the complementizer *ndé*. Usually in direct discourse, the main clause contains an utterance verb and an indirect object to whom the quote is addressed, see examples (408) to (410).

- (408) wènè tè ḡ á kóé kè ndé kpòó
 3sg come say LOC woman DEM COMP meat

gók kè mē nōŋ...
 serpent DEM 2sg:IMP eat

'He came saying to this woman that 'This serpent meat, eat...''

- (409) Zùbèlà kìfĩdĩ á wâ ndé wâ ḡn ...
 Zubela respond LOC 3pl COMP 3pl remain...

'Zubela responded to them that 'they remained...''

- (410) òk fèt hìn ná àká⁵¹ Zùbèlà ndé tò
 tribe all therefore FOC ask Zubela COMP but

òd ká wènè sà só kè.
 hunt REL 3sg call PERF DEM

'Therefore all the tribes asked Zubela that 'But this hunt that you had called...''

The complementizer *ndé* may be found also when there is no overt verb in the main clause. These clauses are indirect discourse clauses where the verb is omitted and the complementizer immediately follows the main clause subject, see examples (411) and (412).

- (411) wílí kè ndé yí kà kú lì...
 man DEM COMP people REL cross water...

'The man (said) that the people who cross the water...'

⁵¹This is an elision of the two /á/ in /àká/ + the preposition /á/.

- (412) gók ndé òlò lák vòlò...
 serpent COMP LOG:dual leave LOG:dual:REFL
'The serpent (said) that they, themselves, leave (now)...'

3.7.6.2 Paratactic complements

Paratactic and serial verb constructions (section 3.7.5) are syntactically and semantically similar, but there are some differences. Verbs in a serial construction must not contrast in tense and aspect while verbs in a paratactic construction may vary in tense or aspect (Noonan 1985: 76).

Mbódòmò has both serial verb and paratactic complements. In serial verb constructions, only the first verb is inflected for tense and aspect. All verbs in a serial construction must have the same subject and the same object if applicable, see examples (413) to (415).

Serial verb constructions

- (413) Tò kàṇ-à ló á nù
 To carry-PAST throw LOC ground
'To picked up and threw (him) to the ground.'
- (414) kóé kù-ù tòlì né né á lé
 woman take-PAST basin go go LOC village
'The woman brought (lit. took and went) the basin to the village.'
- (415) gbàlà mé gbìn-ì gbó dèr
 bone 2sgPOSS break-PAST exit outside
'Your bone is broken and is sticking out (complex fracture).'

In paratactic complements, by contrast, both verbs are inflected for tense and aspect. The verbs in a paratactic complements may differ in tense and aspect, and in certain contexts may have different subjects and objects, see examples (416) to (421).

Paratactic complements

- (416) wènè *má* *kpò* *mbèr-à* gìmà
 3sg PFV start sing-PAST song
'She started to sing a song.'

- (417) à *ngòl-à* *nè-á* dòkò *đán*
 3sg want-PAST drink-PAST alcohol too.much
'He wanted to drink too much alcohol.'

- (418) kàskò *kò-à* *wè-á* yí
 Kasko wish-PAST imitate-PAST people
'Kasko wished to imitate everyone'

- (419) Carole *ín* mí *á* kè ná
 Carole know:PR 1sg LOC here NEG
'Carole does not know that I am here.'

- (420) Námò *gbàr-à* pìrà tò *wìsì-ì*
 Námò betray-PAST place Tò hide-PAST
'Namò betrayed the place where To was hiding. (e.g., Namò revealed To's hiding place (to his enemy)).'

- (421) mí *ngól-á* wènè *nón* tór mbòngò
 1sg want-PAST 3sg eat:PR fresh corn
'I wanted him to eat fresh corn.'

3.7.6.3 Infinitive complements

Complement clauses may also be formed by the conjunction *mé* followed by the complement. The complement verb is always in root form with low tone with no tense or aspect is marked. The verb in root form is the closest structure to an infinitive verb found in Mbódòmò. These complements follow manipulative or modal verbs, see examples (422) to (426). Furthermore, all examples of *mè*

complements found have the same subject in the complement as in the main clause.

- (422) Sígóló ɲgól mé zù ná kpòó
 Sigolo want:PR CONJ steal FOC meat
'Sigolo wants to steal the meat.'

- (423) mí ɲgól-á mé ɲ dóló tùà mè
 1sg want-PAST CONJ know road house 2sgPOSS:alien
'I wanted to know the way to your house.'

- (424) wènè kò-à mé hè 6ásà
 3sg wish-PAST CONJ buy hot.pepper
'She wished to buy hot peppers.'

- (425) kóé lèm-à mé ɲgàn é?
 squirrel is.able-PAST CONJ ride(like on a horse) INT
'Was Squirrel able to ride?'

- (426) wènè nè sémbè mé pí dàk á màtúà
 3sg have power CONJ throw canister LOC vehicle
'He has the ability to put the canister into the truck.'

3.7.6.4 Nominalized complements

Mbódòmò has a focus marker *ná* that, when it occurs before an object, emphasizes the object of the action. While it is not required in transitive clauses, when it occurs an object is obligatory, compare examples (427) and (428).

- (427) wènè ɲóɲ zìgà
 3sg eat:PR fufu
'He eats fufu.'

- (428) wènè nój ná zìgà
 3sg eat:PR FOC fufu
 ‘He eats *fufu*.’

As shown above, the object following the focus marker normally is a noun or noun phrase, but sometimes a complement clause is found in this position. The verb is nominalized by the nominal suffix –à and is acting as the object of the main clause, see examples (429) to (431).

- (429) wènè nzók ná gí-à zìgà
 3sg see:PR FOC prepare-NOM fufu
 ‘He watches *fufu-making*.’

- (430) wâ kùtìkì-ì ná dé-à wànzà
 3pl start-PAST FOC do-NOM sex
 ‘They started *love-making*.’

- (431) mí wé ná wór-à nú mbódòmò 6òn
 1sg try:PR FOC speak-NOM language mbodɔmɔ only
 ‘I try *Mbódòmò-speaking only*.’

In certain circumstances, the verb of the nominalized complement clause does not have the nominal suffix, particularly in the case of verbs ending with /i/, see example (432). Example (429) above also may occur without the nominal suffix as seen in example (433).

- (432) mí nzók ná í zù
 1sg see:PR FOC braid head
 ‘I watch *hair-braiding*.’

- (433) mí nzók ná gí zìgà
 1sg see:PR FOC prepare fufu
 ‘I watch fufu-making.’

3.7.7 Relative clauses

Relative clauses are clauses that function as noun modifiers. Relative clauses in Mbódòmò are embedded clauses formed with an invariable relative clause marker *kà*. The relativized noun phrase may be in the subject, direct object, indirect object, and various oblique cases. Mbódòmò uses two different strategies for recovering the case role of the relativized element in a relative clause: the gap strategy where the case role of the relativized element is not overtly coded but is retrievable by word order only, and the pronoun retention strategy, where the relativized element is coded in the relative clause by either a demonstrative pronoun or by the third person singular pronoun *nè*. The pronoun *nè* occurs in all types of relative clauses except subject relative clauses and always occurs immediately following the verb of the relative clause.⁵²

3.7.7.1 Subject relative clauses

The head noun of a subject relative clause may be either a subject, an object or an object of a preposition of the main clause. The relative clause marker immediately follows its head noun and is not marked for case. The normal strategy of relativization is by gap strategy, a strategy for relative clauses that is not usually helpful for recovering the case role. In a couple of formulaic relative

⁵²Because *nè* codes the relativized elements in several relative clause types, and is invariable, I hesitate to call it a pronoun. It marks that there is a missing relativized element but does not indicate its case. So in a manner of speaking, the gap strategy is still functioning. While the presence of the relativized element is marked, its case is recoverable only by the semantics of the verb.

clauses, a demonstrative pronoun functions as a pronoun retention strategy for recovering the case role of the head noun.

In subject relative clauses that use the gap strategy, the word order is the regular SV(O) pattern, see examples (434) to (436). In example (434), the head noun is both subject of the main clause and the relative clause. In example (435), the head noun is object of the preposition of the main clause and subject of the relative clause. In example (436), the head noun is the direct object of the main clause and subject of the relative clause.

- (434) wílí ká lá á Tòngò dé sàkà bàlòn
 man REL sleep:PR LOC Tòngò do:PR game ball
'The man who lives (lit. sleeps) at Tongo plays soccer.'

wílí lá á Tòngò
 man sleeps LOC Tongo
'The man lives (lit. sleeps) at Tongo.'

- (435) wâ má làk né á ngò ào wâ
 3pl PFV leave go LOC place friend 3sgPOSS:alien

kà bàndì só wènè
 REL invite PERF 3sg
'They left to go to the house of his friend who had invited him.'

ào wâ bàndì só wènè
 friend 3sgPOSS:alien invite PERF 3sg
'His friend had invited him.'

- (436) à nzók ná bé-gók kà sìk-ì á nù.
 3sg see:PR FOC baby-serpent REL fall:PAST LOC ground
'She sees a baby serpent that fell to the ground.'

bé-gók sìk-ì á nù
 baby-serpent fall-PAST LOC ground
'The baby serpent fell to the ground.'

The subject of a predicate nominal clause may be modified by a relative clause, see examples (437) and (438).

- (437) békóé kà dún nè dòká-zàrà ná ào bòn
 girl REL stay:PR have block-ear COP friend 1sgPOSS:alien
'The girl who is deaf (lit. remains having blocked ears) is my friend.'

békóé dún nè dòká-zàrà
 girl stay:PR have block-ear
'The girl is deaf (lit. The girl remains having blocked ears).'

- (438) mí jón-á kùàrà kà dùn-ù nè zélé.
 1sg eat-PAST chicken REL stay-PAST COP sickness
'I ate the chicken that was sick.'

kùàrà dùn-ù nè zélé
 chicken stay-PAST have sickness
'The chicken was sick.'

There are two formulaic subject relative clauses that use a pronoun retention strategy along with a gap strategy to code the case of the relativized element. These are the relative clauses *kà té kí* 'that comes', and *kà làkà kí* 'that left' which function as 'next' and 'last' in the context of time, see examples (439) and (440). In both of these examples, the distal demonstrative pronoun functions as pronoun retention in the relative clause.

- (439) s_óé s_óndè kà té kí⁵³ é tà ngán 6àklà
 day week REL come PRO LOG FUT ride hyena

dám zàṅ-lé.
 everywhere bowels-village

'Next Sunday (lit. Sunday that comes) he will ride hyena throughout the entire village.'

- (440) mí lá á Guiwa nè s_óndè
 1sg sleep LOC Guiwa PREP week

kà lák-à kí.
 REL leave-PAST PRO

'I was at Guiwa last week (lit. week that left).'

3.7.7.2 Direct object relative clauses

The head noun of a direct object relative clauses may be a subject or an object. The original case role of the relativized element is coded in one of two ways, either by the gap strategy, as with subject relative clauses, or by pronoun retention. Direct object relative clauses that use a gap strategy to recover the case role of the relativized element are illustrated in examples (441) to (443).

- (441) tòló zù-ù kúlí-kùàrà ká kó-kùàrà 6èl
 dog steal-PAST egg-chicken REL female-chicken laid
'The dog stole the egg that the chicken laid'

- (442) k_óé pí là kà wènè fàr s_ó fèt
 squirrel put.on:PR clothes REL 3sg wash PERF already
'Squirrel puts on the clothes that he had already washed.'

⁵³ These formulaic relative clauses fit the pattern discussed in sections 3.7.7.2 and 3.7.7.3. The pronoun retention strategy always places PRO immediately following the verb regardless of the case role of the relative clause.

- (443) ná sónsí mề kà sò há
 COP chance 2sgPOSS:alien REL God give:PR
 há mề
 BEN 2sg
 '(It) is your chance that God gives to you.'

Some sentences with direct object relative clauses tend to front the object of the main clause, see example (444). In discourse, fronted objects tend to occur at episode peaks.⁵⁴ Fronted objects containing relative clauses fit the same pattern of occurring at episode peaks (see section 4.2.2).

- (444) O S V
 gìmà kà wènè mbér yí nzél ná
 song REL 3sg sing:PR people hear NEG
 'The song that she sang, no one heard (it).'

Direct object relative clauses may also use a pronoun retention strategy for coding the missing argument, especially when the usual word order of the clause is changed. In example (445) the demonstrative pronoun *kí* 'that one' codes the presence of the missing argument, repeating the demonstrative of the head noun phrase. The pronoun always occurs immediately after the verb regardless of the argument it is coding. The most common pronoun in the pronoun retention strategy is *nè*, the third person singular pronoun. It occurs optionally in direct object relative clauses, compare example (443) with example (446), as well as in indirect object and oblique relative clauses, see section 3.7.7.3.

⁵⁴In the folktale "The zebra" there are several episodes. In the example mentioned, each of the wives of the hunter must cross a river of fire singing a particular song to prove her innocence of stealing the taboo meat. Although all are guilty, only the last is unable to cross the river safely. This sentence occurs at the peak of the story where she, trying to cross singing the song, burns to death. The following sentences are the denouement and the moral.

- (445) O S V
 m̀̀ ḱ k̀ éné d́ ḱ ḿ íŋ-í
 thing DEM REL 2pl do PRO 1sg know-PAST
'That thing that you do that, I know (it).'

- (446) z̀p é k̀ zíná m̀ k̀ é
 nose LOG:POSS:inalien DEM NEG:COP thing REL LOG
 t̀ há ǹ há wènè...
 FUT give PRO BEN 3sg
'This nose of his is not something that he will give to him⁵⁵...'

3.7.7.3 Indirect object and oblique relative clauses

Indirect object relative clauses and oblique relative clauses, excepting locative relative clauses, code the presence of the relativized element by pronoun retention. The pronoun *nè* is used in pronoun retention. *nè* always immediately follows the verb rather than occurring in the position of the relativized element in the relative clause. As a result, there is a change of word order in the relative clause. Compare the following relative clauses with their corresponding independent clauses; examples (447) to (450).

⁵⁵ In the folktale, *Bafia and To*, To demands that Bafia give him his nose which he claims actually belongs to his (To's) grandfather. Bafia, naturally tries to refuse.

Indirect object relative clause

(447) a) kóé ká mí há nè kpòó à ná ào
 woman REL 1sg give PRO meat 3sg COP friend

bòη

1sgPOSS:alien

'The woman to whom I gave meat is my friend.'

b) S V DO IO

 mí há kpòó há kóé

 1sg give:PR meat BEN woman

'I give meat to the woman.'

Instrumental oblique relative clause

(448) a) tòlì kà mí dú nè lì nè nzín
 basin REL 1sg draw PRO water COP dirtiness

'The basin with which I draw water is dirty.'

b) S V DO INSTR

 mí dǔ lì nè tòlì

 1sg draw water PREP basin

'I draw water with the basin.'

Associative oblique relative clause

(449) a) é-bé kà mí dé nè sàkà wâ wór
 PL-child REL 1sg do PRO game 3pl speak

| | | |
|----------|--------------|-----|
| nú | bú-í | ná |
| language | white-person | NEG |

'The children with whom I play, they do not speak French.'

| | | | | | |
|----|-----|-------|------|------|----------|
| b) | mí | dé | sàkà | nè | é-bé |
| | 1sg | do:PR | game | PREP | PL-child |

'I play with the children.'

Reason oblique relative clause

(450) a) ndé à ɲòŋ sɔ mbóɗi bòn ná
 COMP 3sg eat PERF goat 1sgPOSS:alien COP

mò kí kà mí lík nè wènè
 thing DEM REL 1sg hit:PR PRO 3sg

'That he had eaten my goat is the thing (reason) for which I hit him.'

b) mí lík wènè á mò kí
 1sg hit 3sg for thing DEM

'I hit him for that thing (reason).'

In sentences where the head noun is animate and the subject of the main clause, it is often reiterated following the relative clause in pronominal form. In examples (447) and (449) reproduced here, the pronouns *à* '3sg' and *wâ* '3pl' are resumptive pronouns for *kóé* 'woman' and *ébéí* 'children.'⁵⁶

(447) kóé ká mí há nè kpòó à ná àó
 woman REL 1sg give PRO meat 3sg COP friend

bòn

1sgPOSS:alien

'The woman to whom I gave meat, she is my friend.'

⁵⁶ Not all clauses use a resumptive pronoun. It seems to be optional and used for clarity.

békóé kà dúŋ nè ðòká-zàrà ná àó bòn
 girl REL stay:PR have block-ear COP friend
 1sgPOSS:alien

'The girl who is deaf (lit. remains having blocked ears) is my friend.'

- (449) é-béí kà mí dé nè sàkà wâ wór nú
 PL-child REL 1sg do PRO game 3pl speak language
- bú-í ná
 white-person NEG
'The children with whom I play, they do not speak French.'

3.7.7.4 Locative relative clauses

Locative relative clauses code the presence of the relativized element in one of two ways. When the head noun is the subject of the main clause and the location of the relative clause, gap strategy is used, see example (451).

- (451) tùà kà mí lá nè bú-à
 house REL 1sg sleep have white-NOM
'The house where I live is white (lit. has whiteness).'

The locative relative clause uses a pronoun retention strategy when the head noun is not the subject of the main clause. In example (452) the head noun is the locative of the main clause and the relative clause contains a distal demonstrative pronoun which follows the copular locative.

- (454) lér kà zí pèr-à nú nè sǎŋ gér
 hour REL fly wipe-PAST mouth 3sgPOSS now neck
- zí 6èrkàdā
 fly snap:PAST
'At the moment (lit. hour that) fly wiped his mouth, his neck snapped.'

3.7.7.6 Summary

Relative clauses in Mbódòmò may have relativized elements that are subjects, objects, indirect objects or oblique case roles. One of two strategies is used in relative clauses: gap strategy or pronoun retention strategy. Gap is used predominately in subject relative clauses, gap or pronoun retention is used predominately in direct object or locative relative clauses and pronoun retention is always used in the other oblique relative clauses, except for temporal relative clauses, which tend to employ the gap strategy. This can be summarized as shown in table 26:

Table 26. Relative clause coding strategies

| Subj | D.O./LOC | I.O./Oblique | TEMP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| [+ gap] | [+/- gap] | [- gap] | [+ gap] |
| [- PnRet] | [+/- PnRet] | [+ PnRet] | [- PnRet] |

3.8 Pragmatically marked structures

Pragmatics relate the content of the message to the context of the message. It takes into account the general knowledge and presuppositions held by the hearer. In the process of communication, the speaker is less likely to place as much attention on known or presupposed information as on new or unexpected information. Pragmatically marked structures are devices by which the speaker focuses attention on those aspects of the message deemed important. Among these

devices are strategies to facilitate the identification and reference of participants (discussed in chapter 4). Also important is the representation of topicality (the degree to which the participants in a discourse are crucial in the eventline of the discourse). Topicality is calculated by the continuity of the topic in the clauses of the discourse (Givón 1983: 8), see chapter 4. Finally, contrastive focus is a pragmatically marked structure that contradicts the presupposition of the hearer. Contrastive focus may have a scope that encompasses the truth value of the entire clause or a scope limited to a constituent of the clause (Payne 1997: 268).

3.8.1 Contrastive focus

Mbódòmò marks contrastive focus by the copula *ná*, which functions as a focus marker in clauses that contain a full, non-copular verb. *ná* may mark a noun phrase, verb or a complement clause. When *ná* precedes a noun phrase or a complement clause, that constituent is being emphasized. When *ná* precedes the verb, the scope of the focus is the truth value of the entire clause. In all the examples I have seen so far, the word order remains the same in focused clauses as in non-focused clauses.

When the focus marker occurs before the direct object, the emphasis is on the object of the action. It is the object, being set up as the contradiction to the tacit presupposition of hearer. See examples (455) and (456) in comparison with example (457) which is not marked for focus. Example (458) illustrates the use of *ná* as a copula in non-focused clauses, see section 3.3.1.

- (455) à nzók ná gók
 3sgTOP see FOC serpent
 *'She sees **a serpent**'*

- (456) wâ kòkrì só ná Sò
 3pl pray PERF FOC God
 *'They had prayed **to God**'*

- (457) wâ kòkrì só Sò
 3pl pray PERF God
 'They had prayed to God.'

- (458) àsé wílí kè ná gbà gók
 CONJ man DEM COP big serpent
 'But this man is a big serpent.'

The copula *ná* may also mark nominalized complement clauses (see section 3.7.6.4) as focused. The complement clause functions as the object of the main verb in examples (459) and (460). The verb of the complement clause is nominalized and is marked for focus in the same way as a noun phrase is marked.

- (459) wâ kùtìkì-ì ná dé-à wànzà
 3pl start-PAST FOC do-NOM sex
 *'They started **love-making**.'*

- (460) wènè nzók ná gí-à zìgà
 3sg see:PR FOC prepare-NOM fufu
 *'He watches **fufu-making**.'*

The focus marker may also occur before the subject of a clause, see examples (461) to (463). The focus in this construction is on the subject. This

construction is commonly used in response to a question, see examples (464), (465) and (466).

- (461) *ná wàn-lé n̄ŋ zìgà kè.*
 FOC chief-village eat fufu DEM
'The chief eats fufu there.'

- (462) *ná śnsí mè kà sò há*
 FOC chance 2sgPOSS:alien REL God give:PR
há mé
 BEN 2sg
'(It's) your chance that God gives to you...'

- (463) *kùàrà fè-à, ná tòlò gbé é*
 chicken die-PAST FOC dog kill ImPN
'The chicken died, the dog killed it.'

The copula *ná* is used in certain content questions. The copula is followed by a question word and is usually fronted (see section 3.7.2). The response to these questions is normally *ná* followed by a noun phrase or clause, as shown in examples (464) to (467). Givón (1990: 714-5) sees a close syntactic and semantic correlation between content questions and contrastive focus.

- (464) a) *ná gè śŋ sáŋ é*
 FOC what season now INT
'What is the season now?'
- b) *ná wé-bèlè*
 FOC fire-savanna
'(It is) dry season.'

- (465) a) ná ò ɲóŋ zìgà kí é
 FOC who eat fufu DEM INT
 'Who is eating fufu there?'
- b) ná àó bòŋ ɲóŋ zìgà kè.
 FOC friend 1sgPOSS:alien eat:PR fufu DEM
 '(It is) my friend (who) eats fufu there.'
- (466) a) wà mùá ná ò
 3pl 3pl:REFL FOC who
 'Them, who (are) they?'
- b) ná wàn-lé nè é-kóé
 FOC chief-village PREP PL-wife
 '(It is) the chief and his wives.'
- (467) ná ò gón yéré kí á mè ê?
 FOC who cut lie DEM LOC 2sg INT
 'Who is telling lies there to you?'

The response pattern shown above is very common, and may be in the process of grammaticalizing as the normal response pattern, especially in conversation. In certain contexts, this response structure may be used in the same clause where a *ná* functions as a focus marker on another argument. Consider the following sentences from the story "The Squirrel and the Hyena," in example (468).

- (468) dilà kpò-à zà kò. ɓàklà á mbè á
 lion start-PAST dig hole hyena LOC behindLOC
'Lion started digging the hole. Hyena was behind to
- vèkì gásá fálá dilà kà gbò-à nè mbè.
 measure large testicle lion REL protrude-PAST PREP behind
measure Lion's large testicles that were protruding behind (him).
- kà dilà kífidí lí à nzók ná ɓàklà kà
 when lion turn eye then see:PR FOC hyena REL
When Lion turned (his) eye, (It's) Hyena, he sees who,
- pém fálá nè. dilà ák mò ndé
 regard testicle 3sgPOSS:inalien lion ask something COMP
(is) regarding his testicles. Lion asked, 'What (are you) doing,
- dè-à gè yám? ɓàklà ndé yám, ná mí pém
 do-PAST what uncle hyenaCOMP uncle FOC 1sg regard
Uncle?' Hyena responds 'Uncle, (it's) me watching for Squirrel,
- ná kóé kà wènè gbó á mí bá nè.
 FOC squirrel when 3sg exits LOC 1sg catch 3sg.
when he exits, for me to catch him.'

In the final sentence above, the copula *ná* unexpectedly occurs twice, preceding both the subject and the object of the direct quote. From the context of the story, it seems that the focus is more likely the object of the verb, (i.e. Squirrel), than the subject, since Hyena is trying to deceive the suspicious lion concerning the real object of his interest. Since this sentence is the response to a question, *ná* preceding the subject functions as the formulaic device of responses to questions rather than marking focus.

The focus marker may also modify the verb of a clause. When the verb is marked for focus, the scope of the focus is the entire clause and counters the presupposition of the truth-value of the clause (Payne 1997: 268), see examples

(469) and (470). In the text "The Zebra," from which example (469) comes, the first couple of women cross the water safely, but the third contrarily does not. The copula marking the verb marks this contradiction of the presupposition that this third woman, like the others (all of whom were equally guilty), would cross the fire-water without being burned.

- (469) lì ná dǒ-à náná wènè dǎng
 water FOC burn-PAST feet 3sgPOSS:alien badly
'The water (did) burn her feet badly.'

In the text "The Young Woman and the Serpent" from which example (470) comes, there is less of a sense of contradiction of a presupposition for one would assume that the blacksmith, from whom the girl sought help, would indeed help. However, this clause also occurs in the peak of an episode in which the girl is fleeing from the serpent and seeks refuge with a blacksmith who kills the serpent. The presence of the focus particle in this clause (and even in example (469)) may be influenced by its position in the peak episode. More research is needed in this area to fully account for the occurrences of the focus marker *ná*.

- (470) wàn-dòl-bòlò ná tò-à zù gók gbé
 man-fashion-iron FOC strike-PAST head serpent dead
'The blacksmith (did) strike the head of the serpent dead.'

3.8.2 Negation

Negation is the manner by which languages negate an assertion held. Negation expresses that some state or event is negated. There are two common types of negation: clausal negation and constituent negation (Payne 1997: 282). The difference between these is in their scope. Clausal negation applies to the

entire proposition of the clause rather than to a particular constituent of the clause (Payne 1985: 198). Constituent negation negates only a particular constituent of the clause.

Negation in Mbóðòmò is encoded by the invariant negative particle *ná*. It always occurs as the final element of a negative clause whether that clause is simple or complex, see examples (471) and (472).

- (471) kóé jòŋ-à kpòó ná
 woman eat-PAST meat NEG
 'The woman didn't eat the meat.'

- (472) gìmà kà wènè mbér yí nzél ná
 song REL 3sg sings people hear NEG
 'The song that she sings, no one can hear (it).'

Depending on the type of clause being negated, there are other negation strategies that are used in conjunction with the negative particle *ná*. In declarative clauses that state a negation of some proposition rather than a negation of the existence of some entity, only the negative particle is used, as seen in the above examples and in examples (473) to (475).

- (473) wílí fè-à
 man die-PAST
 'The man died.'
- wílí fè-à ná
 man die-PAST NEG
 'The man didn't die.'

- (474) élé lák-á
 1pl leave-PAST
'We left.'

élé lák-á ná
 1pl leave-PAST NEG
'We didn't leave.'

- (475) béŋ dè-à sàkà
 child do-PAST game
'The child played a game.'

béŋ dè-à sàkà ná
 child do-PAST game NEG
'The child didn't play a game.'

Predicate nominal and other copular constructions add the prefix *zí-* to the copula as well as adding the negative particle clause finally, see examples (476) to (478).

- (476) wílí ná wàn-zú
 man COP chief-steal
'The man is a thief.'

wílí zí-ná wàn-zú ná
 man NEG-COP chief-steal NEG
'The man isn't a thief.'

- (477) béŋ nè yàrà
 child COP bed
'The baby has a bed.'

béŋ zí-nè yàrà ná
 baby NEG-COP bed NEG
'The baby doesn't have a bed.'

- (478) kóé á hò
 woman COP field
 'The woman is in the field.'
- kóé zí-á hò ná
 woman NEG-COP field NEG
 'The woman isn't in the field.'

As there is a strategy for expressing the existence of some entity (section 3.3.2), there is also a strategy for expressing the non-existence of an entity. The negation of existence is similar to the negation of the predicate nominal construction, see example (479).

- (479) kpòó-áŋ
 meat-exist
 'There is meat.'
- kpòó zí-ná
 meat NEG-COP
 'There isn't any meat.'

3.8.3 Imperatives

Imperative structures concern "verbal acts through which the speaker attempts to manipulate the non-verbal behavior of the hearer" (Givón 1990: 806). Such verbal manipulation is affected by various social and personal factors and are altered accordingly. These factors include the social status of the participants, their authority and ability to act. The higher the status of the one in comparison to the other, the stronger (or order-like) the imperative may be. The more equal the status between the two participants, the weaker (or more request-like) the imperative is likely to be. Generally speaking the stronger imperatives have a smaller structure and vice versa (Givón 1990: 806-8).

Imperative clauses in Mbóðòmò are distinguished from declarative clauses by the tonal pattern. All imperative clauses have a LHL tone pattern. This pattern overrides the inherent tone of the second person pronouns. In normal declarative clauses the first and second person pronouns have a high tone, but in the imperative, they always take a low tone. Compare example (480) to examples (481) and (482).

There are two basic degrees of imperatives used in Mbóðòmò. The strongest imperative is illustrated in examples (481) and (482).

Declarative

(480) mɛ́ ɲóŋ ɲínà
 2sg eat medicine
'You take the medicine.'

Imperatives

(481) mɛ̀ ɲóŋ
 2sg:IMP eat
'Eat!'

(482) mɛ̀ ɲóŋ ɲínà
 2sg:IMP eat medicine
'Take the medicine!'

The less manipulative imperative uses the modal *tí* 'must' and an imperative marker, *mà*. This imperative follows the same LHL imperative tonal pattern, as the high manipulative imperative, see example (483).

- (483) mề tí ɲòŋ mà ɲínà
 2sg:IMP must eat IMP medicine
'You must take the medicine!'

The negative of imperatives is similar to all negative structures in the use of the negative particle *ná*, but the negative imperative adds an imperative marker *mà*, which further distinguishes the negative imperative from the negative declarative clause, see example (484). The imperative marker is found in affirmative imperatives of lower manipulative strength, see section 3.8.2.

Declarative

- (484) mề té
 2sg come
'You come.'

Imperative

- mề tề
 2sg come
'Come!'

- mề té ná
 2sg come NEG
'You don't come.'

- mề tề mà ná
 2sg come IMP NEG
'Don't come!'

Negative imperatives, like affirmative imperatives, have two basic degrees of manipulation. Compare the declarative clauses in example (485) with the imperative clauses in examples (486) and (487).

Declarative

- (485) mề ɲóŋ ná
 2sg eat NEG
'You do not eat.'

- mề ɲóŋ zìgà ná
 2sg eat fufu NEG
'You do not eat fufu.'

Imperatives

(486) mɛ̀ ɲóŋ mà ná
 2sg:IMP eat IMP NEG
 'Do not eat!'

mɛ̀ ɲóŋ mà kìná ná
 2sg:IMP eat IMP pill NEG
 'Do not eat the pills!'

(487) mɛ̀ tí ɲòŋ mà kìná ná
 2sg:IMP must eat IMP pill NEG
 'You must not eat the pills!'

3.8.4 Interrogatives

Interrogatives are the means by which a language differentiates between assertions and requests for information. Interrogatives typically fall into two categories: yes/no questions in which the response elicited is 'yes' or 'no', and content questions which require a more in-depth response (Payne 1997: 295).

3.8.4.1 Yes/no questions

Yes/no questions are formed by adding a question marker *é* or *ndé* to the end of a declarative clause, see examples (488) to (490). There is usually a rise in the intonation of the question as opposed to a fall of intonation of declarative clauses. Yes/no questions are generally neutral in the expected response, although there may be a slight bias toward an affirmative response as is the case in example (490). In the case of questions where the presupposed answer is negative, the tag marker *ná* is used, see example (491).

- (488) kóé lèm-à mé ɲgàn é
 squirrel is.able-PAST CONJ ride INT
'Was Squirrel able to ride?'
- (489) zù6èlà sà só ndò kè tà lì ndé
 zu6ela call PERF hunt DEM with.out water INT
'Had Zubela called this hunt without water?'
- (490) mé ɲón só mbódĩ bòn é
 2sg eat PERF goat 1sgPOSS:alien INT
'Have you eaten my goat?'
- (491) kóé tà ɲgàn mé dám zàɲ-lé
 squirrel FUT mount 2sg throughout bowels-village
- á sòndè kè kà té ná?
 LOC Sunday DEM REL come NEG:INT
'Squirrel will not ride you throughout the village this coming Sunday, will he?'

3.8.4.2 Content questions

Content questions are used when some aspect of a proposition is unknown. That unknown element is the focus of the question (Givón 1990). In Mbódòmò, the types of elements that may be in focus in a content question are subjects (Who went to the store?), objects (What was bought?), locations (Where did he go?), manners (How did he go?), times (When did he go?), reasons (Why did he go?) or possessor (Whose is it?).

Mbódòmò content questions end in one of three question particles: *é* the generic question marker, *gè* 'what' or *yò* 'where'. The question markers *é* and *yò* 'where' occur only in the last position of the clause.

Questions focusing on subjects use the question words *ò* ‘who’ or *gè* ‘what’ following the contrastive focus marker, the copula *ná* (see section 3.8.1. on contrastive focus). See examples (492) to (494).

(492) a) *ná* *ò* *gón* *yéré* *kí* *há* *mé* *é*
 FOC who cut lie DEM PREP 2sg INT
 ‘Who tells you that lie?’

b) *ná* *yí* *kè* *kà* *gón* *yéré* *kí* *há*
 FOC people DEM REL cut lie DEM BEN

 mé
 2sg
 ‘(It’s) these people who tell you that lie!’

(493) a) *ná* *gè* *yí* *kà* *ńón* *zìgà* *kí* *é*
 FOC what people REL eat fufu DEM INT
 ‘What people are they who are eating fufu (over) there?’

b) *ná* *yí* *mé* *Tòngò* *kà* *ńón* *zìgà* *kí*
 FOC people POSS Tongo REL eat fufu DEM
 ‘(It’s) people of Tongo who eat fufu over there.’

(494) a) *ná* *gè* *sín* *sàn* *é*
 FOC what season now INT
 ‘What season is it now?’

b) *ná* *sín* *kóró*
 FOC season rain
 ‘(It’s) rainy season’

Content questions focusing on objects use the question word *gè* ‘what’ which may occur at the end of the clause as seen in examples (495) and (496). Sometimes the question focusing on the object may end with the interrogative *ndé* following the question word *gè* ‘what’ as seen in example (497).

(495) a) éné 6ó ná gè
 2pl say COP what
 'What are you saying?'

b) éné 6ó yéré
 2pl say lies
 'They tell lies.' or *'They are chatting (idiomatic).'*

(496) a) yí ɲgí nó ná gè
 people DEM drink COP what
 'What are those people (over there) drinking?'

b) yí ɲgí nó kpàtà
 people DEM drink corn.beer
 'Those people (over there) drink corn beer.'

(497) a) élé tà dé gè ndé
 1pl FUT do what INT
 'What will we do?'

b) élé tà dé sàkà bàlòn
 1pl FUT do game ball
 'We will play soccer (lit. do game ball).'

gè also may precede the object being questioned as is seen in examples (498) and (499).

(498) mé dé ná gè tóm é
 2sg do FOC what work INT
 'You do what work?'

(499) mé ɲgól ná gè bé-tòló é
 2sg want FOC what small-dog INT
 'You want which puppy?'

The object of a preposition may also be focused in a question, see example (500).

- (500) mé té né gè dúk é
 2sg come PREP what tribe INT
'You come from what tribe?'

Questions focused on location are encoded by the question word *yò* 'where' which always occurs at the end of the clause, see (501) to (503).

- (501) a) éné dé-á sàkà bàlòn á yò
 2pl do-PAST game ball LOC where
'Where do you play ball? (e.g., soccer)'

- b) élé dé-á sàkà bàlòn á Mbélémbèkè
 1pl do-PAST game ball LOC Mbelembeke
'We play ball (soccer) at Mbelembeke.'

- (502) a) lùmò á yò
 market COP where
'Where is the market?'

- b) lùmò á gàrà mé wàn-lé
 market COP shelterPOSS chief-village
'The market is at the chief's shelter.'

- (503) a) tòló kè nè-à á yò
 dog DEM go-PAST LOC where
'Where is that dog going?'

- b) tòló kè nè-à á hò
 dog DEM go-PAST LOC farm
'This dog went to the farm.'

Questions focusing on manner are similar to questions focusing on objects in structure. Both forms use the question word *gè* ‘what’ to request the information desired, see example (504).

- (504) a) *éné* *ló* *kà* *tùà* *gè*
 2pl construct HAB house what
 ‘How do you construct a house?’
- b) *élé* *ló* *kà* *tùà* *nè* *mbótógó*
 1pl construct HAB house PREP mud
 ‘We construct houses with mud.’

Questions focused on time are formed by the question word *gósè* ‘when’ or by the phrase *gè tám é* ‘what time INT,’ see examples (505) and (506).

- (505) a) *ào* *mè* *tà* *pél* *gósè*
 friend 2sgPOSS:alien FUT return when
 ‘When does your friend return?’
- b) *ào* *bòn* *tà* *pél* *nè* *sídí*
 friend 1sgPOSS:alien FUT return PREP tomorrow
 ‘My friend will return tomorrow.’
- (506) a) *éné* *ńón* *kà* *zìgà* *á* *gè* *tám* *é*
 2pl eat HAB fufu LOC what time INT
 ‘You usually eat fufu at what time?’
- b) *élé* *ńón* *kà* *zìgà* *nè* *mbólón-zè*
 1pl eat HAB fufu PREP evening-night
 ‘We usually eat fufu in the evening.’

Reason questions use the question word *wén-gè* ‘because what’ at the beginning of the question and the generic question marker *é* at the end, see examples (507) and (508).

- (507) a) *wén-gè* *mé* *zú-á* *mbòlì*
 because-what 2sg steal-PAST money

bòŋ *é*
 1sgPOSS:alien INT
 ‘Why did you steal my money?’

- b) *mé* *zú-á* *mbòlì* *bòŋ*
 2sg steal-PAST money 1sgPOSS:alien
 ‘You stole my money.’

- (508) a) *wén-gè* *tòló* *kè* *nè-à* *á* *hò*
 because-what dog DEM go-PAST LOC field

híné *yí* *é*
 PREP people INT
 ‘Why did that dog go to the fields with the people?’

- b) *tòló* *kè* *nè-à* *á* *hò* *híné* *yí*
 dog DEM go-PAST LOC farm PREP people
 ‘That dog went to the farm with the people.’

Questions focused on the possessor are formed by the question word *ò* ‘who’ followed by the alienable possessive marker *mé*, see examples (509) and (510). The copula *ná* functions here as a focus marker, not as a copula. Possessive constructions use the copula *nè*, as is shown in example (509 c).

- (509) a) tùà kè ná mé ò
 house DEM FOC POSS who
 'Whose house is that? (lit. That house is possessed (by) who).'
- b) tùà mé wàn-lé
 house POSS chief-village
 'house of the chief.'
- c) wàn-lé nè tùà kè
 chief-village COP house DEM
 'The chief has this house.'
- (510) tòló kí ná mé ò kà zù kpòó kè é
 dog DEM FOC POSS who REL steal meat DEM INT
 'Whose dog is that who steals that meat?'

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the Mbódòmò grammar covering the grammatical categories, their characteristics and their relations in the clause. Various questions pertaining to verb syntax, specifically relating to tense and aspect of the verb are addressed, in particular the concept of markedness. Markedness plays an important role in the tense and aspect systems of Mbódòmò, which has both marked and unmarked tenses and aspects. The unmarked tense and the unmarked aspect are completely unspecified for the feature in question, rather than signaling the lack of the feature. These features are relevant in the analysis of the narrative in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

TEXT ANALYSIS

This chapter introduces a couple of topics brought up in the previous chapter pertaining to the discourse features of various forms, specifically the phenomenon of two genderless third person singular pronouns and their functions (section 3.1.1.4), and the roles of the various past tenses (section 3.5). Of particular interest is the role of the simple past tense, which is unmarked for aspect, in the narrative.

4.1 Participant reference

In the Mbódòmò narrative, a distinction is drawn between the central participant around whom the story is told; non-central, but major participants such as the antagonist; and minor participants whose role in the story is limited to a portion of the narrative. The prototypical narrative will have a central participant, a non-central participant or antagonist and at least one minor participant who comes on the scene as the conflict builds towards the peak.

There are exceptions to the normal participant rankings mentioned above, however. In certain short narratives, there is no one central participant. This is exemplified in the series of short narratives about “Fly and Toad” which have the same basic plot and outcome (Fly snaps his neck and Toad bursts his belly laughing). In these stories, Fly and Toad are equally central, and are the only participants in the narrative. The story is built around a prop, which is the thing

used to carry out the action, and in this case, the thing that causes Fly to snap his neck.⁵⁸

In the more prototypical narrative structure, the central, non-central and minor participants are differentiated by several discourse devices in the narrative. These discourse devices include the use of a formulaic discourse-initial presentation of the central participant as opposed to non-formulaic discourse internal presentations of non-central and minor participants (sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2), the use of the topic third person singular pronoun *à* for central participants and the non-topic pronoun *wènè* for all other participants (section 4.1.3), and the use of a proper name opposed to common nouns to distinguish between the central participant and other participants (section 4.1.4).

4.1.1 Discourse-initial presentation of central participant

The central participant of a discourse is always introduced in the first sentence of the discourse. When more than one participant is mentioned in the discourse-initial sentence, other means of differentiating the central from non-central participants is used.

The form of the discourse-initial presentative sentence is rigidly fixed. It consists of the verb *dùhú* ‘sit, stay, remain’ in the past tense, an inversion of the word order with the verb fronted, an optional indefinite article *òh*, as in examples (512) and (513), and an optional juxtaposed descriptive clause, as in examples (512) and (513) also. This juxtaposed clause may contain a relative clause, as in example (513).

⁵⁸ Another example of the same genre of narrative is “Big-head, Fat-belly and Skinny-foot,” a series of narratives about three friends (or brothers depending on the story) who come to their ends as a result of their physical attributes as portrayed by their names.

- (511) dùŋ-ú nè gásá hòr nè bé hòr.
 stay-PAST CONJ big in-law CONJ small in-law
'There was a mother-in-law and a son in-law.'
- (512) dùŋ-ú òŋ bé-kóé dikà náŋ
 stay-PAST certain young-woman since mother
- wậ 6èl-à nè wènè, à tí
 3sgPOSS:alien deliver-PAST PREP 3sg 3sgTOP:IMP must
- sì mà wílí 6é ná
 marry EMP man since NEG
'There was a certain young woman, since her mother gave birth to her, she had never married a man.'
- (513) dùŋ-ú òŋ wílí ndé⁵⁹ mbádĩmbaŋ tòŋ
 stay-PAST certain man COMP mbađĩmbaŋ work
- wậ kà kèk-á wèn á wènè á
 3sgPOSS REL search-PAST argument PREP 3sg PREP
- bí tùmbò
 fight fight
'There was a certain man named (lit. that) Mbađĩmbaŋ, his work that of picking fights with others'

The presentative verb *dùŋú* is invariant and has lost some of its original meaning. In the presentative constructions, it simply expresses existence, although it is a fully inflectional verb in non-presentative independent clauses, see examples (514) to (516).

⁵⁹ The complementizer *ndé* is often used to introduce the name of a person in discourse.

(514) mè dúŋ nù á kè
 2sg:IMP sit ground LOC here
 'Sit down here!'

(515) Dàŋmò dùŋ-ù á lé
 Dàŋmò stay-PAST LOC village
 'Dàŋmò stayed in the village.'

(516) Marie tà dúŋ á kè
 Marie FUT stay LOC here
 'Marie will stay here.'

There is little difference in structure between the use of *dùŋú* in examples (515) and (516) and its function as an auxiliary in copular constructions as mentioned above in section 3.3, examples (252) and (255).

4.1.2 Introduction of secondary participants

Secondary participants, whether they are non-central participants or minor participants, are usually introduced later in the narrative than the central participant. In the narrative “The young woman and the serpent,” the serpent, a non-central participant, is introduced in the third sentence of the narrative. The blacksmith, a minor participant of the narrative, is introduced in the nineteenth sentence, near an episodic peak.

There is no syntactic means of distinguishing non-central participants and minor participants; however, this distinction is determined by persistence of the participant over the course of the narrative. Minor participants tend to be relevant in the storyline briefly, while non-central participants may be relevant in most or all of the narrative. All secondary participants are introduced in similar ways. They may be introduced by an optional adverb or adverbial phrase connector, and

an optional semantically bleached verb. Secondary participants, like central participants, may be introduced with an optional indefinite article *òŋ*. Example (517) illustrates the introduction of a new participant by a verb phrase connector with a semantically bleached verb *bo* ‘say’.

- (517) à dilà 65⁶⁰ ndé é lâk, dilà nzók
 then lion say COMP LOG comes.by lion see:PR
- ná 6àklà kà zá nù
 FOC hyena REL dig ground
 ‘Then Lion comes by, (it’s) Hyena, he sees, who is digging a hole.’

Sometimes a new participant is introduced using none of the above indicators as seen in example (518).

- (518) kè wâ ndé é tòmm wílí kùàrà.
 and.then 3pl COMP LOG send male chicken
 ‘And then they said that they (would) send the rooster.’

The existential verb *dùŋú* and inverted word order is never found in the introduction of a participant after the first sentence.

4.1.3 Third person pronouns and participant ranking

Mbódòmò has two third person singular pronouns that may refer to either gender, *à* and *wènè* (see section 3.1.1.4). In the narrative, the central participant is differentiated from all other participants by the use of the third person singular

⁶⁰Semantically bleached verb introducer, which does not contribute any semantic meaning to the clause.

pronoun *à*. Only one participant in each text is referred to by the pronoun *à*. Consider examples (519) and (520) in reference to example (512) above.

- (519) wílí kè tè-à, à sèn-à kàgó
 man DEM come-PAST 3sgTOP refuse-PAST like.that
'This man came, she refused (him) absolutely.'

- (520) kà bé-kóé kè pí lí, à nzók ná
 when young-woman DEM throw eye 3sgTOP see FOC
 gók
 serpent
'When this young woman glances, (lit. throws the eye), a serpent, she sees.'

In the same way, in the narrative “The zebra,” the central participant is the hunter who kills a zebra to feed his family. The topical pronoun *à* is used in reference to him alone in the narrative, see example (521).

- (521) kà wènè mà né-à mé ná nzók kpòó mbòngá
 when 3sg SEQ go-PAST PURP FOC see meat zebra
 à kpà-à ndé kpòó fòn-à sék
 3sgTOP find-PAST COMP meat remain-PAST little
'When he went to see the zebra meat, he found that little meat remained.'

The central participant of the narrative does not need to be a sympathetic character or even the participant that succeeds in the end. Many Mbóðmò tales concern a character named *Tò* ‘spider’ who is the trickster or the fool. In the narrative “Mbádímbán,” the central participant is the title character who is a man who thrives on fighting others. He is represented as a disgusting character in the versions of this narrative found in Gbaya Yaayuwée, a language closely related to

Mbódòmò (Noss 1988). That Mbádĩmbáŋ is the central participant, even over Tò, is evidenced by the introduction of Mbádĩmbáŋ in the discourse-initial sentence and by the use of the topic pronoun in reference to him, see example (522).

- (522) Mbádĩmbáŋ kùr-ù tèt-à á lé mé
 Mbadĩmbaŋ rise-PAST come-PAST LOC village POSS
- tò nè mbóđĩ hò-â wâ á
 To with goat arrive-PAST:NOM 3sgPOSS:alien LOC
- lé mé tò, à kpò-à 6ò-à...
 village POSS To 3sgTOP start-PAST say-PAST
- 'Mbadĩmbaŋ got up and came to To's village with his goat. At his arrival at To's village, he started to say...'*

However, while the pronoun *à* is used only for the central participant of the narrative, the central participant is not referred to only by the pronoun *à*. The central participant may also be referred to by full noun phrases, proper names, the pronoun *wènè* (see example (521) above), and by null reference, as can all other participants of the narrative.

4.1.4 Proper names vs. common nouns in participant ranking

In certain narratives, the topic pronoun strategy of differentiating between central and non-central participants is not in evidence. In the text “Zùbèlà” the central participant, the title character, is distinguished from the secondary participants by the use of the proper name for the central participant and common nouns or descriptive noun phrases for all other participants. For the majority of the text, the friends of Zùbèlà who go hunting with him are referred to as a group (examples (523) and (524)), but in the final episode, one person of this group

stands out. Even so he is referred to by the non-topic pronoun *wènè* and by the noun phrase, *àó mé zùbèlà* ‘the friend of Zubela,’ see example (525).

- (523) dùk fét hìn ná àká zùbèlà ndé...
 tribe all chase FOC ask Zubela COMP
‘All the tribes chase and ask Zubela that...’

- (524) é-yí ndògò má gbè wâ fét
 PL-people DEM:PL PFV kill 3pl all
‘Those people killed all of them (i.e. animals that lived in that savanna).’

- (525) wâ má nè á zàṅ gbára, àó mé zùbèlà
 3pl PFV go LOC bowels savanna friend POSS Zubela

kè má pì wèé á gbára
 DEM PFV throw fire LOC savanna
‘They went into the heart of the savanna, this friend of Zubela set fire to the savanna.’⁶¹

In summary, distinguishing the central participant and all other participants is important in Mbóðòmò narrative, and as a result there are several different methods of making the distinction. The most common means is by introducing the central participant in the initial sentence of the discourse and by the use of the topic pronoun in reference to the central participant. Another method of differentiating the central participant from other participants is the use of a proper name for the central participant and descriptive noun phrases for all other participants. However, some narrative genres do not have a single central

⁶¹ Setting fire to the savanna is a common way of hunting. The hunters then position themselves to intercept the animals fleeing from the fire.

participant. In these narratives, there is no distinction made between the participants.

4.2 The role of tense and aspect in narrative

As mentioned in section 3.5, Mbódòmò has a past perfective structure consisting of the auxiliary *má* preceding the verb root, and a simple past structure consisting of the verb with the suffix *-a* which is unmarked for aspect. Furthermore, the verb stem, unspecified for tense, has a present sense when found as the main verb of an independent clause (section 3.5.1). These three verb types make up the majority of independent clause verbs in narrative.⁶² Since these are the most common tense/aspects used in narrative, I will discuss the roles that they have in narrative structure. The text primarily used is the folktale “The young woman and the serpent” recounted to and recorded by Bagoutou Djembélé Sylvain in the Mbódòmò village of Gandima Tongo in January 1996 (see appendix).

4.2.1 Summary of the narrative

The narrative “The young woman and the serpent” is divided into a stage, which establishes the character of the central participant, and three episodes. The conflict augments with each episode peak.

In the first episode, the young woman, who has refused all previous suitors, is courted by a big serpent who has transformed himself into a man. After their marriage, on the way to his house, he leaves her on the road. The first episode

⁶² In the narrative “The young woman and the serpent” these verb types make up 79% of the independent verbs found in the narrative (serial verbs and chaining verbs were not included in the count).

peak occurs when he returns in his serpent form and his new wife sees his true form for the first time.

The second episode begins with the young woman fleeing from the serpent. She is then caught and forced to accompany the serpent, her husband, home. Later, she sees her chance and runs away, but the serpent chases her. This time, however, she finds refuge at the place of a blacksmith, to whom she relates her story. The second episode peak occurs when the snake enters the blacksmith's home and is killed by the blacksmith.

In the third episode, which is also the peak of the narrative, the blacksmith gives the meat of the serpent to the woman to eat. However, he strongly warns her not to take away with her any bone from the serpent. After she eats, she disregards the advice taking and tying a bone in her wrapped skirt and leaves. In the peak of the third episode, the woman stops along the road to look at the bone she has taken away with her. Upon untying her wrapped skirt, she finds not a bone but a baby serpent. She takes flight again with the serpent in pursuit, but as she approaches her father's village, the serpent increases in size. At the denouement, as the young woman enters the village, the serpent, which has regrown to full size, catches her and eats her.

The narrative ends with a moral and admonition to other young women should they show bad judgement in not listening to the good counsel of their elders in choosing a mate.

4.2.2 Tense and aspect in the narrative

The prototypical narrative consists of a stage, various episodes increasing in tension to a peak, a denouement, a moral and a formulaic closure. The setting

establishes the situation of the story and the more important participants. The episodes relate the storyline and the build up of suspense. There may be several episodes, each with its own peak, building up to the main peak of the story. The denouement resolves the suspense and the moral recounts the lesson to be learned by the hearing of the story.

The narrative peak is distinguished from the storyline by certain formal structures. As will be discussed below the tense/aspect often changes in the peak. Furthermore, the contrastive marker *ná* occurs more frequently in the peak (see section 3.8.1, in particular example (470)). Word order variation is also typically found in the peak episode. The object is often fronted as is seen in examples (526) and (527).

- (526) *gìmà kà wènè mbér yí nzél ná*
 song REL 3sg sing:PR people hear NEG
'The song that she sang, no one heard (it).'

- (527) *kpòó mbòngá kè wâ má jòn*
 meat zebra DEM 3pl PFV eat
'This zebra meat they ate.'

Another typical peak structure is the nominalized verb phrase (section 3.7.3.3) which occurs before an independent clause. Nominalized verb phrases repeat what has happened in the preceding clause before adding new information, effectively slowing down the pace of the narrative and building tension, see example (528).

- (528) *bùr-ú-à wà, à nzók ná*
 untie-PAST-NOM 3sgPOSS:alien 3sgTOP see FOC
bé gók
 small serpent
 '(At) her untying, she sees a baby serpent.'

The tense/aspect used in the main clause in narrative differs depending on the section of the narrative in which it is found. The past perfective occurs only in the storyline of the episodes. It never occurs in dependent clauses, in background information or in the peak. Examples (529) to (531) illustrate the usage of the past perfective in the storyline.⁶³ In verb series and verb chains, only the first verb is marked for tense (sections 3.7.4 and 3.7.5).

- (529) *bé-kóé kè má dè náǵá á yù*
 young-woman DEM PFV abandon feet LOC flight
 'This young woman abandoned her feet in flight.'
- (530) *gók má hìn wènè gó nè bâ*
 serpent PFV chase 3sg like.that CONJ catch
 'The serpent chased her like that and caught (her).'
- (531) *wà má làk sí né á ɲgò wílí kè*
 3pl PFV leave return go LOC place man DEM
 'The left to return, going to this man's place.'

The simple past tense occurs in the main clause predominately in the setting. It also shows up in preposed and postposed dependent clauses elsewhere in the narrative. Its use is primarily background, see examples (532) and (533).

⁶³ These examples are consecutive clauses in the narrative occurring in the second episode, see appendix.

- (532) dùŋ-ú òŋ bé-kóé dikà náŋ
 sit-PAST certain young-woman since mother

wà bèl-à nè wènè...
 3sgPOSS:alien bear-PAST with 3sg
'There was a young woman (who) since her mother bore her...'

- (533) kà wílí té à sèn-à
 when man come 3sgTOP refuse-PAST
'When a man came, she refused (him).'

The simple past is not limited to background, however; it may also occur in the episode peak, as is seen in examples (534) and (535).

- (534) hò-â mé gók, wàn-dòl-bòlò ná
 arrive-PAST:NOM POSS serpent chief-fashion-iron FOC

tò-à zù gók gbé
 strike-PAST head serpent kill
'(At) arrival of the serpent, the blacksmith struck the serpent's head, killing (him).'

- (535) hò-â⁶⁴ wâ á dóló, à
 arrive-PAST:NOM 3sgPOSS:alien LOC road 3sgTOP

bùr-ù gòè
 untie-PAST wrap
'(At) her arrival at the road, she untied (her) wrapped skirt...'

⁶⁴ Nominalized verbs occur frequently in preposed clauses in the peak. In the main peak of the narrative, virtually every sentence starts with a nominalized verb clause, relating events that occurred previously. (e.g., At her arrival at the road, she unties her skirt. At her untying, she sees a baby serpent.)

The verb unmarked for tense, which has a present sense when found as the main verb of an independent clause, also occurs in the peak, see examples (536) and (537), or very near the peak, see example (538). In all occasions where the unmarked verb occurs outside of the peak, it occurs adjacent to the peak.

- (536) *kà bé-kóé kè pí lí, à nzók ná*
 when young-woman DEM throw eye 3sgTOP see FOC
gók
 serpent
‘When this young woman glances (lit. throws the eye), a serpent, she sees.’

- (537) *bùr-ú-à wâ, à nzók ná*
 untie-PAST-NOM 3sgPOSS:alien 3sgTOP see:PR FOC
bé gók
 small serpent
‘(At) her untying, a baby serpent, she sees.’

- (538) *à wènè tề 6ó á kóé ndé...*
 but 3sg come say LOC woman COMP
‘But he comes saying to the woman that...’

Other, less commonly used tenses may occur in the storyline or as background, but not in the peak. These other verb forms, include the copulas, the future tense, the past perfect and the imperative, occur in direct and indirect discourse within the narrative. The complementizer *ndé*, which marks discourse in the narrative, also occurs in this position when the verb of communication is omitted.

In general, the past perfective is the tense used in the storyline of the narrative. The simple past is used in relating of background information and

sometimes in the peak. The unmarked tense is predominately used in the peak but does occur at the boundaries of the peak.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter addresses briefly certain aspects concerning the analysis of narrative in Mbóðòmò, specifically the methods of distinguishing participants in the narrative and the role of tense and aspect in the different sections of the narrative. Both participant reference and the role of tense and aspect are rich topics of which this chapter touches only the surface.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to give an overview of the phonology and grammar of Mbóðòmò, highlighting in particular certain aspects of the grammar and their functions in discourse. Since Mbóðòmò has not been previously analyzed, this overview covers a broad spectrum of topics superficially in an attempt to establish a foundation on which to build a more in-depth and detailed analysis. Certain topics are, as a result, more interesting and worthy of pursuing than others. Even the setting down on paper of the less interesting or more prosaic topics, however, can be profitable for establishing a global view of the language and for providing a launch pad for more focused analysis. It is hoped that this paper will provide a base for further research not only in Mbóðòmò, but also in the neighboring related languages that remain unanalyzed.

5.2 Areas of specific interest

Although this thesis is intentionally a broad overview of the language, in the course of the writing, certain aspects took precedence over others. Among the more interesting aspects are the morphological processes of verbs with the simple past suffix *-a*, the form and function of the various tenses and aspects found in Mbóðòmò and the roles of the two third person singular pronouns in narrative. These areas of interest are briefly reiterated below.

5.2.1 Morphological processes of verbs

Although Mbódòmò restricts the consonants that may occur in the coda of verbs on the surface level, underlying structures may consist of illegal structures. These underlying forms are syllabified eliminating illegal codas by adding vowel slots that are filled either with a default vowel or by the past tense suffix *-a* when applicable, see section 2.6. However, vowel harmony is disrupted by the vowel slots found in the surface structure. In particular the past tense suffix assimilates only to the [+high] feature of the verb and no longer to the [+back] feature.

5.2.2 Tense and aspect

Mbódòmò has marked and unmarked tenses and aspects. The two marked tenses are past and future. The unmarked tense in independent clauses has a present sense and in dependent clauses takes its tense from the context in which it is found. The two marked aspects are perfective and imperfective. The unmarked aspect may have either a perfective or imperfective sense depending on its context. The marked past perfective has been found only in narrative. It is likely that the past perfective in Mbódòmò like the French ‘passé simple’ had a wider distribution, but is now restricted to narrative only. This being the case, it would not be surprising to find the unmarked simple past taking over the role of the perfective in other contexts. Therefore the simple past having an imperfective sense in narrative background and having a perfective sense outside the context of narrative can be explained by the infusion of the unmarked simple past into domains once occupied by the marked past perfective.

5.2.3 Third person singular pronouns

Mbódòmò has two third person singular genderless pronouns. One is generic and may be used in virtually any context; the other is a topical pronoun and refers only to the most central participant of the narrative or discourse. While the topical pronoun refers only to the central participant, the central participant is not referred to only by the topical pronoun. Furthermore, the topical pronoun is more restricted in its distribution than the generic pronoun. In particular, the topical pronoun does not occur in isolated independent clauses, or in any dependent clause.

5.3 Areas for further study

One of the results of a general overview is that there are often aspects that are dealt with superficially and not fully understood or explained. This is certainly true for this thesis. Among the aspects that could bear further analysis are the following:

- Vowel harmony with the past tense suffix on verbs with illegal codas, section 2.6.2. Why doesn't the [+back] feature also assimilate as it does on verbs with open syllables or with legal codas? Why does the past tense suffix spread?
- The grammaticalization of certain serial verb constructions, section 3.7.5. In particular, what combinations of verbs occur? Do verbs of motion have a privileged status in this construction?
- Pronoun retention in the relative clause, section 3.7.7. In particular, the phenomenon which places the pronoun immediately following the verb regardless of the case of the relativized element.

More research is also needed in text analysis. This thesis only touches on the topic in relation to narrative. Other phenomena such as the role of direct and

indirect discourse and song within the narrative have not been considered at all. Much more can be said on the overall structure of the Mbóðmò narrative also. Furthermore, no other genre of discourse has been studied.

Since this paper is a broad overview, all the areas it covers merit more in-depth coverage than is provided here. It is hoped that this overview provides a beachhead for further study and analysis.

APPENDIX
MBÓDÒMÒ NARRATIVES

Bé-kóé nè góχ
 young-woman with serpent
Young woman and the serpent

1) dùŋ-ú òŋ bé-kóé dîkà nán
 sit-PAST certain young-woman since mother
'There was once a young woman who since her mother

wâ ɓèl-á nè wènè à tí sì
 3sgPOSS:alien give.birth-PAST PREP 3sg 3sgTOP must marry
*bore her had never married a man (lit. she must not marry man since
 [imperative structure in third person]).*

mà wíJí ɓé ná.
 IMP man since NEG

2) kà wíJí tɛ́, à sɛŋ-à,
 when man come 3sgTOP refuse-PAST
When a man came, she refused him.

wíJí kê tɛ̀-à, à sɛŋ-à kàgó.
 man DEM come-PAST 3sgTOP refuse-PAST like.that
This man came, she absolutely (lit. like that) refused him.

3) kê òŋ wíJí ndé gbàχ-tè-nè-pòndò nè-à
 then certain man COMP borrow-body-PREP-grass go-PAST
Then a certain man called He-who-changes-bodies-with-the-grass came

⁶⁵ These texts are written phonetically except that nasalization on vowels in the environment of a nasal consonant is not marked. The tone in particular shows dissimilation of low tones as mentioned in section 2.4.2.1.

- 4) nè sëndì tề mé tà sị nè bé-kóé
 CONJ change body CONJ FUT marry PREP young-woman

kề.

DEM

and changed his body to marry with this young woman.

- 5) pìrá gbàx-tề-nề-pòndò hò-â kề
 place borrow-body-PREP-grass arrive-PAST:NOM DEM
At (lit. place) 'He-who-changes-bodies-with-the-grass's' arrival,

bé-kóé kề ndé é dâ wíJí bòn
 young-woman DEM COMP EXCL father man 1sgPOSS:alien
this young woman exclaimed that 'Father, this is my husband

kà tề-à gô.
 REL come-PAST like.that
who is coming there!

- 6) mí tà sí ná wènề.
 1sg FUT marry FOC 3sg
Him, I will marry.

- 7) àsé wíJí kề ná gbà góχ.
 but man DEM COP big serpent.
'But this man is really a big serpent.

- 8) wâ sí màì, tề kál màì
 3pl marry:PR together CONJ gather together
They got married, then they gathered everything.

si nè nè-à á ngò gbà góχ.
 return CONJ go-PAST LOC home big serpent
and returned going to the home of the big serpent.

9) hò-â mùá á dóló wíJí kè ndé
 arrive-PAST:NOM 3plREFL COP road man DEM COMP
At their arrival on the road, this man told

wènè á kèdí é sèχ.
 3sg AUX wait LOG little
her to wait for him for a little.

10) pìrá wènè lè-à mò kè, kà bé-kóé kè
 place 3sg enter-NOM thing DEM when young-woman DEM
At the spot he entered there, then this young woman

pí Jí, à nzóχ ná góχ gà
 throw eye 3sgTOP see:PR COP serpent like.that
glances and suddenly, a serpent, she sees who

kà bó á nè ndé òlò láχ.
 REL say COP 3sg COMP LOG:IMP leave
tells her that they will go now.

11) bé-kóé kè ndé é kédí vé
 young-woman DEM COMP LOG wait LOG:REFL
This young woman said that

ná wíJí vè.
 COP man LOG:POSS:alien
it's her husband that she, herself, is waiting for.

- 12) góχ ndé òlò láχ vòlò
 serpent COMP LOG:IMP leave LOG:REFL
The serpent responded that they will go

áè ná é wíJí.
 because COP LOG man
because it is he who is her husband!

- 13) wâ bé-kóé kè má dè náṅá á
 3sgPOSS:alien young-woman DEM PFV abandon feet COP
This young woman picked up (lit. abandon) her feet and flees.

yù.
 flight

- 14) góχ má hìn wènè gó nè bâ.
 serpent PFV chase 3sg like.that CONJ catch
The serpent chased her like that and caught her.

- 15) wâ má làχ sí né á ṅgò wíJí kè.
 3pl PFV leave return go LOC home man DEM
They left and returned going to the home of this man.

- 16) wâ má là á kí.
 3pl PFV sleep COP DEM
They slept there.

- 17) kàrá kè bé-kóé kè ndé é tà sí
 later DEM young-woman DEM COMP LOG FUT return
After some time there, this young woman said that she will return

né á ɲgò bán vè.
 go LOC home father LOG:POSS:alien
going to the home of her father.

18) wènè má kpò yù.
 3sg PFV begin flight
She started to flee.

19) góχ má hìn wènè gó nè hó
 serpent PFV chase 3sg like.that CONJ arrive
The serpent chased her like that and arrived

á ɲgò ǒɲ wàn-dòl-bòlò.
 LOC home certain chief-fashion-iron
at the home of a blacksmith.

20) bé-kóé má lè, ɓó zù yù wà
 young-woman PFV enter say head flight 3sgPOSS:alien
The young woman entered, telling the whole of her story

á wàn-dòl-bòlò kè fét.
 LOC chief-fashion-iron DEM all
to the blacksmith.

21) hò-à mé góχ, wàn-dòl-bòlò ná tò-à
 arrive-NOM POSS serpent chief-fashion-iron COP strike-PAST
At the arrival of the serpent, the blacksmith struck the

zù góχ gbé.
 head serpent kill
serpent's head, killing him.

- 22) à wènè tèt ɓó á kóé kè ndé,
 then 3sg come say LOC woman DEM COMP
Then he comes and says to this young woman that

kpòó góχ kè mèt nòŋ, mèt tí
 meat serpent DEM 2sgIMP eat 2sg must
'This serpent meat, you must eat. But you must

kù mà gbàlà góχ kè láχ né ná.
 takeIMP bone serpent DEM leave PREP NEG
not take a bone of this serpent and leave with it.

- 23) bé-kóé kè má nòŋ góχ, kán òŋ gbàlà
 young-woman DEM PFV eat serpent carry certain bone
This young woman ate the serpent,

hêr á nú gòè.
 attach COP mouth wrap
and carried a bone away tied in her wrap.

- 24) làɓ-à wà á kí ndé ê
 leave-NOM 3sgPOSS:alien LOC DEM COMP LOG
At her departure from there, she said that she

sí né á ŋgò bán wà.
 rentrer go LOC home father 3sgPOSS:alien
will return to the house of her father.

- 25) hò-â wà á dóló,
 arrive-PAST:NOM 3sgPOSS:alien LOC route
At her arrival on the road,

à bùr-ù gòè ndé é nzóχ gbàlà góχ.
 3sgTOP untie-PAST wrap COMP LOG see bone serpent
she untied the wrap to see the serpent bone.

26) bùr-ú-à wà, à nzóχ ná
 untie-PAST-NOM 3sgPOSS:alien 3sgTOP see COP
At her untying, it's a small serpent she sees

bé góχ kà sìkí á nù.
 small serpent REL fall LOC ground
that falls to the ground.

27) wènè má kpò yù hórò.
 3sg PFV begin flight again
She started fleeing again.

28) kà wènè hó á sòrsí góχ mà gbán-à.
 as 3sg arrive COP ahead serpent SIM grow-PAST
As she advanced, the serpent grew.

29) wènè kà hón yù, kà wènè mà né-à á hò
 3sg REL run flight when 3sg SEQ go-PAST COP arrive
She, who was fleeing, when she arrived at the entrance

á lé, góχ kífì só gbà góχ fét.
 LOC village serpent become PERF big serpent all
of the village, the serpent had already become a big serpent again.

30) kà wènè bó ndé é lé tùà mé bán
 when 3sg say COMP LOG enter house POSS father
When she said that she is entering her father's house,

wà, góχ ná bà wènè gbè, gúr wènè
 3sgPOSS:alien serpent COP catch 3sg kill swallow 3sg
the serpent catches her, kills and swallows her whole.

nè kílíà.
 PREP whole

31) ndé mé bé-kóé kà wílí hó á ngò mé
 COMP 2sg young-woman when man arrive LOC home 2sg
Now, you, young woman, when a man arrives at your house

mé tà sì mé, ná sónsí mè kà
 CONJ FUT marry 2sg COP chance 2sgPOSS:alien REL
to marry you, it is your chance that

sò hà há mé.
 God give BEN 2sg
God has given to you.

32) á wílí kà té mé ná sèη á kè,
 but man REL come 2sg COP refuse LOC DEM
But the man that comes, you refuse him,

mé kéχ ná gènzàkà ndé zúná gàn-à mbòrà
 2sg search COP same.thing COMP girl ignore-PAST counsel
you search for the same exact thing that the girl ignored good counsel

fè-à fìyò tà zú.
 die-PAST death without head
sought dying a horrible death.

33) ndé nzégìJí tò bòn góè.
 COMP finish tale 1sgPOSS:alien like.that
That is the end of my story.

34) tò mèn é.
 tale 2sgPOSS:alien EXCL
Your story!'

tò mbòṅgá
tale zebra
The zebra story

- 1) dùṅú òṅ wíJí nè dóbá kóé.
sit-PAST certain man PREP many wife
'There once was a man who had many wives.

- 2) wâ dùṅù ndán ɓél dóbá bɛṅ.
3pl remain-PAST one give.birth many child
They had many children (lit. They were one, and bore many children).

- 3) kè hòà á òṅ tám mgbáχ
then arrive-PAST LOC certain time real
Then there came a real time of famine

nón-a-mò mé dàl nè ɛ́bɛṅ ndòkò zíná.
eat-NOM-thing CONJ raise INST PL-child DEM:PL EXIST-NEG
and food for raising those children did not exist.

- 4) wò má lè hòlò wâ.
hunger PFV enter PREP 3pl
Hunger came among them.

- 5) mò kà ɛ́kóé ndòkí tà dé zíná.
thing REL PL-wife DEM:PL FUT do EXIST-NEG
The thing that these wives could do did not exist.

- 6) wíJí kè má nɛṅ nò.
man DEM PFV walk walk
This man went walking a walk.

7) kè òŋ sóé wènè má làχ né kpá mbòŋgá.
 then one day 3sg PFV leave go find zebra
then one day he left and went to find a zebra.

8) wènè gbè-à mbòŋgá kí.
 3sg kill-PAST zebra DEM
He killed that zebra.

9) kpòó mbòŋgá kè wâ má nòŋ.
 meat zebra DEM 3pl PFV eat
This zebra meat, they ate.

10) àsê à dè-à bé zím mbòŋgá kè.
 CONJ 3sgTOP do-PAST little taboo zebra DEM
But, he put a small taboo on this zebra meat (i.e. he reserved a portion for himself alone).

11) kà mà kàrà, òŋ kóé nè-à nè ßérkìdì
 when SEQ later, certain wife come-PAST CONJ break
After a time, one of the wives went and cut off

kpòó mbòŋgá kè nòŋ.
 meat zebra DEM eat
some of this zebra meat and ate it.

12) é ßó ndé ná gùlá vè.
 LOG say COMP COP co.wife LOG:POSS
(She said to herself that) one will say that it was one of her co-wives (who did it).

13) òŋ kóé nè-à hórò nè ßérkìdì kpòó
 another wife come-PAST again CONJ break meat
Another wife also went and cut off some of this zebra meat

mbòṅgá kè nòṅ.
zebra DEM eat
and ate it.

14)é ɓó ndé ná gùlá vè.
LOG say COMP COP co.wife LOG:POSS
(She said to herself that) one will say that it was one of her co-wives (who did it).

15)kàgó dàm é-kóé ndòḂò fét.
like.that complete PL-wife DEM:PL all
Like that completes all of those wives.

16)wíJí dùṅ-ù.
man sit-PAST
The man was.

17)kà wènè mà né-à mé nà nzòχ kpòó mbòṅgá
when 3sg SEQ come-PAST CONJ FOC see meat zebra
When he went to see the zebra meat,

à kpà-à ndé kpòó ɓòn-à séχ.
3sgTOP find-PAST COMP meat remain-PAST little
he found that little remained.

18)kà wènè áχ, yí fét ná sì káfé.
when 3sg ask people all FOC marry denial
When he asked about it, The people all denied (doing it).

19)wâ má kàl màì láχ né á Jì wéè.
3pl PFV gather together leave go PREP water fire
They gathered together (and) left going to the fire river.

20) wíJí kè ndé, yí kà kú Jì,
 man DEM COMP people REL traverse water
This man said that the people who cross the water (and)

Jì híχ wènè ná, ngì ndé zí-ná wènè
 water burn 3sg NEG DEMpr COMP EXIST-NEG 3sg
the water does not burn them, it is not them

ṣón kpòó mbòṅgá kè ná.
 eat meat zebra DEM NEG
that ate this zebra meat.

21) hò-â né kí, kùtí kí
 arrive-PAST:NOM PREP DEM first
Arriving there, the first wife

kóé dè-à nú á gìmà
 wife abandon-PAST mouth LOC song
opened her mouth and sang a song:

22) mbòṅga é mbòṅgá wíJí bòn é mbòṅgá
 zebra EXCL zebra man 1sgPOSS EXCL zebra
Zebra, Oh zebra, my husband, oh zebra

é mbòṅgá mbòṅgá
 EXCL zebra zebra
Oh zebra, zebra

mí má ṣón-á silà mbòṅgá Jì kè gbé mí
 1sg SIM eat-PAST liver zebra water DEM kill 1sg
If I ate the zebra liver, this water will kill me

mbòṅgá mbòṅgá
zebra zebra
Zebra, zebra

23) mbòṅga é mbòṅgá wíJí bòn é mbòṅgá
zebra EXCL zebra man 1sgPOSS EXCL zebra
Zebra, Oh zebra, my husband, oh zebra

é mbòṅgá mbòṅgá
EXCL zebra zebra
Oh zebra, zebra

mí má nón-á sìlà mbòṅgá Jì kè gbé mí
1sg SIM eat-PAST liver zebra water DEM kill 1sg
If I ate the zebra liver, this water will kill me

mbòṅgá mbòṅgá
zebra zebra
Zebra, zebra

24) òṅ kóé má tè mbér ndán gìmà kú Jì.
another wife PFV come sing same song traverse water.
Another wife came sang the same song and traversed the water.

25) òṅ hórò má tè kà wènè ßó ndé é mbér
another again PFV come when 3sg say COMP LOG sing
Another one also came and when she said that she would sing

gìmà, gér ná sítí mò nè kùá.
song throat COP tighten thing PREP tears
the song, ther throat tightened with tears.

26)kà wènè ßó ndé é dé náǵá á Jì,
 when 3sg say COMP LOG abandon foot LOC water
When she said that she would put her foot in the water,

fólà zí-ná.
 means EXIST-NEG
means did not exist.

27)Jì ná dò-à náǵá nè dǵǵ.
 water FOC burn-PAST foot 3sgPOSS:inalien too.much
The water burned her feet badly.

28)kà wènè mà né-à á hò á sèndé
 when 3sg SIMUL go-PAST PREP arrive PREP middle
When she went to arrive in the middle of the water,

Jì, Jì má hìǵí tèt nè dǵǵ.
 water water PFV scald body 3sgPOSS:inalien too.much
the water scalded her body badly.

29)gìmà kà wènè mbér yí nzél ná.
 song REL 3sg sing people hear NEG
The song that she sang, nobody heard.

30)kàǵó fèt nè á zǵǵ-Jì.
 like.that die 3sg LOC bowels-water
Like that died she in the middle of the water.

31)ndé mé wíJí kà mè ßó ndé
 COMP 2sg man if 2sg say COMP
Now, you, man if you say that

sí kóé, m̀è sí ndán, vàχ.
 marry wife 2sg marry one two
you (will) marry a wife, marry one or two.

32) á kàl-à ǹè d́óǎ k̀è, wâ kár mà
 CONJ gather-PAST PREP many DEM:PN 3pl last SIM
But if you gather many wives, they (will) keep on (doing)

d̀è-à mìǎ́ m̀ò á zàŋ-tùà, á wâ
 do-PAST strange thing LOC bowels-house PURP 3pl
strange things in your house for they

kéχ mé gòn yéré d́é á é-nú
 search CONJ cut lie abandon LOC PL-mouth
search to tell lies and not abandoning the ways (lit. mouth)

béŋ ná.
 child NEG
of children.

33) ndé nzégìJí tò b̀òŋ ǵó è.
 COMP finish tale 1sgPOSS:alien like.that. EXCL
That is the end of my tale!

34) tò m̀è è.
 tale 2sgPOSS:alien EXCL.
Your tale!'

tò zùbèlà
 tale Zùbela
The story of Zùbela

1) dùŋ-ú zùbèlà nè dòná àó zí-ná sàá ná.
 stay-PAST zùbela CONJ many friend NEG:EXIST game NEG
'Once there was Zùbela with many friends (who) had nothing to do (lit. no game).

2) òŋ sóé, wènè má sà sàrá ndé é-áo
 certain day 3sg PFV call message COMP PL-friend
One day he sent a message that all those, his friends,

wâ ndòkí fét ndé wâ mótí màì.
 3sgPOSS:alien DEM all COMP 3pl assemble ensemble
(that) they assemble together.

3) wâ má hò nè zǎŋ nù fét, é-yí
 3pl PFV arriver PREP bowels earth all PL-people
They arrived from all over the earth, people that

mé tèt nè dònχ, é-yí mé tèt nè kàlà.
 CONJ come PREP south PL-people CONJ come PREP north
come from the south, people that come from the north,

4) wâ hò é-òŋ nè é-àdá, é-òŋ nè
 3pl arrive PL-other INSTR PL-machete PL-other INSTR
They arrive, some with machetes, others with

é-kàmbà, é-òŋ nè é-sélé, é-òŋ nè
 PL-knife PL-other INSTR PL-spear PL-other INSTR
knives, others with spears, others with

é-ngáǵì é-òŋ nè é-ndòǵò.
 PL-gun Pl-other INSTR PL-bows and arrows
guns others with bows and arrows.

- 5) nò kà zùbèlà né kě wènè nè bé dǎχ Jì
 walk REL Zùbela go DEM 3sg have small bottle water
The walk that Zùbela goes there, he has his small water bottle

wâ á bàǵà wèn gbárá kà
 3sgPOSS:alien COP shoulder because savanna REL
on his shoulder because the savanna that

wâ né á ŋǵí, Jì zí-ná.
 3pl go COP DEM water NEG-EXIST
they go (through) there water does not exist.

- 6) wènè má òsí pìrá dùŋ-né á zù dùχ fét.
 3sg PFV show place stay-PROG LOC head tribe all
He showed the place (where) staying to the head of each tribe.

- 7) kě wènè má pì wèé á bèlè.
 and.then 3sg PFV throw fire LOC savanna
And then he threw fire into the savanna

- 8) é-nám kà dùŋ só á zǎŋ bèlè kè,
 PL-animal REL stay PERF LOC bowel savanna DEM
The animals that had lived in the heart of the savanna there,

é-yí ndòǵò má gbè wâ fét.
 PL-people DEM PFV kill 3pl all
those people killed them all.

wâ má dè gbàx mé kátítí kpòó.
 3pl PFV do drying.shelf for dry meat
They made drying shelves for drying the meat.

- 9) wâ má nòṅ kpòó, kè wǒ-Jì hìn
 3pl PFV eat meat and.then hunger-water therefore
They ate the meat, and then thirst therefore,

lém ná.
 is.able NEG
is not sufficient (i.e. thirst struck).

- 10) dùx fét hìn ná àᵛà á zùᵛèlà ndé,
 tribe all therefore FOC ask-PAST LOC zubela COMP
All the tribes therefore asked Zubela that,

tò ndò kà wènè sà só kè óló kà
 but hunt REL 3sg call PERF DEM 1pl:LOG REL
but this hunt that he had called us (that)

gbè-à tén kpòó gà, á Jì mé nò-né
 kill-PAST truly meat like.that but water for drink-PROG
we truly killed a lot of (lit. like that) meat,

zí-ná kè.
 NEG-EXIST DEM
but water for drinking does not exist here.

- 11) é-béí ná fè-à kè óló tà dé gè ndé?
 PL-child FOC die-PAST DEM 1pl:LOG FUT do what INTR
The children die here, we will do what?

12) zùbèlà kífìdì-ì á wâ ndé,
 zubela respond-PAST COP 3pl COMP
Zubela responded to them that

wâ òón kà mùá ná nòŋ-à kpòó.
 3pl remain HAB 3pl:REF FOC eat-PAST meat
*they habitually stay, them, having eaten the meat.*⁶⁶

13) zùbèlà nzòɓ-à lém ná
 zubela see-PAST is.able NEG
Zubela saw that it was not possible (for them).

14) wènè má dàn tì sàŋ, mé sá Jì. wènè má kpò
 3sg PFV climb tree now for call water 3sg PFV begin
He climbed a tree now for calling water. He started to sing a song

mbèrá gìmà
 sing song

15) zùbèlà Jì-mé Jì-mé zùbèlà Jì-mé
 zubela eye-2sgPOSS eye-2sgPOSS zubela eye-2sgPOSS
Zubela your eye, your eye. Zubela your eye

zùbèlà Jì-mé Jì-mé zùbèlà Jì-mé
 zubela eye-2sgPOSS eye-2sgPOSS zubela eye-2sgPOSS
Zubela your eye, your eye. Zubela your eye

⁶⁶ The meaning of this sentence is somewhat obscure. Zubela is, I think, chastising them for remaining in a waterless savanna feasting rather than taking their game back to their own place to eat.

zùbèlà sà sọ ndò kẹ tà Jì ndè
 zubela call PERF hunt DEM without water INTR
Zubela had called this hunt without water?

zùbèlà Jì-mé zùbèlà gbìn-ì kótó kós
 zubela eye-2sgPOSS zubela break-PAST paw (noise)
Zubela your eye, Zubela broke paw, crack

zùbèlà gbìn-ì éré góṛòm
 zubela break-PAST nail (noise)
Zubela broke nail, snap

16)kà mà kárà, ná Jì sàṅ á zàṅ gbárá
 when SEQ later FOC water now LOC bowel savanna
When later, there was water now in the heart of the savanna.

Jì hóχ kà lé ná zàṅ nú é-yí kà
 water flow HAB enter FOC bowel bouche PL-people REL
The water flowed (it) enters into the mouth of the people who

sìχ sọ wǒ-Jì.
 fall PERF hunger-water
had fallen down of thirst,

17)yí fét ná dè-à ósòḵò há zùbèlà.
 people all FOC do-PAST thanks give zubela
all the people gave thanks to Zubela.

18)kẹ òṅ dùχ ndé, zùbèlà ná.
 and.then another tribe COMP zubela COP
And then another of the tribe (said) that Zubela is.

19)kà hó yàrà mòrkó, wènè á kù dùχ
 when arrive day five 3sg AUX take tribe
When five days arrive, he is taking his tribe

wâ né né á ηγò é.
 3sgPOSS:alien go go LOC place LOG:POSS
going to go to his place.

20)àsê wènè ßó ndè é wé ná zùbèlà.
 but 3sg say COMP LOG imitate FOC zubela
But he says that he (will) imitate Zubela

21)yàrà mòrkó dàamá, wâ má làχ né á ηγò
 day five complete 3pl PFV leave go LOC place
After five days pass, they left to go to place of his friend

àó wâ kà ßàndì só wènè.
 friend 3sgPOSS:alien REL invite PERF 3sg
that had invited him

22)wâ má nè á zàη gbárá àó mè zùbèlà
 3pl PFV go LOC bowel savanna friend POSS zubela
They went to the heart of the savanna, this friend of Zubela's

kè má pí wèé á gbárá.
 DEM PFV throw fire LOC savanna
threw fire into the savanna.

23)é-yí ndòḂò má gbè é-nám, dé gbàχ
 PL-people DEM PFV tuer PL-animal do shelf
Those people killed animals, made shelves

kátìtì nè kpòó tò wǒ-Jì má kpò.
 dry INSTR meat but hunger-water PFV begin
to dry the meat, but thirst began.

24)é-yí ná fè-à wǒ-Jì.
 PL-people FOC die-PAST hunger-water
The people (were) dead (with) thirst.

25)yí áχ àó mé zùbèlà mgbôr.
 people ask friend POSS zubela in.vain
The people begged the friend of Zubela in vain.

26)yí fét má sìkí wǒ-Jì.
 people all PFV fall hunger-water
All the people fall down with thirst.

27)zùbèlà nzòɛ-à lém ná.
 zubela see-PAST is.able NEG
Zubela saw that it was impossible (for them).

28)wènè má dàn tì mbér gìmà kè,
 3sg PFV climb tree sing song DEM
He climbed a tree and sang this song,

29)Jì má gbò, kpási-dì nè é-yí
 water PFV exit survive-CAUS PREP PL-people
water spouted, saving the people

kà bò só ndé fé wǒ-Jì.
 REL say PERF COMP die hunger-water
who had said that they die of thirst

30) ndé kà mē bá àó, kà mē nzóχ ndé
 COMP if 2sg catch friend REL 2sg see COMP
(Now) if you get a friend who you see that

mò kà àó mē dé lém
 thing COMP friend 2sgPOSS:alien do is.able
the thing that your friend does is not good (to)

Jí mē ná, mē dáχ-sá kó
 eye 2sgPOSS:inalien NEG 2sg pull-CAUS:PAST hand
your eye, abandon

á tě àó ngì
 LOC corps friend DEM
that friend (lit. cause to pull out the hand from the body)

31) nzégì Jí tò bòn gó è.
 finish tale 1sgPOSS:alien like.that EXCL
Like that ends my story!

32) tò mē è.
 tale 2sgPOSS:alien EXCL
Your story!'

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