CHAPTER 4
EKEGUSII TENSE MORPHOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the EkeGusii system of tense by casting it within Bantu verbal morphology. Seminal analyses of these inflectional verbal categories in the language are Whiteley (1960), Kingston (1983) and Cammenga (2002). Mention of the same is made in Ogechi (2002). However, tense aspect and mood (TAM) morphemes are subsumed under ‘tense’ in these studies, a terminological imprecision that causes confusion. One object of this chapter is to sift the three TAM categories from one another.

Perhaps the main reason for the imprecision in distinguishing TAM categories is that, EkeGusii, typical of Bantu TAM systems, is characterized by an intricate pattern of verbal inflection in which the TAM affixes are lodged. This knotty agglutinative system is further compounded by the lack of consensus as to the precise terminology for and classification of temporal, aspectual and modal phenomena in Bantu linguistics (Lindfors 2003:6). The complexity of Bantu TAM phenomena has also been noted by Dahl, who contends that it is “difficult to fit Bantu into a universal scheme” (Dahl 1985:176). Dahl explains that whereas the average number of the major TAM categories in the world’s languages is 6.5, the intra-Bantu average is 11. Coupled with terminological imprecision, this fact accounts for the descriptive discrepancies which characterize Bantuistics.

A basic definition and characterization of tense is in order at the outset. It is standard to consider TAM categories as morphologically marked phenomena. Disputing this view, Dahl (1985:22) writes that such a definition is “an unwanted delimitation of the field of inquiry” because it is possible to encode TAM periphrastically. Further, the expression of some TAM categories is a function of autosegmental features, most notably tone. Accordingly, Givón’s (2001:285) all-embracing view of, for example, tense as “the systematic coding of the relation between two points along an ordered linear dimension of time” and Comrie’s (1985) definition that tense is “the grammaticalized location in time” seem apt as they are
broad enough to include, for example, tone under morphological categories. This paves the way for the possibility of bringing into focus tonal morphemes, which phenomena have not been accorded adequate consideration in the literature. In sum, tense consists in the use of morphological categories such as verbal inflection and other strategies such as auxiliaries, particles and tone to encode information regarding the precise temporal location of an event in time.

As emerges in chapter 5, tense is intricately intertwined with aspect, the segmentation of the temporal structure of an event into appreciable phases. Payne (1997:238) refers to these as “the internal temporal shapes of events or states.”

There is considerable classificatory and terminological discordance in the literature concerning the description of such temporal information. Whereas tense seems to fix an event at a specific point on the timeline relative to speech time (S), also termed utterance time (UT), aspect is concerned with the possibility of stretching the event along the temporal continuum and the marking of its intermediate points. For Dahl (1985:24), aspect is a category that “has to do with things going on or taking place in the situation described by the sentence.” In a nutshell, although both focus on time, tense locates an event at a specific temporal point, while the concern of aspect is the internal structure of the event. Both TAM categories can be accounted for with little confoundment if this fundamental distinction is borne in mind.

In contradistinction with tense and aspect is grammatical mood, the expression of commitment or lack of it to propositional truth-value. More specifically, mood refers to the use of verb forms to indicate whether an utterance or sentence expresses, for example, a fact, opinion, condition, request, wish or an order. In this sense, mood captures the relationship of the verb with reality and speaker-intent. For this reason, it is distinguishable from the time-related categories of tense and aspect, because it is concerned with intentions or attitudes and the assessment of the degree of propositional truth. Modality is expressible in various linguistic forms in EkeGusii but to remain within the focus of this study, the discussion in this section is confined to mood insofar as it finds expression in the inflectional verbal system of the language.

That TAM categories, especially tense and aspect, sometimes cross-classify should also be borne in mind. Binnick (1991) observes that both categories are almost inextricably interwoven and linguists often get lost in the labyrinth in their attempt to
describe verbal categories. Dahl (1985:25) also admits that the distinction between tense and aspect is 'by no means clear' and that the semantics of aspect and mood is even "more elusive than that of tense." Admittedly, both linguists are in agreement that TAM boundaries are difficult to demarcate. To circumvent this conundrum, some scholars opt to treat TAM as 'tense', which handicaps the research programme. For example, by considering 'tense' as being coterminous with TAM, the existing studies of the EkeGusii TAM system (Whiteley 1960:13; Cammenga 2002:399; Ogechi 2002:65), add to a fundamental neglect of the categories of aspect and mood in the language.

Further, these studies are inadequate because they do not sufficiently foreground the linguistic, social and prosodic contexts, which come into play to determine the nuances of temporal, aspectual and modal meanings of linguistic forms. Lindfors (2003) concurs with Dahl (1985) and Besha (1989) that context determines the meanings of TAM categories. On TAM semantics, Besha contends that, for example, a tense marker constitutes two meanings, namely, the basic meaning, which is the constant meaning of the marker, and the extended meaning, which the marker derives from context. This reasoning is an exhortation to linguists to take into consideration every facet of a communicative event which can modify the sense of a linguistic form. However, other than expanding the senses of the term tense, Besha's categorization does not aid in filtering out tense from the TAM nexus in which it is lodged.

Additionally, like time adverbials and subordinate clauses, tone also encodes the temporal characteristics of events. For this reason, the tonal TAM morphemes which occur in EkeGusii deserve scrutiny. Spencer (1991:18) reports that in Chichewa, for example, tone solely distinguishes the simple and recent pasts from the past habitual and future. The occurrence of phenomena of this nature in some Bantu languages corroborates Whiteley's (1960:15) conclusion that in EkeGusii, "one of the more striking features...is the number of tenses distinguished only by tone." Accordingly, tone, by virtue of being functionally contrastive, deserves pride of place in TAM research, not only in EkeGusii but also Bantu in general. In an analysis of the Kikerebe TAM system, a Tanzanian Bantu language which Guthrie (1970) labels E24, Thornell also contends that it is "probable that tones, among other things, contribute to distinguish between individual TAM markers, which otherwise have the
same morphological shape” (Thornell 2002:22). Considering that such phenomena may be prevalent in Bantu, evidence from EkeGusii will be adduced in this section to validate the claim that tone plays an autosegmental role in the semantics of Bantu TAM.

Several theories concerning the grammaticalization of the temporal dimension of events have been propounded. For example, Jespersen (1924) held that there are three semantic notions of time, namely, past, present and future, which correspond to the three grammatical tenses termed preterite, present and future, respectively. The development of the theory of tense hitherto hinges on this three-by-three model. Using S as the deictic centre, the model views events as either preceding or following S on the linear time axis. A refinement of this model is captured in Reichenbach’s (1947) theory and subsequent work on which the current research is grounded. Although the Reichenbachian model has been criticized for its inadequacy in the analysis of the semantics of some tenses, for example, the future perfect of the past, it is adopted in the current analysis because its basic conceptualization of temporal event structure remains applicable to TAM research. For example, as will be shown in section 4, Stowell’s (1993,1995, to appear) analysis of sequence of tense (SOT) phenomena draws upon the Reichenbachian model as modified in Zagona (1990) to entrench the syntax of tense in X-bar theoretic terms.

In section 3, it will be argued that the three TAM categories in EkeGusii and Bantu in general are distinct. In other words, to show that tense is not a shorthand term for TAM, as frequently depicted in the literature, is one of the objects of this discussion. In order to cast EkeGusii tense within the general system of Bantu, an examination of some Bantu languages is pertinent. Equally important are the evolving theoretical models around which the analysis of the semantics and syntax of tense revolves.

4.2 THEORY OF TENSE

Reichenbach’s (1947) theory of tense is of persuasive authority in the interpretation of tense semantics. The Reichenbachian conceptual model recognizes three points of ‘time’ that are relevant to the analysis of tense and aspect. These are event time, reference time and speech time, hereafter E, R and S, respectively. As already noted, S refers to the moment of speech relative to which the temporal points
on the time line are located. It is this property that makes tense a deictic category. S is
distinct from, for example, E, the time when the event being described occurs. S and
E are also distinct from R, which is "the time for which, on some occasion, a claim is
made" (Klein 1992:535).

R need not be overtly expressed but where it is, an adverbial expression or a
subordinate clause may be used for its denotation. E, R and S depict events as being
sequentially located on the time scale on which the temporal relations of either
simultaneity or precedence hold. This means that, for example, two specific points
may be related to each other either by existing concurrently or by one occurring
subsequent to the other. Reichenbach explains the nature of these relations in the
interpretation of the past perfect, for example, which is considered a tense thus:

From a sentence like 'Peter had gone' we see that the time order expressed in
the tense does not concern one event, but two events, whose positions are
determined with respect to the point of speech. We shall call these time
points the point of the event and the point of reference. In the example the
point of event is the time when Peter went; the point of reference is a time
between this point and the point of speech.

(Reichenbach 1947:288)

This means that Peter's going precedes R which also precedes S. These
temporal relations may be represented as E < R < S, where < means that the point on
the left of the symbol 'precedes' the one on its right. This relation can also be
represented diagrammatically as:

E    R    S

In this way, Reichenbach's theory conveniently distinguishes and locates the
three points sequentially on the time line which helps to capture tense in the sentence
'Peter had gone.'

Similarly, on the basis of this framework, the present, past and future tenses
can be mapped on the time continuum and condensed as:

(a) Present: E, S, R.
(b) Past: E, R, S.
(c) Future: S, E, R.
In these formulae, the comma means that the 'time points' are contemporaneous while the dash means that the symbol on the left precedes the one on its right. It is upon this model that the following section draws in the discussion of the syntax and semantics of tense in EkeGusii in particular and Bantu in general while Stowell's and Zagona's approaches will be applied to SOT phenomena in section 5.

4.3 TENSE IN EKEGUSII

This section discusses the morphology of tense in EkeGusii within the context of other Bantu languages and posits that the EkeGusii tense system exhibits a PAST vs non-PAST dichotomy.

4.3.1 Bantu Past Tense

The properties of 'PAST' as a category of tense, hereafter PST, is one of the least controversial features of language (Dahl 1985). This is because the past is characterizable fairly easily. For example, Dahl notes that the past is marked morphologically crosslinguistically, often suffixally. Exceptions to such a generalization are some Bantu languages which prefer prefixal position as in, among others, Kiswahili, Kikuuyu, Kikerebe, Sesotho, Chichewa, Luganda, Oluluyia and, as will be shown in this section, EkeGusii. The Kiswahili data in (1) illustrate this phenomenon:

1 (Kiswahili)

(a) M-toto a -li -ku -l -a.
   1-child 1SM-PST-INF-eat-FV
   'The child ate.'

(b) Mbwa wa -li -ku -l -a.
   10dog 2SM-PST-INF-eat-FV
   'The dogs ate.'

(c) Ndege wa -li -ku -l -a.
   10bird 2SM-PST-INF-eat-FV
   'The birds ate.'
(d) M-toto a -li -imb -a.
1-child 2SM-PST-sing-FV
‘The child sang.’

(e) Mbwa wa -li -imb -a.
10-dog 2SM-PST-sing-FV
‘The dogs sang.’

(f) Ndege wa -li -imb-a.
10-bird 2SM-PST-sing-FV
‘The birds sang.’

Such morphological marking of tone obtain in EkeGusii in which the prototypical tense marker is /-a/- as (2) shows:

2 EkeGusii
(a) Eke-busi n -kí -á -ráágér- a.
7 -cat FOC -7SM -PST -eat -FV
‘The cat ate.’

(b) Chí-seese n -chí -á -ráágér -a.
10-dog FOC -10SM -PST -eat -FV
‘The dogs ate.’

(c) Eke-gómkóóru n -gí -á -téér -a.
7-cat FOC -7SM -PST -sing -FV
‘The crow did sang.’

(d) Chí-nyóni n -chí -á -téér -a.
10-birds FOC -5SM -PST -sing -FV
‘The birds sang.’
(e) Aba-ána m -bá -á -ráár -a.
2-child FOC -2SM -PST -sleep - FV
'The children ate.'

(f) Chí-mbóri n -chí -á -ráár -a.
10-goat FOC-10SM-PST-sleep- FV
'The goats slept.'

In conformity with Bantu verbal template morphology, slot number 4 of the simple declarative in Kiswahili is filled by the TAM /i-marker and /-a/ in EkeGusii. As already noted, tense marking in this position has also been reported in, among others, Chichewa (Spencer 1991:18, Alsina & Mchombo 1993:18), Runyambo (Rugemarila 1983:189), Kinyamwezi (Maganga & Schadeberg 1992:150) Kikerebe (Thornell 2002:131) and Chingoni (Ngonyani & Githinji 2006:34).

Dahl (1985:116) has rightly noted that “an attempt at finding the focal uses of PAST would lead one astray.” In spite of this caution, PAST can be characterized as the point on the ‘time line’ depicting an event as occurring prior to S, that is, E, R-S. In other words, using S as the viewpoint, the category PAST has past time reference as the events in (1) show. The use of /-li/ in (a), for example, denotes the fact that the event of eating occurred prior to S, hence the property of ‘past’ in the sentence.

Bantu languages exhibit scalar degrees of ‘pastness’, which means that closeness or remoteness of E from S is expressible in these languages. Some of the languages in which remoteness systems are manifested, and in which scalar marking of temporal distance from S is salient include, among others, Kamba (Whiteley and Muli 1962, Dahl 1985:122), Chichewa (Spencer 1991:18), Kikuyu (Stump 1998:28, Dahl 1985:125), Aghem (Anderson 1979:73), Zulu and Ewondo (Dahl 1985: 125).

In the recent and remote pasts, E and R are the same and both precede S. While the perfect as opposed to hodiernal or ‘today’ past seem nondistinct in some languages, the differentiation of both categories occurs in Kikuyu, Kamba and LoNkindo (Dahl 1985:137). What is often referred to in the literature as hodiernal or ‘today’, hesternal or ‘yesterday’, recent and remote pasts is, essentially indexical tense which can be symbolized as E,R_S in Reichenbach’s terms. To illustrate, in
Chichewa, the past tense markers /-ná/, /na/ and /nâ/ express the simple, the recent and the remote pasts which are distinct from each other with regard to their respective temporal proximity to or distance from S as in (3):

3 (Chichewa, Spencer 1991:18)

(a) ndi- ná- fôtokoza. (simple past)
   1SG.SUB PST explain
   ‘I explained’

(b) (Spencer 1991:18)
   ndi-na- fôtokoza. (recent past)
   1SG.SUB PST explain
   ‘I explained’

(c) (Spencer 1991:18)
   ndi- nâ- fôtokoza. (remote past)
   1SG.SUB PST explain
   ‘I explained’

In these examples, the segments /-na/ per se are not sufficient in signaling the perceptible contrasts between the three pasts, which Chichewa recognizes. These are differentiable only by tone. Spencer cogently argues that, in such cases, tone is an integral part of the tense morpheme. This means that the prefix /-na/ is devoid of specific time reference unless it is assigned tone. The segments /na-/ together with the appropriate tones, locate the events described by the verb at three indexical time points measurable from S. These are the simple, recent and remote pasts. Accordingly, /-ná/, /-na/ and /nâ/ are tonal morphemes expressing PAST in Chichewa because they mark R as preceding S.

Quite often, tone works closely in tandem with morphology to encode the four-tense system, which also obtains in Chichewa as the data in (4) shows:
(Chichewa)

(a) Ba-ľifi-bomb-ele (Remote past, before yesterday)
    'They worked.'

(b) Ba-ľli-bomb-a  (Removed past, yesterday)
    'They worked.'

(c) Ba-čći-bomb-a  (Near past, earlier today)
    'They worked.'

(d) Ba-ľa-bomb-a   (Immediate past, just happened)
    'They worked.'

That morphological marking and tone variation are crucial in determining the
four tenses in Chichewa is evident. Phenomena of this kind demonstrate that while
PAST in some languages is one 'chunk' to the left of S, it is possible to pinpoint
several intermediate points on the same time span in Bantu languages.

A similar tense pattern is found in Aghem where 'today past', P1, differs from
'before today past', P2, only in tone (Anderson 1979). For example, standing in
contrast to 'today/hordiernal past' in 5 (a) is the 'before today/hesternal past' in (b).
As Anderson notes, the segmental constitution of all the morphemes in both sentences
is identical but the two past tenses are differentiable solely in tone:

5  (a) ḍ i mò bò fì ghâm   (Aghem, Anderson1979:  87)
    he P1 hit mat
    'He hit the mat [today]'  

(b) ḍ i mò bò fìghâm    (Aghem, Anderson1979: 88)
    he P2 hit mat
    'He hit the mat [before today]'
The occurrence of such tonally conditioned allomorphs of the past tense in Aghem, as also happens in Chichewa, corroborates the view that tone is criterial in the characterization of tense in Bantu.

Such tonal morphemes are more elaborate in EkeGusii. Kingston (1983) identifies four degrees of the past in EkeGusii, namely, the immediate, hodiernal, hesternal and distant past. As is shown in (6), immediate and hodiernal pasts occur within the ‘today’ time frame in Kingston’s analysis but in the current research, only what Kingston labels ‘immediate’ past corresponds with ‘today’ while ‘hodiernal’ past is, in essence, recent past. Therefore, the distinction between ‘today’ and ‘recent’ pasts in the current research results in the recognition of four pasts, namely, ‘today’, ‘yesterday’, ‘recent’ and ‘remote’ past coded as P1, P2, P3 and P4, respectively. (6) illustrates Kingston’s system of pasts in which distinctions are made by the alternate high and low tone:

6 (EkeGusii, Kingston 1983:42)
(a) Immediate bá-á-minyok-a reeró.
3PL-PST-run -FV today
‘They just ran today.’

(b) Hodiernal bá-á-minyok-et-e mambia.
3PL-PST-run -PFV-FV this morning
‘They ran this morning.’

(c) Hesternal bá-a-minyok-a ígọrọ.
3PL-PST-run -FV yesterday
‘They ran yesterday.’

(d) Distant bá-a-minyok-et-e karc.
3PL-PST-run -PFV-FV a long time ago
‘They ran a long time ago.’

Kingston does not segment these clauses into their constituent morphemes, but as is argued in this section, the data show that a given segmental tier has two readings

82
which are signaled by tone variation. Disregarding tonal alternation in the perfective morpheme, /-et/, for the moment, it is apparent that the immediate and hodiernal pasts prefer the high-toned a-marker, while the low tone perches on the same marker in the expression of hesternal and distant past events. These tones convey the degrees of pastness without the aid of temporal adjuncts which are sometimes used for the expression of P. The four degrees are presented in the following sections.

4.3.1.1 EKEGUSII P1

As has been shown, the prototypical temporal marker for PAST is the prefix /-a/ but not the suffix /-et/ as Cammenga (2002) reasons. For example, in (6), P1, is marked by the tonally conditioned allomorph /a/. As happens in most Bantu languages, this morpheme occurs in the pre-verbal position after the subject marker in simple declaratives. Therefore, in conformity with Bantu verbal template morphology, this slot is earmarked for TAM. The occurrence of this past tense marker is illustrated in (7):

7 EkeGusii

(a) Eke-busi n -kí -á -ráágér- a.

7-cat FOC -7SM -PST -eat -FV

'The cat ate.'

(b) Chí-seese n -chí -á -ráágér -a.

10-dog FOC -10SM -PST -eat -FV

'The dogs ate.'

(c) Eke-gónkóóru n -gí -á -téér -a.

7-cat FOC -7SM -PST -sing -FV

'The crow did sang.'

(d) Chí-nyóni n -chí -á -téér -a.

10-birds FOC -5SM -PST -sing -FV

'The birds sang.'
(e) Aba-ána m -bá -á -ráár -a.
2-child FOC -2SM -PST -sleep - FV
‘The children ate.’

(f) Chí-mbóri n -chí -á -ráár -a.
10-goat FOC-10SM-PST-sleep- FV
‘The goats slept.’

In these examples, the noun class prefixes /-ki/ in 7 (a), /-chi/ in (b), /-gi/ in (c), /-chi/ in (d), /-ba/ in (e) and /-chi/ in (f) occur before the tense morpheme /á/- in agreement with their antecedent lexical DPs. That /á/- is the simple past tense marker is evidenced by the fact that in all the five sentences, the temporal relation E, R<S holds. This means that in 7 (a), for example, eating by the cat or E, is identical to R, which is not overtly expressed, and that both E and R precede S.

4.3.1.2 EKEGUSII P2

Standing in contrast to the high-toned P1 marker, /-á/, is its low-toned counterpart which marks P2 as the same data in (7), repeated here with low tone as (8), shows:

8 EkeGusii
(a) Eke-búsi n- kí -a -ráágér-a.
7-cat FOC- 7SM PST eat FV
‘The cat ate.’

(b) Chí-seese n- chí -a -ráágér-a.
10-dog FOC-10SM -PST -eat -FV
‘The dogs ate.’

(c) eke-gómkóru n -gí -a -téé-r-a.
7-cat FOC-7SM -PST -sing-FV
‘The crow sang.’
(d) Chí-nyóní n -chí -a -těér-a.
10-birds FOC-5 SM-PST -sing- FV
'The birds sang.'

(c) Aba-ána m -bá -a -ráár-a.
2-child FOC -2SM-PST -sleep -FV
'The children ate.'

(f) Chí-mbóri n -chí a- -ráár -a
10-goat FOC -10SM-PST -sleep -FV
'The goats slept.'

(7) and (8) demonstrate that tone is criterial in the differentiation of PI from P2. Kingston notes that “[t]he two degrees of past are distinguished by tone, high tone on /-a/ for immediate past and low tone for the hesternal” and contends further that tone plays a more fundamental role than the suffixes per se in the marking of the temporal distinctions (Kingston 1983:42). More examples may be cited:

9 (EkeGusii, Kingston 1983:38)
(a) ɪgɔ bá -á -rúga goika bá -á -rɔsa.
so 3PL-IMMP-cook until 3PL-IMMP-tire
'So they just cooked until they tired.'

(b) ɪgɔ bá -a -rúga goika bá-ka-rɔsa.
so 3PL-HEST-cook until 3PL-CSEC-tire
'So they cooked until they tired.'

Kingston rightly notes that the immediate past, in this research, P1, is used for “events occurring within the past one hour or two and hesternal past for events occurring sometime yesterday” (Kingston 1983:38). Since the distinction between both pasts can be signaled by tone alone as in (8), it is arguable that the suffix /-et/ in (5), is a perfective but not a tense marker. In other words, it is the tonal morphemes which distinguish, for example, P2 from the other pasts in EkeGusii.
4.3.1.3 EKEGUSII P3

The recent past may be represented as E, R_ S. As already noted, the allomorphs /a-/ and /a/- are the prototypical markers of PAST in EkeGusii but the encoding of an event as a bounded whole is marked by the perfective suffix /-et/. For Ogechi (2002), both /-et/ and the past tense a-marker, constitute a discontinuous pair of PAST as in the analysis in (10):

10 (EkeGusii, Ogechi 2002:65)

(a) baik -a -minyog -é & -e (long time ago)
    3PL-PST-run -PST -FV
    ‘They ran long time ago.

(b) bá-a -monyoka (yesterday)
    2PL-PST-run
    ‘They ran yesterday.’

(c) bá -á -minyog -et -e (this morning)
    3PL-PST-run -PST -FV
    ‘They ran this morning.’

(d) bá -á -monyoka (earlier today)
    3PL-PST-run
    ‘They ran earlier today.’

Ogechi explains that these ““pasts” are distinguished through prefixes and discontinuous tone-bearing morphemes before and after the verb stem” (Ogechi 2002:64). In view of the fact that /-a/, considered singly, has already been established as the past tense morpheme in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, there is no principled theoretical ground for reasoning that /-et/ is a discontinuous element of the past tense. Admittedly, an account of /-et/ lies elsewhere and, therefore, Ogechi’s analysis should be rethought.

Key among the issues the analysis raises is the twin questions of why there should be double marking of the same category in EkeGusii and also why /-a/ occurs
alone as in 27 (b) and (d) if it is inalienably yoked to /-et/ in the expression of PAST. One escape route from this labyrinth is to sharpen the hypothesis and posit that the allomorphs /-á/ and /-a/ mark P1 and P2 while /-et/ marks the remote past, P4. This proposal also raises the question of the role which tone variability plays in the distinction of these tenses because the morphemes denoting these ‘pasts’ are nondistinctive without the tones. As Kingston notes, “[t]his is a remarkable number of distinctions for a deictic category such as tense. Though it is surprising that forms with different suffixes alternate like this, the pervasive proximal: distal tone contrast may be more fundamental than that carried by the tenses” (Kingston 1983:42).

That /-et/ marks a category other than past tense is the basic claim of the present study. Specifically, it seems apt to posit that /-et/ is a perfective aspect marker because PAST occurs elsewhere without the perfective suffix and therefore both affixes cannot be construed as discontinuous morphemes denoting PAST. On the contrary, it is arguable that /-et/ and /-et/ are aspectual allomorphs which co-occur with PAST to denote perfectivity. As Dahl (1985) explains, a past tense marker can co-occur with the perfect and the perfective as happens in the case of the Akan past time marker, na. In sum, tone perches on the past and perfective markers to signal the four degrees of PAST in EkeGusii.

To illustrate, the high-toned /-á/ past marker and the low-toned /-et/ perfective suffix in (11) have recent past meaning:

11 EkeGusii

(a) Chì-gari n -chì -á -ch -et -e.
10-vehicle FOC -10SM -PST -come -PFV -FV.
‘The vehicles came (recently).’

(b) Aba-gambi m -bá -á -so -et -e nyomba.
2-leader FOC -2SM -PST -enter -PFV -FV house.
‘The leaders entered the house (recently).’

(c) Eke-rongo n -gì -á -kw -et -e.
7-porcupine FO -7SM -PST -die -PFV - FV
‘The porcupine died (recently).’
Mention of the fact that the sentences in (11) may also have hodiernal past reading in appropriate contexts should be made. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is the role /-et/ plays in the expression of perfectivity.

4.3.1.4 EKEGUSII P4

A distinction is maintained between P3 and P4 by the variable tone in the past morpheme /-a/ and perfective suffix, /-et/. More succinctly, P1 is in all respects identical to P2 except in tone. This means that by, for example, assigning a high tone to the perfective morpheme while changing the high tone on the past morpheme into a low one in the sentences in (10), they receive a remote past interpretation as in (12):

12

(a) Chi-gari n -chí -á -ch -et -e.
   10-vehicle FOC -10SM -PST -come -PFV -FV.
   ‘The vehicles came (long time ago).’

(b) Aba-gambi m -bá -a -so -ét -e nyomba.
   2-leader FOC -2SM -PST -enter -PFV -FV house.
   ‘The leaders entered the house (long time ago).’

(c) Eke-rongo n -gí -a -kw -ét -e.
   7-porcupine FOC -7SM -PST -die -PFV -FV
   ‘The porcupine died (long time ago).’

(d) Chi-seese n -chí -a -raager -ét -e.
   10-dog FOC -10SM -PST -eat -PFV -FV
   ‘The dogs ate (long time ago).’
The data in (10) and (11) indicate that tonal morphemes come into play in making distinctions in the system of ‘pasts’ in EkeGusii. The occurrence of such tonally variable morphemes in the language, reminiscent of Aghem and Chichewa, corroborates the view that tone is criterial in the characterization of tense not only in EkeGusii but also Bantu in general. Further, this underlines the relevance of autosegmental phonology to the analysis of possible subtleties in the temporal semantics of events.

The simple, recent and remote pasts in Bantu should not be confused with, for example, the English pluperfect in which E, R and S are different points on the time line. Although the three pasts in Bantu can be mapped onto different points on the time scale, each one of them is independently anchored to, and therefore, measurable from, S. This means that in each of the pasts, E need not be temporally differentiated from R as both are identical and they precede S. The temporal relation that E contracts with R is what distinguishes the English pluperfect, as an aspectual category, from tense. Dahl (1985:120) notes that not many languages have a category which, like the English pluperfect, “is used for events that take place before an R which in turn precedes S.” He cites a minimal pair from Sesotho (Morolong 1978), as a somewhat clear case in which the distance between a past R and a preceding E seems to be grammaticalized. In other words, the temporal distance between R and E is measurable and, therefore, morphologically marked on the Sesotho time line as in (13):

13  (Morolong 1978; Dahl 1983: 121)
   (a)  Ha letsatsi le-likela re-ne re-tsoa tloha Maseru
        ‘At sunset we had just left Maseru.’
   (b)  Ha letsatsi le-likela re-ne re-tloh-ile Maseru
        ‘At sunset we had left Maseru.’

According to Morolong, the form ne-tsoa in (a) makes the expression nearer R than ne-stem-ile does in (b). In this way, Sesotho manages to distinguish between R from E morphologically.

89
4.3.1.5 BANTU NARRATIVE TENSE

Besides P1, P2, P3 and P4, Bantu morphologically marks another type of past termed the narrative past (NARR). A morpheme marking NARR presupposes the occurrence of an event prior to the one being described. Dahl (1985:114) characterizes this tense thus, “a narrative discourse typically starts with a verb in some non-narrative past form: all the subsequent verbs then obtain NARR.” It seems convincing to maintain, as Lindfors (2003) has, that this is not a prototypical past tense marker because it is a tense where, as Anderson also explains, “action in one clause follows the action in the preceding clause” (Anderson 1979:92). It is for this reason that the tense has also been termed the subsecutive past (Polomé 1967), historical past (Loogman 1965) and consecutive tense (Anderson 1979). It occurs in Aghem and Kiswahili as in (14):

14  (a) (Aghem, Anderson 1979:92)
    ó mè bò
    he NARR hit
    ‘He then hit it’

(b) (Kiswahili)
    Wa li -m -shika wa -ka- m -nyangany -a pesa.
    3PL- PST -3SG -catch 3PL- NARR- 3SG -rob FV money
    ‘They caught him/her and then robbed him/her of his/her money.’

In these examples, the Aghem /-me/ and Kiswahili /-ka/ morphemes describe the action in the clauses in which they occur as subsequent to a presumed past event in the preceding clause. As is apparent, NARR is often preceded by PAST in Kiswahili as in (15):

15  Kiswahili
    (a) A -li -tu -on -a a -ka -torok -a.
    3SG -PST -1PL -see-IND 3SG -NARR- run away-FV
    ‘S/he saw us and then run away.’
In these examples, it is the /-li/ morpheme in the first clause that licenses the use of the NARR ka-marker in the second clause. Dahl observes that the narrative tense appears “in some way subordinate or otherwise syntactically connected to the preceding verb” and argues further, “the sentences in a narrative text should probably be treated as syntactically independent of each other” (Dahl 1985:114). It is for this reason that Besha (1989:154) correctly maintains that tense is more of a discourse property than a feature of individual sentences.

By virtue of encoding past events, NARR is frequently analyzed in the literature as marking PAST in EkeGusii and Kiswahili as in 16 (a) and (b), respectively:

16  (a)  (EkeGusii, Ogechi 2002:65)
A   -ka  -gend-a  mogondo
3PL-PST-go  -FV farm
'S/he went to the farm.'

(b)  (Kiswahili, Ogechi 2002:65)
A   -ka  -end-a  shamba-ni
3PL-PST-go  -FV farm  -LOC
'S/he went to the farm.'

The use of /-a/ elsewhere in EkeGusii and /-li/ in Kiswahili to mark PAST militates against the postulate in Ogechi (2002) where /-ka/ denotes PAST in both languages. To sum, the contention of the current research is that the treatment of /-ka/ as a prototypical morpheme meaning PAST is an imprecise analysis.
4. 3.1.6 THE COMPLEX PAST

In this section, an attempt is made to shed light on how the past imperfective is encoded in EkeGusii. Dahl (1985:89) notes that the past imperfective (PASTi), in Russian, for example, is “used for ongoing and habitual actions in the past.” This characterization holds true in EkeGusii in which the category occurs in the complex past where the past prefix, /-a/, the auxiliary verb re ‘be’ and its (optional) past suffix, /-ŋge/, come into play as in (17):

17 EkeGusii

(a) Chí-seese chí -á -re -ŋge kó -rááger -a.
   10-dog 10SM-PST -be -PASTi INF -eat -FV
   ‘The dogs were eating (this morning).’

(b) Chí-nyoni chí -á -re -ŋge kó -ráágér -a.
   10-bird 10SM-PST -be -PST INF -eat -FV
   ‘The birds were eating (this morning).’

(c) Chí-seese chí -á re -ŋge gó -téér -a.
   10-dog 10SM-PST -be -PASTi INF -sing -FV
   ‘The dogs were singing (this morning).’

(d) Chí-nyoni chí -á -re -ŋge gó -téér -a.
   10-bird 10SM-PST -be -PASTi INF -sing -FV
   ‘The birds were eating (this morning).’

(e) Chí-seese chí -á -re -ŋge kó -rááger -a
   10-dog 10M-PST -be -PASTi INF -eat -FV
   ‘The dogs were eating (this morning).’

(f) Chí-nyoni chí -á -re -ŋge kó -eyáán -a.
   10-bird 10SM-PST -be -PASTi INF -breathe-FV
   ‘The birds were breathing (this morning).’
(g) Chi-seese chi á -re -ŋge kó -eyáán a.
10-dog 10SM-PST-be -PSTi INF-breathe-FV
‘The dogs were breathing (this morning).’

Noteworthy is the fact that the suffix /-ŋge/ does not co-occur with any other verbs save the auxiliary re and is optional as it can be omitted without rendering the remnant expression unacceptable. Accordingly, re should be considered the default form in the expression of PASTi. This accounts for the acceptability of the optionality of /-ŋge/.

4.3.2 BANTU PRESENT TENSE

Present tense, hereafter PRES, and progressive aspect, hereafter PROG, sometimes overlap in some Bantu languages. The reason for this is that ‘present’ is contemporaneous with S or includes S and lacks the deictic time to which it can be anchored. As has been noted, PRES is characterizable as E, R, S, in which case R is indistinguishable from S and E. The problematic nature of the characterization of the present has been noted in Shambala and Kiswahili (Besha 1989; Lindfors 2003). This is because it includes ongoing, generic and habitual events, which define imperfectivity (Bybee et al 1994:26). For example, Lindfors argues that since the present in Kiswahili encodes generic events, it is not a prototypical temporal reference marker (Lindfors 2003). The tense occurs as in (18) in which the speaker describes an event without reference to time:

18 (Kiswahili, Nurse 2006:95)
Tw -a -sem-a
1PL-PRES-say -FV
‘We say’

The present is sometimes zero-marked in the language as in (19), which is a generic statement about a property of cows:

19 (Kiswahili, Lindfors 2003:32)
Ng -ombe wa- ø l- a ma -jani.
NPX10 -cow SC2 PRES eat IND NPX6-leaf
‘Cows (in general) eat leaves.’
Although the status of /-a/ as the canonical PRES marker is not in dispute, it is worthwhile to note that /-na/, which is prototypically a PROG morpheme, is increasingly usurping the function of /-a/, especially among upcountry speakers of Kiswahili in Kenya. This phenomenon has percolated into the literature. For example, Katamba (1993) analyzes /-na/ as the PRES marker as in (20):

20 Katamba 1993:220)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Before now)</td>
<td>(Now)</td>
<td>(After now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-PST-bring-FV</td>
<td>I-PRES-bring-FV</td>
<td>I-FUT-bring-FV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I brought.’</td>
<td>‘I bring.’</td>
<td>‘I shall bring.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With exemplification, Nurse (2006) also points out the apparent semantic overlap between the morphemes /-a/ and /-na/, to show the competition of both morphemes for the same function:

21 (Kiswahili, Nurse 2006:95)

(a) Tw -a -sem -a.

1PL-PRES/PROG-talk -FV
‘We talk/We are talking.’

(b) Tu -na -sem -a

1PL-PRES/PROG-talk -FV
‘We talk/We are talking.’

Nurse maintains that the occurrence of such redundancy would mean that the speakers are either wrong because they are unable to discern “certain subtle semantic differences” or “right, in which case one member...can probably look forward to a short life, as language does not tolerate absolute redundancy for long” (Nurse 2006:95).

The present a-marker also encodes ongoing as well as generic events. Despite the encroachment of both morphemes into each other’s functions, they are arguably distinct. The fundamental difference is that while /-a/ denotes events which
characteristically lack time reference and are, therefore, analyzable as present events. The precise semantics of /-na/ can be captured in (22) in which the prefix encodes progressive but neither habitual aspect nor present tense:

22 (Kiswahili)
(a) Wa-toto wa -na -chez-a u -wanja-ni
   2 -cow 2SM -PROG -eat -FV 11-field -LOC
   'The children are playing in the field.'
(b) Wa-toto wa -na -imb-a darasa ni
   2 -child 2SM -PROG-sing-FV classroom-LOC
   'The children are singing in the classroom.'

In Chichewa, the present tense morpheme is /-ku/. Nonetheless, as is the case in Kiswahili, this prefix also seems to have progressive aspect reading as 23 (a) and (b) show:

23 (Chichewa, Mchombo 2004:19)
(a) Mi-kango i -ku -sak-a zi-wawenga.
   4-lions 4SM-pres-hunt-FV 8 -terrorists
   'The lions are hunting the terrorists.'
(b) (Mchombo 2004:27)
   Anyani a -ku -b -a mi-kanda
   2-baboons 2SM-pres- steal-FV 4-beads
   'The baboons are stealing the beads.'

However, this semantic overlap does not deprive /-ku/ of its canonical property of PRES in the language.

Lindfors (2003) reasons that PRES as a non-deictic category falls outside the province of tense. This notwithstanding, she proceeds to discuss present events in Kiswahili as tense, in conformity with tradition, explaining that PRES as a temporal category is difficult to characterize. In spite of this indeterminacy, of relevance to the
current research is the caveat that the present includes S and can be used to express generic events.

Disregarding the question as to whether PRES is a tense or not, it should be noted that the category is not morphologically marked in EkeGusii. Whereas the prefix /-ko/ in (24) may be postulated as a possible marker of PRES, it is should be noted that the morpheme has a habitual reading:

24 EkeGusii
(a) Atandi a -kó -ráágér-a maambia.
Atandi 1SM-PRES?-eat -FV dawn
‘Atandi eats at dawn.’

(b) Chí-seese chí -kó -ráágéra-a maambia.
10-dog 10SM-PRES?-eat -FV dawn
‘The dogs eat at dawn.’

(c) Aba-ána bá -gó -teér-a maambia.
2-child 2SM-PRES? -sing-FV dawn
‘The children sing at dawn.’

Furthermore, the morpheme /-ko/ expresses the category PROG in some contexts as will be demonstrated in chapter (5). This is what prompts Kingston (1983:44) to conjecture that /-ko/ has “a (present) continuous reading”, an inexact description of the category PROG.

The temptation to analyze the expression the habitual as PRES is possible as the generic statements in (25) illustrate:

25 EkeGusii
(a) E-seese n -kó -rí -a é -ré chí-ţěndę.
9-dog FOC -PROG -eat -FV SM-be 10-bean
‘A dog eats beans/ Dogs eat beans.’
It is the use of the auxiliary re ‘be’, in conjunction with the progressive morpheme /-ko/ to express events whose time overlaps S which may prompt some linguists to consider that both morphemes encode that PRES. However, the events in these sentences are not temporally restricted to present time because, being law-like, the sentences portray the events as preceding and extending beyond S. In this case, S seems to be a segment of temporally boundless E and R. In other words, since the events span the past, present and foreseeable future, ‘present tense’ does not relate specific time to S, as would be expected of tense. Therefore, the imperfectivity of the nomic statements in (31) militates against postulating a proper category of tense.

The PFV morpheme /-et/ which has a resultative stative reading as in (26) may also be mistaken for PRES in EkeGusii:

26 EkeGusii
(a) Omw-áná oyo a -many -et -e EgeSongo.
   1-child DEM 1PL. know-PFV-FV English
   ‘This child knows English.’

(b) Abá-ána aba bá -anch-et -e ama-embe.
   2-child DEM 2SM-like -PFV-FV 6-mango
   ‘These children like mangoes.’

(c) M -ba -egéén -et -e ŋa n -ké -bwen -e.
   FOC- 1PL- believe -PFV-FV COMP FOC-7SG-recover-FV
   ‘They believe that it will recover.’
The aspectual category PROG cannot co-occur with the verbs in (24), as happens in the case of (23), since they are inherently stative and, therefore, their aspectuality is determined by *aktionsart*.

### 4.3.3 BANTU FUTURE TENSE

The category of future, hereafter FUT, is prototypically used to encode ‘intention’, ‘prediction’ and ‘future time reference’ (Dahl 1985:108). As such, future time frequently interfaces with modal semantics, thereby making the tense-mood distinction fuzzy. In Reichenbach’s model of tense, FUT may be represented as S E, R. This means that S precedes E and R and that E and R are identical. Since the future time marker expresses an event that will follow S, it is considered an irrealis morpheme (De Haan 2004). There are two main ways of encoding future events in Bantu. One is morphological marking as in (28):

28  (Kiswahili)

(a) Wa-zazi wa -ta- -ku -l -a.
    2-parent 3PL-FUT -INF -eat -FV
    ‘The parents will eat.’

(b) Wa-sichana -ta -imb -a
    2-girl -FUT -sing -FV
    ‘They will sing.’

(c) Wa-vulana -ta -chez -a
    2-boy -FUT -play -FV
    ‘The boys will play.’

(d) Vi -ongozi wa -ta -onge -a
    8 -leader 2SM-FUT -walk -FV
    ‘The leaders will talk.’

Admittedly, as the data indicates, Kiswahili future time is morphologically expressed by the *ta*-marker. However, future time can also be expressed periphrastically using certain verbs, for example, ‘come’ and ‘go’, which may become grammaticalized tense forms with the passage of time. This is the process Anderson
(1991:91) seeks to explain when he states, "tense markers often develop historically from verbs."

The acquisition of new meanings by morphemes in language is not uncommon. For example, the development of the English 'ability' morpheme 'may' into an 'epistemic possibility' or 'permission' morpheme has been reported in the literature (De Haan 2004; Baybee et al. 1994). Similarly, in the Kru languages of West Africa such as Klue, Bassa, Wobe, Dawan, Grebo and Tepo, the verb 'go' has assumed the function of a future time marker while in Nego, Godie, Koyo, Bete, Dida and Tepo, 'come' has remained "the source of potential or remote future marker" (Heine 1984:131; Marchese 1978: 123-125). Heine further notes that in Duala, it is the verbs meaning 'come' and 'go' that are semantically loaded with future time reference.

Similarly, in Kikercbe (Thornell 2002), the verb kwiza 'come' has become lexicalised for future time meaning. Outside Bantu, periphrastic expression of the future using 'to go', which is comparable to English 'shall', 'will' and 'be going', has also been reported in Afrikaans in South Africa (Dahl 1985). 4.6.7 EkeGusii Future Tense

Unlike PRES and PAST, FUT expresses a proposition concerning an event after S on the time line. Accordingly, the properties of FUT are 'intention', 'prediction' and 'future time reference' (Dahl 1985). Additionally, as De Haan considers, "future is a proto-typical irrealis category because it refers to events that have not yet happened and therefore unreal" (De Haan 2004:24). This means that S precedes FUT and, as such, the tense is akin to some types of modality because it expresses unreal events.

In spite of this similarity, Dahl maintains that FUT is indisputably a category of tense but cautions that "a sentence which refers to the future will almost always differ also modally from a sentence with non-future time reference. This is the reason why the distinction between tense and mood becomes blurred when it comes to the future (Dahl 1985). This observation should be borne in mind when analyzing the formal and semantic properties of FUT.
Like PRES, FUT is not morphologically marked in EkeGusii. Whiteley (1965) and Ogechi (2002) suppose that verb-final /-e/ is the FUT suffix in the language as in (29):

29 (EkeGusii, Ogechi 2002:66)
N  -o  -rem  -e  ege-sima
STAB-2S -dig  -FUT  CL7-well
‘You will dig a well.’

Prima facie, this analysis is on the right track because, without /-e/, it is difficult to account for the FUT reading in the sentence. This reasoning, coupled with the fact that the only position available for TAM is the verb-final slot which /-e/ occupies, seems to support the claim that the morpheme marks FUT. However, scrutiny of more data calls into question the association of this morpheme with FUT. For example, /-e/, which has been identified as a FUT marker in (29), is also assigned subjunctive mood semantics in the same work by Ogechi as in (30):

30 (EkeGusii, Ogechi 2002:63)
To  -nyor-an  -e  Hamburg
1PL-meet-REC-SUBJ Hamburg
‘Let us meet in Hamburg.’

Whiteley (1965; 1960) also implies that the verb final /-e/ has FUT meaning as in (31):

31 (EkeGusii, adapted from Whiteley 1960:40)
(a)  N  -ŋ  -gend-e  reerero.
FOC-1SM-go  -FV  today.
‘I will go today.’

(b)  N  -a  -gend-e  aankio.
FOC-1SM-go  -FV  tomorrow
‘S/he will go tomorrow.’
Although Whiteley only says that the examples in (28) have “future time reference” without identifying /-e/ as the FUT marker, this conclusion is implied from the explicit analysis of the same he presents in Whiteley (1965). The association of /-e/ with subjunctive mood in (27) but FUT in (28) is a pointer to the possibility that the morpheme is a common denominator of irrealis categories. As already noted in Dahl (1985), the distinction between tense and mood is elusive in constructions with future time reference. This is what is meant by the observation that a “non-future category may be used” to express the future (Dahl 1985:108). If this caveat is borne in mind, the apparent confusion evident in the literature regarding the interpretation of FUT and modal semantics can be minimized.

Additionally, considering that FUT does not obtain in some Bantu languages like Kikuyu (Dahl 1985), a Bantu language related to EkeGusii, the postulation that the category is not morphologically marked in the latter may hold. If this proposal is tenable, then the only possibility is to posit that /-e/ is an all-embracing marker under which FUT and modality are subsumed. An apt category for this description is irrealis mood. As Katamba (1993:223) observes, “the distinction between the future and potential (or irrealis i.e. non-actual) mood is not strictly maintained” and that TAM categories “are often simultaneously signaled by the same form.” In such a case, context partly plays a role in determining the intended reading of the morpheme.

4.4 TENSE IN CONTEXT

Dahl (1985:3) underlines the role which context plays in the determination of the meaning of TAM categories. TAM semantics should not be “reduced to questions of reference” since “the set of contexts in which the category is found in a language, rather than the set of objects which a term denotes” is crucially relevant to the interpretation of TAM phenomena (Dahl 1985:3). This means that exhaustive analysis of TAM calls for consideration of contextual information because context can alter and, consequently, determine the meaning of a TAM form. The contextual domain
may be broad enough to encompass both linguistic as well as discourse pragmatic knowledge.

Evidence that context determines the semantics of TAM morphemes may be drawn from the PRES and PROG categories in Luganda. As will emerge in section 4, the morpheme /-ko/ in the Luganda examples in (18), for example, has either PRES or PROG meaning:

32 (Luganda, Katamba 1993: 224)

(a) Ba -ko -l -a
   3PL-PRES-do-FV
   ‘They work.’

(b) Ba -ko -l -a
   3PL-PRES PROG-do-FV
   ‘They are working.’

Obviously, it is the discourse contexts in which the statements in 18 (a) and (b) are uttered which can help to resolve the ambiguity of this morpheme. That the interpretation of the semantics of /-ko/ depends on context explains why tabulating TAM markers in some languages can cause confusion as variation of the context of use of the forms alters their meanings. For this reason, if listing of forms were to proceed without reference to context, the same morpheme may be listed under more than one TAM category.

Nurse & Philippson (2006) also underscore the need to pay attention to subtle details of context of use context, arguing that the interpretation of TAM semantics of many Bantu languages demands this approach. They cite the aspectual category PROG in (33) as a case in point:

33 (Nurse & Philippson 2006:98)

We were fishing.

For Nurse & Philippson, (33) has both “PROG” as well as “continuous” readings in English while in many Bantu languages two distinct morphemes may be employed to convey the two readings which can be translated as, for example:
Accordingly, Nurse & Philippson further argue, "when the data source simply gives a single translation into English, without context, it is not possible to know which category is intended." A notable example of a language which seems to mark the sort of subtle difference which obtains in 35 (a) and (b) is Kiswahili in which the rendition of both sentences may be:

35 (Kiswahili)
(a) Tu -li -ku -w-a tu -ki -vu -a u -li -po -tu -on-a
1SPL-PST-INF-be-FV 1PL-PROG-fish-FV 2SG-PST-SUBO-1PL-see-FV
'We were fishing when you saw us.'
(b) Tu -li -ku -w-a tu -na -vu -a juma l-ote.
1PL-PST-INF-be-FV 1PL-PROG-fish-FV week 5-whole
'We were fishing all week.'

While some speakers of Kiswahili consider that the morphemes /-na/ and /-ki/ are interchangeable in marking PROG, others perceive the nuances of meaning conveyed by both. /-ki/ denotes the simultaneity of the events being described while /-na/ encodes continuity of a single event. In other words, /-ki/ expresses PROG in parallel events while /-na/ denotes PROG in a single event. That both morphemes semantically converge at PROG explains why the distinction between both morphemes may not be obvious for some speakers.

The foregoing argument also holds for (36):

36 (Kiswahili, Nurse & Philippson 2006:95)
(a) Tu -li -kuw-a tu -ki -zungumz-a.
1PL-PST-be-FV 1PL-PROG-talk -FV
'We were talking.'
Both sentences demonstrate that although they seem identical, context gives a clue as to which one should be assigned either the meaning of PROG for a single event or PROG for simultaneous events. The most probable explanation for the seeming double marking of PROG is the contact Kiswahili has had with other languages. Indeed /-na/ occurs more frequently in the upcountry varieties of Kiswahili while /-ki/ is common in its coastal dialects, where it is spoken natively and, therefore, can be said to be closer to the standard. Such socio-linguistic phenomena help to account for the notable formal redundancies in some categories in the language.

In sum, this section has identified and described the nature of forms which mark tense in Bantu in general and EkeGusii in particular. For illustration, the EkeGusii and Kiswahili tense morphemes, for example, can be presented as in tables (1) and (2):

**TABLE 1: KISWAHILI TENSE MORPHEMES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENSE</th>
<th>MORPHEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>li</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>ta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2: EKEGUSII TENSE MORPHEMES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENSE</th>
<th>MORPHEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables show that while Kiswahili distinguishes three tenses morphologically, EkeGusii exhibits a PAST vs non-PAST distinction. The foregoing sections focused on simple constructions in order to identify the temporal morphemes.
Section 4.5 sheds light on the interaction between tenses in matrix and embedded clauses and suggests that sequence of tense (SOT) phenomena obtain in EkeGusii.

4.5 EKEGUSII SEQUENCE OF TENSE PHENOMENA

The term SOT, agreement of tenses, succession of tenses, tense harmony and back shifting are used interchangeably in the literature. They refer to the ordering of the tense of the verb describing an eventuality in an embedded clause *vis à vis* the tense in the verb of speech in the matrix clause (Dickey 2001). Throughout this section the term SOT is used to refer this phenomenon. The English sentence in (1) illustrates this temporal ordering:

(1) Jack said that Bill lost his wallet. (Stowell 2005)

The verb in the embedded CP expresses an eventuality in the past. The reference time of the embedded verb ‘lose’ refers to past time relative to the past tense of the matrix verb. Since the matrix past ‘shifts’ the embedded past onto a location preceding past in the matrix clause, the embedded past is said to be past shifted. In other words, the occurrence of the past tense of ‘say’ in the matrix clause catapults the embedded past of ‘lose’ to a location before the ‘saying’ time in the matrix clause, thereby yielding a SOT relation in which matrix past follows embedded past and embedded past follows the utterance time (UT) of the entire clause as diagrammed in (2):

2.

Accordingly, English is said to be a SOT language as opposed to a non-SOT language, for example, Japanese. Hollenbrandse et al. (2005) observe that non-SOT languages express “simultaneity” of the events in the main and embedded clauses by using a present tense in the embedded clause as in (3):

3 (Hollenbrandse 2005; Ogihara 1994:2, 1995)

Taroo-wa Hanako-ga byo oki-da to iu-ta

Taroo-Top Hanako-NOM be sick-PRS that say-PST
'Taroo said that Hanako was sick (at that time).’ (a simultaneous reading only) 

In (3), the present tense morpheme synchronizes matrix tense and embedded tense, thereby blocking SOT effects.

Conversely, English exhibits SOT ambiguity as tenses are doubly interpretable as ordered as well as simultaneous. For example, (4) has both back shifted and simultaneous readings:

4. John said that Mary was sick.

In a back shifted reading of (4), tense in the embedded CP precedes matrix tense as in (1). On the other hand, a simultaneous reading of (4) means that matrix tense and embedded tense were concurrent and both are past relative to UT.

4.6.8.2 THEORY OF TENSE

Although Reichenbach’s (1947) theory of tense has consistently attracted criticism in the literature, his basic conceptualization of the semantics of tense still informs modern research discourse. According to Reichenbach, tense locates eventualities in time within a three-time co-ordinate continuum, namely speech time (S), Event time (E) and Reference time (R). The order of the three points denotes tense. For example, E, R-S denotes the simple past, S-E, R future, E-R-S present and E-R-S past perfect.

One recent attempt to modify the Reichenbachian approach is Stowell (1993, 1995, to appear). Following Zagona (1990) and drawing upon X-bar theoretic notions of argument structure, thematic roles and pronominal reference, Stowell considers that tense is a dyadic predicate head T which takes as its arguments two time-denoting phrases, one external and the other internal. The internal argument is the VP denoting event time while the external argument, which is speech time or UT, is in the [Spec, TP] position of a simple sentence.

In a main clause, the external argument ZP denotes S while in a subordinate clause, it denotes S in the matrix clause, it denotes S in the matrix Clause. The external argument of T in a main clause, that is, PRO-ZP, is a temporal analogue of PRO since it occurs without a c-commanding controller. Conversely, in a complement clause, S is controlled by the temporal argument of the matrix verb, that is, matrix event-time ZP. It is such dependency and consequent ordering involving matrix and
embedded tense which yields a "back shifted" construal of embedded tense phenomena described as SOT.

4.6.8.3 EMBEDDED TENSE IN EKEGUSII

As already noted, EkeGusii tense morphology exhibits a past vs non-past dichotomy. Further, the language is characterized by four degrees of past which are coded as P1, P2, P3 and P4 in this research. These approximate to ‘today’, ‘yesterday’, recent and remote pasts, respectively, and are presented in (5):

5 EkeGusii

(a) Ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-a. (P1)
8-cat FOC-8-PST-cat-FV
'The cats ate.'

(b) Ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-a. (P2)
8-cat FOC-8-PST-cat-FV
'The cats ate.'

(c) Ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-et-c. (P3)
8-cat FOC-8-PST-cat-PFV-FV
'The cat ate.'

(d) Ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-ét-c. (P4)
8-cat FOC-8-PST-cat-PFV-FV
'The cats ate.'

Embedding the four pasts in (5) under one another yields SOT as well as non-SOT readings. Before an examination of the evidence for this hypothesis, it should be noted at the outset that the two types of embedded clauses as exemplified in (6) behave differently with regard to the SOT phenomenon:

6 EkeGusii

(a) Bosibori said that Kerubo was happy.

(b) Bosibori saw the girl who stole the shoes.
Whereas the complement clause in 6 (a) exhibits a SOT reading, the relative clause in (b) does not. In other words, the tense in relative clause occurs as an absolute tense since it is not controlled by the matrix clause. Noting the dependency between the matrix and embedded CPs, Hollenbrandse (2000) formulates the Complementation Hypothesis thus:

7  
(a) a past tense in a complement clause is dependent on the tense in a matrix clause.
(b) a past tense in a relative clause is independent of the main clause.

The twin hypotheses in (7) explain why relative clauses do not exhibit SOT effects as CPs do.

Reverting to embedding in EkeGusii, it is worth while to note that the sentences in (5) can undergo complementation under the verb of speech teeba, 'say', as the eventive predicates in data sets (8) to (11) exemplify.

DATA SET 8 (EMBEDDING P1, P2, P3, AND P4 UNDER P1)

8  
(a) Kerubo n-a-a-teeb-a ẹbi-busi m-bi-á-raager-a (P1 under P1)
   Kerubo FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
   'Kerubo said that the cats ate.'

(b) Kerubo n-a-a-teeb-a ẹbi-busi m-bi-a-raager-a. (P2 under P1)
   Kerubo FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
   'Kerubo said that the cats ate.'

(c) Kerubo n-a-a-teeb-a ẹbi-busi m-bi-á-raager-et-e. (P3 under P1)
   Kerubo FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-PFV-FV
   'Kerubo said that the cats ate.'

(d) Kerubo n-a-a-teeb-a ẹbi-busi m-bi-a-raager-ét-e (P4 under P1)
   Kerubo FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8PST-eat-PFV-FV
   'Kerubo said that the cats ate.'
DATA SET 9 (EMBEDDING P1, P2, P3 AND P4 UNDER P2)

9 (a) *Bosibori n-a-a-teeb-a ŋa ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-a. (P1 under P2)
Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PT-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
'Bosibori said that the cats ate.'

(b) Bosibori n-a-a-teeb- a ŋa ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-a. (P2 under P2)
Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
'Bosibori said that the cats ate.'

(c) Bosibori n-a-a-teeb-a ŋa ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-et-e (P3 under P2)
Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-ete-PFV-FV
'Bosibori said that the cats ate.'

(d) Bosibori n-a-a-teeb-a ŋa ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-ét-e. (P4 under P2)
Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-PFV-FV
'Bosibori said that the cats ate.'

DATA SET 10 (EMBEDDING P1, P2, P3 AND P4 UNDER P3)

10 (a) *Maosa n-a-á-teeb-et-e ŋa ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-a. (P1 under P3)
Maosa FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
'Maosa said that the cats ate.'

(b) *Maosa n-a-á-teeb-et-e ŋa ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-a. (P2 under P3)
Maosa FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
'Maosa said that the cats ate.'

(c) Maosa n-a-á-teeb-et-e ŋa ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-et-e. (P3 under P3)
Maosa FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-PFV-FV
'Maosa said that the cats ate.'
(d) Maosa n-a-á-teeb-ét-e ηa ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-ét-e. (P4 under P3)
Maosa FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-PFV-FV
'Maosa said that the cats ate.'

DATA SET 11 (EMBEDDING P1, P2, P3 AND P4 UNDER P3)

11  (a) *Atandi n-a-a-teeb-ét-e ηa ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-a. (P1 under P4)
Atandi FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
'Atandi said that the cats ate.'

(b) *Atandi n-a-a-teeb-ét-e ηa ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-a. (P2 under P4)
Atandi FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that 8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-FV
'Atandi said that the cats ate.'

(c) *Atandi n-a-a-teeb-ét-e ηa ebi-busi m-bi-á-raager-et-e (P3 under P4)
Atandi FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-PFV-FV
'Atandi said that the cats ate.'

(d) Atandi n-a-a-teeb-ét-e ηa ebi-busi m-bi-a-raager-ét-e.(P4 under P4)
Atandi FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that8-cat FOC-8-PST-eat-PFV-FV
'Atandi said that the cats ate.'

The data in sets (8) to (11) may be summarized in table (12):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded</th>
<th>Matrix 1</th>
<th>Matrix 2</th>
<th>Matrix 3</th>
<th>Matrix 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1: Embedded P1, P2, P3, P4 under Matrix P1, P2, P3 and P4

Considering that SOT refers to control or ordering of the tense in the verb describing an eventuality in an embedded clause vis à vis the tense of the verb of speech in the matrix clause, the data in sets (8) to (11) show that EkeGusii is a SOT language because the binder of the embedded past is the matrix verb of speech. This means that embedded past receives a back shifted interpretation. In 8 (a), for example, the reference time of the embedded eventuality is past relative to the matrix tense. This gives the CP tense a back shifted reading, thereby yielding SOT effects.

Besides back shifted readings, simultaneous interpretation is also possible in EkeGusii. An embedded CP tense and the matrix one are said to be simultaneous if both overlap in time (Dickey 2001). EkeGusii data set (13) shows these phenomena:

13 EkeGusii

(a) Bosibori n-a-a-tceb-a ηa n-omo-rwa-ir-e (Present under P1)
   Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that FOC-1-be.sick-PFCT-FV
   'Bosibori said that she was sick.'

(b) Bosibori n-a-a-tceb-a ηa n-omo-rwa-ir-e (Present under P2)
   Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that FOC-1-be.sick-PFCT-FV
   'Bosibori said that she was sick.'

(c) Bosibori n-a-a-tceb-ét-e ηa n-omo-rwa-ir-e (Present under P3)
   Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV zhat FOC-1-be.sick-PFCT-FV
   'Bosibori said that she was sick.'

(d) Bosibori n-a-a-tceb-ét-e ηa n-omo-rwa-ir-e (Present under P4)
   Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-PFV-FV that FOC-1-be.sick-PFCT-FV
   'Bosibori said that she was sick.'

The simultaneous readings of the sentences in (13) are occasioned by the fact that the time intervals of 'saying' in the matrix clause and 'being sick' in the embedded CP overlap.
4.6.8.4 SOT AND DOUBLE ACCESS

Whereas the past tense in a simple sentence as in (14) has an indexical tense construal, that is, it locates an event at a time interval preceding UT, tense in an embedded clause as in (15) is ambiguous as to whether it is interpretable relative to UT or matrix clause, in which case it has a dependent tense construal, or both:

14 EkeGusii
(a) Kerubo n-a-á-raager-a. (P1)
   Kerubo FOC-3SGSM-PST-eat-FV
   'Kerubo ate.'

(b) Bosibori n-a-á-raar-a. (P1)
   Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PS T-eat-FV
   'Bosibori ate.'

(c) Sinclair n-a-á-iran-a. (P1)
   Sinclair FOC-3SGSM-PST-return-FV
   'Sinclair returned.'

15 EkeGusii
(a) Kerubo n-a-a-teeb-a ŋa n-omo-rwa-ir-e. (Present under P2)
   Kerubo FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that FOC-1-be.sick.PFCT-FV
   'Kerubo said that is sick.'

(b) Bosibori n-a-a-teeb-a ŋa n-omu-oro. (Present under P2)
   Bosibori FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that FOC-1-lazy
   'Bosibori said that she is lazy.'

(c) Sinclair n-a-a-teeb-a ŋa n-omo-ngiti. (Present under P2)
   Sinclair FOC-3SGSM-PST-say-FV that FOC-1-mean
   'Sinclair said that he is mean.'
In 15 (a) to (c), the present tense in the CP is simultaneous with sentence UT as well as matrix clause event time. Each of these sentences is said to have a double access reading. In a double access event, "[t]he complement clause seems to behave independent from the main clause and renders simultaneity with only utterance time, as relative clauses do and at the same time the complement clause behaves dependent on the main clause event and renders simultaneity with the main clause event" (Hollenbrandse 2005: 51). This means that in 15 (a), for example, the temporal reference of the state of Kerubo's sickness holds not only at UT but also at the matrix clause time of the event of reporting.¹

¹ Some languages have a strategy for blocking such double access effects. In Japanese, for example, the use of a present tense morpheme in the relative clause effectively eliminates the possibility of a double access reading by synchronizing the relative clause tense with the main clause event as in (16):

16. Taroo-wa [nai-te-i-ru otoko]-omi-ta
    Taroo-TOP cry-PROG-PRES man-ACC see-PST
    'Taroo saw a man who was crying (at the time of the meeting).' (Ogihara 1995; Hollenbrandse 2005)

In this example, the present tense morpheme in the relative clause denies the clause the possible access to UT, therefore compelling it to agree with the main clause tense only and, therefore, a double access reading is unavailable. The obvious utility of such a strategy is that it checkmates ambiguity of SOT phenomena.