

Tense/Aspect and Verbal Negation in Ngomba

Scott Alan SATRE
SIL-Cameroon
June 2002

0. Introduction

0.1 General

The purpose of this paper is to set forth the tense/aspect and verbal negation of the Ngomba language. Ngomba is a Bamiléké language² spoken in Mbouda subdivision of Bamoutos division of the West Province of Cameroon. According to Ethnologue (Grimes 2000), there are 63,000 native speakers. It is spoken as the mother tongue in five villages – Bamesso, Bamendjinda, Bamenkoumbo, Babete and Bamendjo. The present analysis is based on the speech varieties of the villages of Bamendjinda and Bamesso.³

0.2 Structure of the Verb Phrase

While it is not in the scope of this paper to discuss at length the entire verb phrase, a brief word here may help the reader envision where tense/aspect and negation marking fit into the larger picture.

The verb phrase must be either negative, which is the marked case, or affirmative. The first element which may occur in the verb phrase is the negative marker. As will be seen below in §3, the negative markers often carry some or all of the tense/aspect marking as well.

The optional tense/aspect slot follows verbal negation in the Ngomba verb phrase. And this, being the major focus of this paper, will be discussed at length later on in §1 and § 2.

Following tense/aspect marking are optional verb modifiers. Here one finds either “adverbial auxiliaries” (for want of a better term) or verbs that may occur independently elsewhere, but

¹ Research for this paper was done under research permit # 007/MINREST/BOO/D6O/D10/D12 issued by the Cameroonian Ministry of Scientific and Technical Research.

² Dieu & Renaud (1983:360-363) classify Ngomba as follows – family: Benue-Congo; sub-family: Bantoid; branch: Bantu; sub-branch: Grassfields Bantu; group: East Grassfields; subgroup: Central Bamiléké; language #940. Watters & Leroy (1989:433) classify Ngomba as Southern Bantoid /Wide Grassfields /Narrow Grassfields /Mbam-Nkam /Bamileke.

³ Grant (1993:4) reports that the speech varieties of Bamesso, Bamendjinda and Bamenkoumbo are perceived by their speakers to be nearly identical.

appear in this position as modifiers of the main verb. As segmental tense markers occur at only one place in the verb phrase, it is good to keep in mind that the marking may occur contiguous to a modifying verb (glossed in English by an adverb) rather than the main verb. It is permissible for more than one verb modifier⁴ to occur in the verb phrase, as may be seen in example (1):

(1) Example of a negative verb phrase containing two modifying verbs

Móo ká tsuŋ éfé'né ńtó pó.⁵
 child NEG.P0 really quickly come NEG
 'The child did not really come quickly.'

The (main) verb comes at the end of the verb phrase. The minimal form of the verb is the verb root bearing its lexical tone (high or low) and often followed by a grammatical high tone. The verb phrase structure may be summed up as follows⁶:

+/- NEGATIVE | +/- TENSE | +/- ASPECT | +/- MODIFIERS⁷ | + VERB

0.3 General Remarks on Tense, Aspect and Verbal Negation in Ngomba

The main body of this paper is divided into three sections. The first deals mainly with tense marking, the second mainly with aspect marking and the third mainly with verbal negation. We will look at these marking systems as a way of getting at the overt grammatical categories concerned with tense, aspect & negation employed by the language. While it is helpful for organisational purposes to divide the paper into three sections, it must also be admitted that there is a good deal of interaction⁸ between these three marking systems to the extent that some markers do double or even triple duty as portmanteau⁹ markers. In §3, we will see how this interaction is manifested in one of the more distinguishing characteristics of the Ngomba language its multiplicity of verbal negation markers. Discussion of the negative (as opposed to affirmative) forms of tense and aspect markers will be reserved for this third section.

⁴ One or two modifiers in a single verb phrase are attested in my data. Further research on this point is needed to ascertain the total number of modifiers allowed.

⁵ The particle *pó* occurs at the end of most negated clauses (it may be omitted if no argument follows the verb, e.g. in an intransitive clause). There are certain verbless clauses – equative or locative in the present – that do not take a verbal negator and instead have the negative particle at the end to mark them as negative (See Satre 1999:24 -26).

⁶ An exception to this structure is the root possibility construction in which the subject of the sentence is preceded by the verb *m̄bó* 'to be' functioning like a modal auxiliary, and followed by a normal verb phrase.

⁷ There is some flexibility with regard to the relative positions of the (non-present) imperfective aspect marker (discussed in § 2.3.3) and the modifying verb.

⁸ Bybee et al. (1994:175) also note "substantial interactions" between tense and aspect.

⁹ "A term used in MORPHOLOGICAL analysis referring to cases where a single morph can be analysed into more than one MORPHEME, as in French *au, aux...*" (Crystal 1985:237)

One important key to an overall understanding of how tense and aspect function and are marked in Ngomba is to observe the extent to which the system exploits the inherent aspectual meanings of verbs. In §1.3.1, for example, we will see how the inherently perfective aspect of dynamic verbs and the inherently imperfective aspect of stative verbs impinge upon the tense interpretation of a frequently occurring verb form. In §2.1 and §2.2, we will see how the system requires two frequently occurring tense/aspect markers – each of which mark both present tense and a type of imperfective aspect. This is because of the system’s reliance on the inherent aspectual meaning of verbs.

In the light of Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994), I shall endeavour to posit lexical sources for the various grammatical markers covered in this paper.

1. Verb Tenses in Ngomba

1.1 Definition of Tense

Tense has been defined as “grammaticalised location in time” (Comrie 1985:9). We understand the term “grammaticalised” to mean that there is something in the verb morphology or some grammatical element in the verb phrase that marks “locations in time” apart from (or at the very least in harmony with) any lexical indication of time. In other words, tense is a set of grammatical oppositions, which may or may not be present in a given language.

In order to localise an event in time, of course, one needs a reference point, often referred to as the “deictic centre” (Comrie 1985:14), around which events are situated. A tense that is located in time in reference to the moment of speaking is called an “absolute tense”. A tense with any point in time other than the moment of speaking serving as its deictic centre or reference point may be referred to as “relative tense” (Chung & Timberlake 1985:203).

Comrie (1985:58) takes a slightly different view of the distinction, saying:

“The difference between absolute and relative tense is not that between the present moment versus some other point in time as reference point, but rather between a form whose meaning specifies the present moment as reference point and a form whose meaning does not specify that the present moment must be it reference point. Relative tenses thus have the present moment as one of their possible reference points, but this is a problem of interpretation rather than of meaning.”

According to Hyman, Yemba (another language in the same sub-group as Ngomba) has a relative rather than absolute tense system in which some clauses may be interpreted with the moment of speaking as deictic centre and others with a preceding clause as deictic centre (1980:229). By Comrie’s definition, Ngomba may also be said to have relative tense, i.e., the deictic centre may be the moment of speaking (indeed, one would assume that to be the

default interpretation in ordinary conversation) or it may be some other contextually-defined point in time in a given discourse. In example (2) P0 is the normal narrative tense¹⁰ and the future tense is used with a relative meaning to indicate that the action took place a day or more after the action in clause just preceding it.

(2) Example of a future tense that takes the preceding clause as its deictic centre

Pé ní' wɔp ndá-tsáj ŋkô pa'a,
 one put(P0) them house-of_dispute now thus
 'Someone put them into prison now like that,'
 ŋgɛ ŋgɛ éfúŋ wɔp kót,
 F3 go call them court
 'and went (a day or more later) to call them to the court.'

A significant feature of Ngomba (and other Grassfields Bantu languages) is the fact that it is not only possible for a speaker to place an event as before (past tense) or after (future tense) the deictic centre, but also to indicate by the tense employed the approximate temporal distance involved, i.e., how far into the past or future. Since the full range of uses of relative tense in Ngomba remains to be explored, the rest of this paper assumes the moment of speaking as the deictic centre.

1.2 Degrees of Remoteness

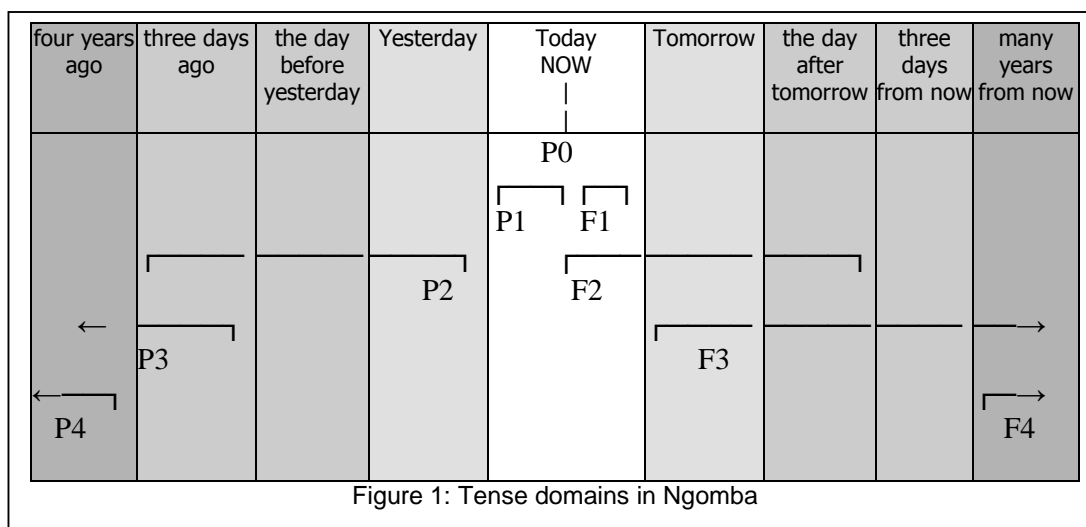
In order to arrive at an adequate description of the tense distinctions in Ngomba it is useful to speak in terms of 'degrees of remoteness' (Comrie 1985:83ff). This refers to oppositions in a tense system employed to indicate gradations in the approximate temporal distance from a deictic centre.¹¹ As will be seen below, Ngomba has at least nine tenses that make distinctions in terms of temporal distance from the deictic centre. The language distinguishes no less than four or five degrees of remoteness in the past (for dynamic verbs at least) and another three or four in the future, depending how one factors in the overlap of tense domains as may be seen in Fig. 1 below. Ngomba is somewhat rare among the world's languages in this respect,¹² though Yemba, also known as Bamileke-Dschang (Hyman 1980 cited in Comrie 1985:86-87) and Ngiemboon (Anderson 1983 cited in Comrie 1985:87), which are languages closely related to Ngomba, are also known for having an abundance of such tense distinctions. It is worth noting that, as with its linguistically and geographically near

¹⁰ It is common for a narrative to begin with a P3 or P4 tense clause setting the time for the narrative as sometime in the past and thereafter the P0 tense is employed to relate the main events.

¹¹ Chung & Timberlake (1985:204) call these metrical tenses, in the sense of measurement, i.e., "they measure the distance between the frame and the tense locus in approximate terms".

¹² Bybee et al. (1994:99) found one language in their representative sample with as 4 degrees of remoteness in the past.

neighbours, reference to the daily cycle¹³, i.e. today, yesterday, tomorrow, etc, for the cut-off points of their time domains is characteristic of this tense system. The farther away one gets from the deictic centre, however, the more ambiguous the cut-off points become, as will be seen later on (see §s 1.3.4, 1.3.5, 1.4.3 and 1.4.4). One possible explanation for this is that for events situated farther from the deictic centre another factor, one which I term speaker certainty or definiteness, i.e., how certain the speaker is about the precise time location of the event or situation, becomes a consideration. The system is largely symmetrical, though there is not a perfect balance between past and future tenses in number and length of time domains. The tenses are numbered P(past) 0-4 and F(future) 1-4 following Anderson's (1983:38) analysis of Ngiemboon, an adjacent Grassfields Bantu language.



1.3 Past Tenses¹⁴

In Ngomba there are five past tenses for dynamic or action verbs, four for stative verbs. (See discussion in § 1.3.1.) For each of the tenses there will be a discussion of its meaning and then an explanation of how it is marked. The suggested names for tense P1 and P2 – hodiernal past and pre-hodiernal past, respectively - are derived from the Latin word for ‘today’ Dahl (1985:125-126 quoted in *LinguaLinks*) and Bernard Comrie (1985:87). As will be seen below, tenses P1, P3 and P4 are all marked primarily by some segmental marker – a grammatical particle, an auxiliary verb, or a combination of the two – that precedes the main

¹³ Bybee et al. (1994:101?) in their discussion of remoteness distinctions distinguish between tenses that do not have very specific cut-off points and those whose cut-off points make reference to what they term “the daily cycle”.

¹⁴ For a table showing all the past tense markers see middle column of Table I at the end of §2.3.5.

verb in the verb phrase. P2, on other hand, is marked primarily by a tone on the verb root and P0 is the unmarked case. The presence or absence of a high-tone verbal prefix that consists segmentally of either a homorganic nasal or schwa is also an important feature of tense marking.¹⁵

1.3.1 P0 (Present Tense or Immediate Past Tense) – ...´

A remarkable feature of this tense is that this one verb form can be taken as a present tense or a past tense depending on the aspectual category of the verb¹⁶ in question. For stative verbs (including cognitive/emotional states, e.g., *a kwaŋe* ‘he thinks’ and *ɔ kɔŋ* ‘you love’) it has the force of a present tense¹⁷. For dynamic verbs (e.g., in *pɔp tɔ* ‘they came’ or *n zúu mbap* ‘I bought meat’) it has the force of an immediate past (see also Anderson 1983:278). A common thread one might postulate between the two is that, with both stative and dynamic verbs, the use of this verb form seems to be to report the present status, for even with the dynamic verbs there is the implication that the result of the action still holds, i.e. is currently relevant, not unlike the Perfect aspect¹⁸. Bybee et al. in their discussion of ‘anterior’ (their term for Perfect aspect) say that some authors refer to anterior as “Indefinite Past”, the rationale being that, “the goal of the utterance is not to locate a situation at some definite point in the past, but only to offer it as relevant to the current situation” (Bybee et al. 1994:61).

It is important to note that Ngomba’s P0 form is not unique among the world’s languages, since similar forms with correspondingly similar meanings have been documented in other Niger-Congo languages not closely related to Ngomba. For example, this basically unmarked or zero-marked verb form seems to correspond to what has been termed “factative” by Welmers (1968 & 1973) in talking about verb tense/aspects in Igbo. He said that factative¹⁹ refers to “past time for verbs expressing action” and to “present or undefined time for verbs expressing state or situation” (Welmers 1973:311, quoted in Marchese 1986:31). In the Kru languages, Marchese says that the factative “may be indicated by a bare verb stem” (1986:30), which appears to be what one finds in the Ngomba P0 tense.

¹⁵ This prefix appears as a schwa on those verbs in which the initial consonant is a voiceless fricative [s, f, ʃ].

¹⁶ According to Crystal (1985:103) there are two main aspectual categories of verb use – dynamic and stative (or static). Bybee et al. (1994:55) define dynamic predicates as describing “a situation which involves some sort of change,” as opposed to stative predicates which describe “an unchanging situation which will continue unless something happens to change it.” More loosely one may term them actions vs. states. (Comrie 1976: 48)

¹⁷ Comrie defines the present tense as “a situation holding literally at the present moment.” (1985:38)

¹⁸ Comrie (1976:52) describes the perfect as indicating “the continuing present relevance of a past situation.”

¹⁹ Not to be confused with the term “factitive” which, according to Crystal (1985:118) refers to, “a CONSTRUCTION or FORM (usually a VERB) denoting an action in which a cause produces a result”.

In Ngomba, as in the case of the languages cited above, this apparently contradictory situation of one form with two tense interpretations seems to be a case of inherent aspectual meaning determining tense interpretation. Bybee et al. have noted that Perfectives often refer to past situations because, “past situations are most naturally viewed as bounded” (1994:83). This, then, appears to be the logic behind the interpretation of unmarked dynamic verbs as past. Bybee et al. in their representative sample of the world’s languages found several that had an unmarked verb form whose interpretation closely resembles that of Ngomba’s P0 with dynamic verbs being interpreted as perfective and the default interpretation for stative verbs being present (Bybee et al.1994:90).

To sum up this discussion of the meaning of the P0 “tense”, it seems that, since this form has no overt grammatical marking whatsoever with regard to either tense or aspect, the interpretation must, therefore, arise from the default aspectual meanings of the verbs themselves. Dynamic verbs are usually seen as being inherently perfective in aspect (unless otherwise explicitly marked); and, as has been mentioned above in this section, the default tense interpretation of a bounded situation is that of a past event. Stative verbs, on the other hand, are seen as inherently imperfective in aspect with the default tense interpretation being that of a Present situation, i.e. that the state is current.

P0 is, as has already been stated above, the unmarked tense in Ngomba, in that it employs neither an auxiliary, particle nor any prefix on the verb. This tense is indicated by the verb stem with its usual lexical tone (either low or high) and followed by a grammatical high tone (present for many tenses). The grammatical high tone is manifested on lexically low-tone verbs by a low rising tone on the stem (as opposed to a simple low) as may be seen in Example (3). Note that the first two examples are of stative verbs and the second two of dynamic verbs:

(3) Examples of stative and dynamic verbs in the P0

Verb	Example Sentence
ńdũũ ‘to be sweet’	Mɛnik lǎũ. ‘The milk is sweet.’
ńkɔŋ ‘to love/like’	ŋ kǎŋ nekʷét metáa-máŋgɔl. ‘I like to eat mangoes.’
ńtó ‘to come/arrive’	Súu waa tó mó. ‘My friend came already.’
ńnó ‘to drink’	Móo nó ŋki. ‘The child drank water.’

Bybee et al. (1994:90) state that zero-marked perfectives do not have a lexical source, i.e., do not evolve from a lexical item into a grammatical one. They go on to say that these forms come about as a consequence of the development of a marked past-imperfective in a language and contrast with that. It is reasonable to assume that in Ngomba, as well, the zero-marked

form has no lexical source. One must, however, take note of the fact that the contrasts in this system are different than they would be in a system where the default interpretation for all zero-marked forms is perfective. It may be significant that the unmarked P0 for dynamic verbs can be seen to contrast with two other marked forms – present progressive and present habitual – which are, of course, imperfectives and will be discussed below in §2.1 and §2.2. Comrie’s conclusions on the phenomenon of aspect-determined tense interpretation of minimal verb forms in other Grassfields Bantu languages are applicable to Ngomba:

“...this seems to be the maximal utilisation of the intersection of tense and aspect: since the imperfective is rarely needed for recent past situations, and the perfective is rarely needed for currently ongoing situations, the assignment of the appropriate time relation difference to the aspectual opposition gains maximum economy while not violating the basic meaning of aspectual opposition. It may be academic whether the tense that overlaps recent past and present is called present or recent past, or a combination of the two” (Comrie 1985:92).

1.3.2 P1 (Hodiernal Past) – *lá' N!-*

As was seen in Fig. 1, P1, what I term the Hodiernal Past, is a tense that refers to a situation holding earlier in the same day the utterance is made (i.e., today) or during the night leading up to this day.²⁰ It is a tense with a relatively short and fairly well defined domain, its cut-off points making reference to the daily cycle. It may only refer back as far as sunset of the preceding day and no further. Hence, it would constitute a major collocational clash to use this tense in the same clause with time expressions such as *mba'mba' zón*²¹ ‘yesterday morning’ or *ápta zón* ‘the day before yesterday’. While the domain of the P1 may overlap a bit with the P0, they differ in that there is no implication with the P1 as to whether or not the situation may still hold. This means, for example, that a P1 statement such as *a lá' n!tó* glossed in English as ‘he/she came’ does not imply that the person is still present, while the P0 statement *a tó* with the same English gloss does imply just that.

The Hodiernal Past is indicated by the presence of the auxiliary *lá'* before the main verb co-occurring with the high-tone verbal prefix on the main verb. The auxiliary also occasions downstep on the main verb root. These may be seen in the Example (4) below (downstep is represented by an exclamation mark):

²⁰ Bybee et al. note that in their survey “the most common cut-off point involving the daily cycle is today versus previous days.” (1994:99)

²¹ The word *zón* literally means ‘one day from today’ and it is the tense of the context which specifies this as ‘yesterday’ or ‘tomorrow’.

(4) Examples of verbs in the P1

Verb	Example Sentence
m̄bó 'to be'	ɔ lá' m̄!bó gó? 'Where were you?' (earlier today)
ńdó 'to rain'	Mbun̄ lá' ń!dó tsɛt nɛtú'. 'It rained during the night.'
ésuk 'to wash'	A lá' é!suk matúwa nɛm nɛgém. 'He/she washed the car at 10 o'clock. (today)

The lexical source for the grammatical morpheme *lá'* in Ngomba is not known. There is a verb of the same shape in Ngiemboon and Yemba which is glossed as 'to spend the night' and one might speculate a cognate or borrowing relationship there. Hyman (1980:230) notes with interest its use as the F4 marker in Yemba and that it is still what we would term a lexical verb. The corresponding lexical verb in Ngomba, however, is *ńdɛ́*. Now, one could hypothesise, for example, that *ńdɛ́* in Ngomba had an earlier form *ńdá'* which as a lexical item underwent a vowel change, but that as a tense marker *lá' / ńdá'*²² did not participate in this change.

1.3.3 P2 (Pre-hodiernal Past) – *Á-* "

The P2, or Pre-hodiernal (before today) Past is a recent past tense that refers to a situation occurring any time the day before the time of speaking, i.e., yesterday, and up to three days into the past. Thus, this tense, like the Hodiernal Past, has a clearly delineated and relatively short domain, though it does overlap one day with P3. One could term it recent or near past, but specific reference to the daily cycle for the cut-off points is still an important part of its interpretation. It would, for example, constitute a collocational clash to use this tense with a time adverbial like *ɲgap yí* 'last week'. This contrasts with Ngiemboon, where some speakers, at least, do employ its corresponding P2 tense for earlier situations up to one month in the past.²³ It is possible, though not obligatory, for time adverbials such as *zón* 'yesterday' and *ápta zón* 'the day before yesterday' to be used to specify with greater precision the time interval involved.

Unlike most other tenses in Ngomba, this tense is not indicated by an auxiliary or grammatical particle, but primarily by a grammatical tone. In the affirmative, this tense is indicated by the high-tone prefix on the verb²⁴ coupled with the presence of what may be described as a super-low tone on the verb root. Ngomba seems remarkable in this respect because its closely related neighbour Ngiemboon, noted for its own complex tone

²² In the phonological system of Ngomba (and of other central Bamileke languages such as Ngiemboon and Yemba), there is an alternation between [l] and [d] in the root-initial position, with the latter occurring only when the root is preceded by a homorganic nasal prefix.

²³ This observation comes from a personal communication with Moïse YONTA.

²⁴ The P2 is not the only tense in Ngomba where the high-tone verbal prefix is present.

interactions, has no tense where tone alone is the distinguishing marker. As to the segments, this tense form is identical to the immediate future (F2) and it is for this reason that one may be justified in saying that the tone alone is the distinguishing marker. In example (5) below the more emphatic first person singular pronoun *mɔ* obligatorily replaces the low-tone homorganic nasal or schwa that typically serves as the first person singular subject pronoun.:

(5) Examples of verbs in the P2

Verb	Example Sentence
ńtɔ́ 'to come'	ŋgú'ɔ́ ńtɔ́ zón. 'Ngouo came yesterday'
ésuk 'to wash'	Mɔ́ ésùk matúwa zón. 'I washed the car yesterday.'

As to lexical source, one can only speculate that, at one time, there may have been a segmental morpheme associated with this super low.

1.3.4 P3 (Non-recent Past) – *ka...*'

The P3 tense in Ngomba is employed to refer to situations at least three days previous to the moment of utterance to about four years in the past or further. (This would again contrast with the usage of Ngiemboon whose P3 tense domain begins approximately one month previous to the moment of speaking.) As its cut-off points do not make as specific a reference to the daily cycle as the preceding two tenses, I have opted to call it the Non-recent Past. The use of this tense in a sentence with either of the time adverbials *zón* 'yesterday' or *ápta zón* 'the day before yesterday' would constitute a collocational clash, the former being a rather major one. While its starting point nearest to the deictic centre is well defined, its cut-off point far from the deictic centre is not. So, unlike the Hodiernal and Pre-Hodiernal Past tenses, its domain is rather large and not as clearly delineated. It may be employed to refer to situations that are weeks, months or even years in the past. How certain the speaker feels about the timing of the event may also be a factor in whether he or she chooses to employ P3 or P4 in reporting something that occurred several years before the moment of speaking.

The P3 tense in Ngomba is indicated by the presence of the low-tone tense marker *ka*²⁵ before the main verb without the high-tone verbal prefix and without downstep, but with a following grammatical high tone. The verb phrase in this tense then, has rather the same tonal melody as in P0, except for the simple addition of *ka* as may be seen in Example (6) below :

²⁵ One may debate whether or not *ka* is an auxiliary or an invariable particle. It does not act like a low-tone verb in Ngomba, which most often come out with a low rising tone. Since it may be preceded in the verb phrase by the first-person subject marker (low-tone verbal prefix) and is never immediately followed by the high-tone verbal prefix, an argument might be made that it is so closely associated with the verb as to be a type of prefix. It may, however, be immediately followed by an adverbial auxiliary before the main verb.

(6) Examples of verbs in the P3

Verb	Example Sentence
ńbó 'to be'	É ka pó yecó ńká wecó ńu. 'There was once a certain person.'
ńtó 'to come'	Pek ka tó za'ne, é ge mó ńgu' saambá. 'We came here seven years ago.' (lit: it made already year seven)
ńgũ 'to go/leave'	Yósep ka gũ né Yawúnde ńgap yí. 'Joseph went to Yaoundé last week.'
ńtɔɔ 'to burn'	Pé ka tɔɔ megii nũu pesaŋ pépá. 'The grass was burned (off) in February. (lit: One burned the grasses...)

It is interesting to note that there is also a marker *ka* in Ngiemboon that serves as the marker for the P2 tense, but as we have seen, there may be considerable overlap between the time domains of the Ngomba P3 tense and the Ngiemboon P2 tense.

1.3.5 P4 (Remote Past) – *ka lá' ń!* / *ńdá' ń!*

The P4 tense in Ngomba may be employed to refer to situations long past, though it is not clear what the exact parameters are of its temporal domain²⁶. It seems to have a near cut-off point at approximately five years previous to the moment of speaking, though usage may vary from speaker to speaker. It is the tense farthest in the past from the deictic centre and makes no specific reference to the daily cycle in its cut-off points. As was discussed above in §1.3.4, there are two factors involved here: one is the concept of temporal distance, the other the degree of certitude or definiteness the speaker feels about his or her estimate of the temporal distance.

There are two ways of indicating this tense. One is to employ what appear to be a combination of markers – *ka lá'* – the P3 marker combined with the P1 marker.²⁷ As with the Hodiernal Past the auxiliary *lá'* is followed by the high-tone verbal prefix before the main verb root and occasions downstep between the prefix of the main verb²⁸ and its root. This form may be seen in first sentence in example (8) that is taken from a folk tale, where it is part of a sentence that sets the stage as being at some time long past with no certain date.

²⁶ Bybee et al. mention a remoteness distinction termed “ancient past” (1994:98) that refers to situations occurring in ancient or mythic times and which contrasts with a “remote past” (ibid). Ngomba does not have a specifically mythic past.

²⁷ It is interesting to note that Ngiemboon (Anderson 1983:252-256) also marks this tense with a combination of markers, *la lá'*, with the first one being that language’s P3 marker, but the second not appearing anywhere else in the tense marking system that I know of.

²⁸ An adverbial auxiliary verb may intervene between the tense marker and the main verb., in which case the downstep will occur on the auxiliary.

Another way to indicate the P4 is to employ the auxiliary *ńdá'*, which may be closely related to *lá'*, since it, too, occasions downstep between the prefix and root of the verb that follows it in the verb phrase as may be seen in the second sentence in example (7):

(7) Examples of verbs in the P4

Verb	Example Sentence
éfo 'to borrow'	Cwímaŋko' ka lá' é!fo ŋkáp-ŋjínaa... 'The tortoise (long past) borrowed the pig's money...'
ńtó 'to come'	<i>Ahidjo ńdá' ń!tṣ</i> Mbu'ndaa, né ŋgu' tá' tṣshi né ŋkɛ yénépfú'ú né meǵém saambá. 'Ahidjo came to Mbouda around 1970.'

There may be an even greater degree of uncertainty about the date with the *ńdá'* form than with the *ka lá'* combination of markers. More research would be needed to probe the nuances of these two forms to decide whether or not another tense or mood distinction is needed in the analysis.²⁹ The form *ńdá'* also resembles one of the F4 forms, but there are tonal differences that distinguish the two and these will be discussed below in §1.4.4

1.4 Future Tenses

Bybee et al. (1994:244) define futures as “a prediction on the part of the speaker that the situation in the proposition, which refers to an event taking place after the moment of speaking, will hold.” As with the past tenses in Ngomba, speaker certainty about the time reference is also a factor here, with the degree of certainty³⁰ becoming less as the temporal distance from the deictic centre increases. This is not to be confused with what Bybee, et al. term “epistemic qualification of the future” (Bybee et al. 1994:247), i.e., how convinced the speaker is that the predicted event will come about. The issue is more the exact timing of the event and how definite the speaker can be about that. Where there is overlap of future tense domains, the determining factor in the speaker’s choice of tense seems to be definiteness about the time reference rather than temporal distance from the deictic centre.

Ngomba has four future tenses (F1 – F4) and they correspond roughly to the past tenses P1 through P4, but they spread out in the opposite temporal direction from the deictic centre. Here, of course, the focus is not on what has been, but on what will be. As will be seen in the following sections (esp. §1.4.2 & §1.4.3), the number of future tenses may be nearly the same as the number of past tenses; their time domains, however, are not the mirror images of each

²⁹ I interviewed a group of ten native speakers (aged 20+ to 50 years) on a couple of occasions and their general sense was that both of these forms indicate that an event or situation is “far, far” into the past.

³⁰ Bybee et al. (1994:248) talk about definite and indefinite future, i.e., “whether the speaker is offering an assurance that an event will take place at some definite time or is not offering such an assurance.”

other. Another important difference is the fact that several of the future tenses (F1, F3 & F4) have alternative markers, i.e. the speaker may chose one of two different auxiliary verbs to indicate the same tense meaning.

1.4.1 F1 (Hodiernal Future) – *gě́ N̄... / gě́ N̄...'*

This tense may be employed to refer to situations or events predicted to occur later the same day as the utterance is made. Hence, it is a tense whose meaning is very much tied to the daily cycle. It corresponds to the P1 (Hodiernal Past) in mirror image fashion. Like the P1, its time domain is relatively short and well defined. Hence, it may not be used with any time phrase or adverbial that makes reference to a time other than the day of speaking.

There appear to be two ways to indicate this tense. One is by the presence of the auxiliary *gě́* followed by the verb with the high-tone verbal prefix, as may be seen in example (8):

(8) Example of verbs in the F1 with *gě́*

Verb	Example Sentence
ńt́ 'to come'	Súu waa gě́ ńt́ ntsun̄kw̄e'. 'My friend will come this evening.'
ńḡu 'to go/leave'	Yósep gě́ ńḡu né Fu'usap n̄em n̄egém. 'Joseph will leave for Bafoussam at 10 o'clock.'

This marker is like one of the F3 markers *ńḡě́*, except that it lacks the prefix. One interesting observation one could make is that, in form, the F1 and F3 auxiliaries (*gě́* & *ńḡě́*) appear to be the P0 and F2 forms respectively of the same low-tone verb. Both of these tense markers resemble the lexical verb *ńḡe* 'to do/make' but have lost their lexical meaning in this context.³¹

There is another construction with the lexical verb *ńḡu* 'to go' in the P0 that functions much like an alternate form of the F1. There is also no evidence of phonological reduction, so in terms of Bybee et al.'s grammaticization theory, this is a relatively young construction as may be seen in example (9):

(9) Examples of verbs in the F1 with *gě́*

Verb	Example Sentence
ńt́ 'to come'	Súu waa gě́ ńt́ ntsun̄kw̄e'. 'My friend is going to come this evening.'
ńḡu 'to go/leave'	Yósep gě́ ńḡu né Fu'usap n̄em n̄egém. 'Joseph is going to leave for Bafoussam at 10 o'clock.'

³¹ Auxiliary verbs are believed to be historically derived from lexical verbs by a process known as “semantic reduction” (Bybee et al. 1994:6) or “bleaching” (Givón 1975 cited in Bybee et al.), where the lexical meaning is lost and only the grammatical meaning, e.g. indication of a certain tense, remains.

Bybee et al. say that futures derived from movement verbs can only evolve where there is “an allative component, ‘movement toward’, either inherent in the semantics of the verb or explicit in the construction” (1994:268). Hence, it is not surprising that this construction in Ngomba bears striking similarity to the ‘to be going to’ construction in English or the ‘*ir a + infinitive*’ construction in Spanish. Unlike those constructions, however, it is not a general future, but refers to an event or situation supposed to take place later in the same day that the utterance is made.

1.4.2 F2 (Immediate Future) – *Ń*...

This tense may be employed to refer to situations that the speaker asserts will occur at some point in time from immediately following the utterance to as far into the future as the day after tomorrow. In the absence of any time adverbials, the implication of this tense is that the situation is imminent, though not yet in progress. Since this tense has a time domain that overlaps with a good part of the F1 and the first day of the F3, its distinguishing characteristic is not so much its time domain, though that is still a factor, as the sense of immediacy or imminence that it conveys.³² Though the cut-off points do make reference to the daily cycle, I have opted to call F2 the Immediate Future tense, because the sense of immediacy seems to be the overriding factor. I have given this tense the number F2, as its possible time domain exceeds that of the F1 tense, though it does not exactly mirror that of the P2. This tense and the one that follows it stretch the symmetry of the system a bit, but do not quite break it.

This tense is indicated by the verb root preceded by the high-tone verbal prefix. The tone on the lexically low-tone roots is manifested as a low rising tone, as it does in the P0, so one may assume there is also a following high grammatical tone associated with this tense. A verb in this tense is segmentally identical to its P2 or yesterday past form and it is only the difference in tone that distinguish the two as may be seen in example (10):

(10) Examples contrasting F2 with P2

Verb	Example Sentence
ńzúu ‘to buy’	Súu waa ńzúu mǎmbí zón. ‘My friend will/is about to buy a goat tomorrow.’ (F2) Súu waa ńzùu mǎmbí zón. ‘My friend bought a goat yesterday.’ (P2)
ńgɛ ‘to go/leave’	Mɔ ńgě . ‘I am about to leave/ I am leaving (soon).’ (F2) Mɔ ńgě . ‘I left (before today but not long ago). (P2)

³² Bybee et al. conclude that immediate futures are not futures in the strict sense, but seem to be more, “assertions announcing the imminence of an event rather than a prediction that it will take place.” (1994:273)

1.4.3 F3 (Post-Hodiernal Future) – *íggě* *ń-...* / *ńdǎ* *ń-...*

This tense may be employed to refer to situations that are predicted or expected to occur the day after the speech moment and afterwards even up to many years into the future. It differs from F2 in its starting cut-off point, being a day later, and in the greater distance to and indeterminateness of the far cut-off point. Due to the vastness of its time domain, any number of time adverbials may be employed in conjunction with this tense to pinpoint the event's location in time. It would, however, be a collocational clash to employ this tense in a sentence that also contains the time adverbial *lɔ'ɔ* 'today'. The Post-Hodiernal Future also differs from the Immediate Future in that the meaning of the tense seems to be simple prediction with no overtones of imminence. As in the distinction in the Past between P3 and P4, wherever overlap is possible between the time domains of F3 and F4, a situation referred to in the F3 has a more definite location in time in the speaker's mind than with F4.³³

This tense may be indicated by the presence of one of two possible auxiliaries – *íggě* or *ńdǎ* – followed by the main verb with the high-tone verbal prefix and a following grammatical high tone. There is no downstep associated with these auxiliaries. Low-tone verb stems come out here, as in many other tenses, as low rising as may be seen in example (11):

(11) Examples of verbs in the F3

Verb	Example Sentence
<i>ńbii</i> 'to pay'	Súu waa <i>íggě</i> <i>ńbii</i> ndík zón. 'My friend will pay the debt tomorrow.' Súu waa <i>ńdǎ</i> <i>ńbii</i> ndík zón. 'My friend will pay the debt tomorrow.'
<i>ńbi</i> 'to sow/plant'	Pangé <i>íggě</i> <i>ńbi</i> ggesán nũ pɛsɛn pétát. 'The women will plant corn in March.' Pangé <i>ńdǎ</i> <i>ńbi</i> ggesán nũ pɛsɛn pétát. 'The women will plant corn in March.'

As to the lexical origin of these markers, *íggě*, as has been stated in §1.4.1, resembles the lexical verb 'to do' and might be the source of this future marker. Bybee et al. posit pathways for the development of future grammatical markers as coming from either desire, obligation or root possibility to intention and from that meaning to future (1994:279). Since this verb also occurs in causative constructions, one might also posit a pathway from causation to intention. The other marker *ńdǎ* resembles the lexical verb *ńdɔ sé* (always occurring with the

³³ This Ngomba tense distinction may have traces of what Bybee et al. term 'definite' vs. 'indefinite future'. They explain this as being a matter of "whether the speaker is offering an assurance that an event will take place at some definite time or is not offering such an assurance." (1994:248-9)

directional *sé*) ‘to get up’ (often used to refer to getting up from a night’s rest) and this is the most probable lexical source of the future marker *ńdǎ*.³⁴

1.4.4 F4 (Remote/Indefinite Future) – *ńtáa* *ń-* / *ń!dá!* *ń!*-

This tense may be employed to refer to events or situations said to occur at some uncertain or unknown date that may be many years into the future. Unlike the other future tenses, its definition includes no reference to the daily cycle. As with the P4, the boundaries of its time domain are not well defined and as has been stated in the preceding section there may be considerable overlap with F3. This seems to be a different kind of future tense from the others, i.e., not what Chung and Timberlake (1985:204) would term a ‘metrical’ or measured tense. Some Ngomba speakers have indicated to me that this tense gives a sense of the event being far off, and yet, as with the P4, speaker certainty, or rather uncertainty, as to the exact timing of the predicted situation or event would appear to be as much, if not more a factor than temporal distance from the deictic centre. This is the tense, for example, that one would employ to state a prediction of what a child will do or become when he or she grows up.

This tense may be indicated by one of two auxiliaries – *ńtáa* or *ń!dá!* – both followed by the main verb with the high-tone verbal prefix. The second, like the P4 marker that resembles it, is also accompanied by downstep in the verb that immediately follows, be that the main verb or an adverbial auxiliary verb as may be seen in example (12):

(12) Examples of verbs in the F4

Verb	Example Sentence
<i>ésa!</i> ‘to destroy/tear down’	<p>Yecó lé! pé <i>ńtáa</i> <i>ésa!</i> ndá wone ńkút yecó. ‘Another day someone shall destroy this house and build another.’</p> <p>Yecó lé! pé <i>ńdá!</i> <i>ésa!</i> ndá wone ńkút yecó. ‘Another day someone shall destroy this house and build another.’</p>
<i>ésá!</i> ‘to rule’	<p>Mó wone <i>ńtáa</i> <i>ésá!</i> ngon wone. ‘This child shall (one day) rule this country.’</p> <p>Mó wone <i>ńdá!</i> <i>ésá!</i> ngon wone. ‘This child shall (one day) rule this country.’</p>

Here again, tone has a very important grammatical role to play, distinguishing one of the F4 tense markers from one of the P4 tense markers³⁵. What the lexical source of these markers might be is unclear.

³⁴ Supporting this hypothesis is the fact that *ńdǎ* appears to be a cognate of the F3 marker in Ngiemboon *lù* (Anderson 1983:298-300) and (Central & So.)Yemba *lu* (Haynes & Harro 1991:43). Hyman says that the Yemba marker *lu* means ‘to get up’ (1980:230).

2 Aspect/Aspectual Meaning in the Ngomba Verb Phrase

Definition of Aspect

Like tense, aspect has to do with time.³⁶ Unlike tense, however, it does not locate events in time with respect to a reference point, but rather “characterizes the internal temporal structure of the event” (Chung & Timberlake 1985:202). Thus, Comrie characterizes the difference between aspect and tense in terms of “situation-internal time (aspect)” as opposed to “situation-external time (tense)” (1976:5). If tense is, as was stated above in §1.1, “grammaticalised location in time,” then aspect may be defined as grammaticalised characterization of the “internal temporal structure of the event”. It is important to note that there may still be aspectual meaning, which is a semantic parameter, even in the absence of any grammatical marking.

A brief look at how aspectual distinctions are defined, that is to say, how one may characterise an event’s internal temporal structure, may be helpful here. Chung and Timberlake conceptualise aspect as having two very basic defining parameters – closure and dynamicity. By closure, they mean that, “an event is limited, bounded or wholly contained in the event frame.”³⁷ (Chung & Timberlake 1985:217) Thus, an event viewed as closed or bounded may be termed *perfective* in aspect, while one which is viewed as not having an upper limit in the event frame nor being contained it would be termed *imperfective*. On the dynamicity parameter they place the opposition between states (non-dynamic) and processes (dynamic) with a common criterion for judging dynamicity being the presence of an agent, that is, “a conscious, willful, responsible instigator.” (Chung & Timberlake 1985:215) Thus, an event that is unbound and dynamic may be termed *progressive* in aspect. These terms will be useful below in discussing aspect in the Ngomba verb phrase. Other pertinent aspectual categories in Ngomba are habitual and iterative, which are considered subtypes of imperfective, and these will be defined below.

³⁵ The P4 tone melody on **ndá'** + **Ní'-stem** is HH H!-(H or L), while for F4 **nd!á'** + **Ní'-stem** it is H!H H!-(H or L). Thus, an F4 verb phrase ends in a perceptibly lower tone register than a P4.

³⁶ Comrie 1976:5; Chung & Timberlake 1985: 256

³⁷ Chung & Timberlake (1985:203) define an event frame as “an interval of time on which the predicate occurs.”

Default aspectual meaning

As was mentioned above in §1.3.1 verbs may have an inherent aspectual meaning associated with them and the Ngomba tense/aspect marking system relies heavily on this. Thus, where there is no overt marking of dynamic verbs for aspect, they may be taken as having perfective aspectual meaning, while unmarked stative verbs are understood to have imperfective aspectual meaning, as may be seen in the example (13):

(13) Examples showing default aspectual meaning

Verb	Example Sentence
ńgɛ 'to go/leave'	Súu waa gǔ mó. 'My friend left already.' (P0 – dynamic verb, perf.)
ńkwét 'to eat'	Móo lá' ń!kwét táa-máŋgól 'The child (earlier today) ate a mango.' (P1 – dynamic verb, perf.)
ńbuŋ 'to be good'	Pé pék ńká'-ńgǔ, ńbó ńcú ńgɔ: Lɛɔ ka pǔń . (P3 – stative verb, imperf.) 'One destroyed a stand of raphia palm while saying that the vine was good.' (an Ngomba proverb)
ńkɔŋ 'to love/like'	Ŋ ka kǔń táa mó. 'I loved/was loving my father.' (P3 – stative verb, imperf.)

It follows, therefore, that for a dynamic verb in Ngomba to take on an imperfective aspectual meaning it must be overtly marked for the imperfective.

Marked aspect

Chung and Timberlake (1985:239) posit two basic types of aspectual organisation and marking systems among the world's languages – closure languages, where the narrowly-defined and marked category is perfective, i.e., frame contains the whole event, and dynamicity languages, where the narrowly-defined and marked category is progressive, i.e., the event as dynamic throughout the frame and not bounded by it. Under this typology, Ngomba more closely resembles a dynamicity language, in that the marked forms are dynamic verbs with imperfective aspect.

According to Comrie (1981:9) there are basically two ways that semantic aspectual distinctions may be expressed -- “by means of the **inflectional morphology** of the language” or “by means of **periphrasis**”.³⁸ Ngomba, as a rule, does not have a complicated morphology, so most aspectual marking, as with tense marking, is done periphrastically through the use of verbal auxiliaries and particles. There is, however, a derivational suffix

³⁸ In a footnote Comrie mentions that there is some dispute as to whether the use of periphrasis constitutes grammaticalization of the progressive aspect or not – most say the English and Spanish progressive does, but that the French construction *être en train de* is not, but rather “a free syntactic construction that expresses the progressive meaning” (Comrie 1976:9).

used to indicate iterativity. The rest of the discussion of aspect will be organized around the markers themselves.

2.3.1 Present Progressive – *sé* *Ń!*-...´

The marking of dynamic verbs as imperfective in aspect is tense-sensitive in Ngomba. The present progressive marker is the particle *sé*. It is employed to indicate that an action or process is ongoing at the moment of speaking. Thus, it is not merely progressive aspect, but also present tense. It may not be employed with other tenses nor may it be employed in verb phrases marked as negative to indicate imperfective aspect. This marker does not have the generic, gnomic or habitual uses associated with the English present tense. As a rule, the situation must literally hold true (or be thought to hold true by the speaker) at the moment of speaking for this marker to be employed.³⁹ It is indicated by the presence of the marker *sé* before verb in conjunction with the high-tone verbal prefix on the main verb and a following grammatical high tone. This marker occasions downstep in the main verb root of high-tone verbs, while low-tone verbs exhibit a rising tone on the root, as may be seen in the example (14):

(14) Examples of verbs in the present progressive

Verb	Example Sentence
ńtó 'to come'	Mo <i>sé</i> <i>ń!tó!</i> 'I'm coming!'
ńzú' 'to perceive or understand'	A <i>sé</i> <i>ń!zú!</i> . ⁴⁰ 'S/He perceives.'
ésuk 'to wash'	Súu waa <i>sé</i> <i>ésũk</i> mbũũ. 'My friend is washing himself.'

As a rule, this marker is employed only with dynamic verbs for the reasons stated above. It may, however, be used exceptionally with a stative verb to express what is perceived of as a temporary and/or unusual state, hence an emphatic use. This contrasts with the non-emphatic habitual/gnomic present tense-aspect interpretation of a stative verb in the P0 tense. For example, an Ndaa person tasting a drink that he or she expects to be alcoholic, who then finds it to be 'sweet', i.e., having little or no alcohol content, might then be heard to remark with surprise and perhaps consternation: *Melú!* *sé* *ńdũũ!* 'The wine is being sweet!'

In grammaticalisation terms, the marker *sé* originates in what Bybee et al. (1994:131) term a locative source, being primarily a noun that may be glossed in English as 'ground' or 'earth'⁴¹. *Sé* is also employed as the existential marker in existential clauses where it is

³⁹ I have one instance in my data in which a person describing a hypothetical situation employs this marker perhaps as a means of making the description more vivid and thus involving the listeners more in what is being communicated.

⁴⁰ This may be an more emphatic usage.

⁴¹ This word has cognates in other Bantu languages...

glossed as ‘to be there’, though it is not necessarily a verb as such.⁴² In the present affirmative, it may stand alone as the existential marker, but for phrases in other tenses, it must be preceded by the appropriate form of the verb *mbó* ‘to be’.

2.3.2 (Present) Habitual/frequentative – *lo* *N*-

To mark a verb as habitual/frequentative in aspect and to have it hold true for the moment of speaking, the marker *lo* ‘often/usually’ is employed. Unlike the Present Progressive, the Present Habitual does not imply that the situation must literally hold for the moment of speaking, but rather that it is characteristic of a broader time frame that includes the time of the utterance.⁴³ Its functions include the gnomic and generic affirmative statement functions of the English Present.

Ngomba would appear to be rare among the world’s languages in having a marked present habitual. Bybee et al. found in their study that present habitual grammatical markers (as opposed to habitual aspect markers that work with all tenses or those that are specifically past habituals) are exceedingly rare. Those they did find (there were only two in their database) had zero expression (Bybee et al. 1994:175), i.e., were unmarked. They surmise that this is because habitual may be one of the “default aspectual readings of present tense, but not of past” (Bybee et al. 1994: 151).

In Ngomba, however, we do find a marked present habitual marker. As was seen above in § 0.3 and §2.2, the need for this marker seems to arise from Ngomba’s reliance on or exploitation of the inherent aspectual meanings of verbs. Dynamic verbs, as was noted in §1.3.1, have an inherent perfective aspectual meaning and the P0 form has a past tense interpretation. Therefore, to obtain a present habitual for dynamic verbs, Ngomba must use a marker. Stative verbs (including cognitive or emotional states), however, being inherently imperfective and since the P0 form already has a present tense interpretation, do not seem to have as great a need for a present habitual marker as dynamic verbs do. Their ‘generic’ present imperfective can be employed for expressing gnomic or generic statements with stative verbs, such as *Menjinaa kōŋ nekwét mekup*. ‘Pigs like eating peelings’ . I have found instances in my data of *lo* occurring immediately preceding a stative verb, but there the

⁴²In Satre (1999:14) I argue that *sé* is an invariable particle since it does not take a verbal negator. Another indicator of this status is that to put existential clauses into a time other than the present or to include an adverbial auxiliary this marker must be coupled with the appropriate form of the verb *mbó* ‘to be’.

⁴³Comrie (1976:27-28) says that the habitual aspect is used to “describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment, but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period.”

stative verb is functioning as a modifier of the main verb and is not the head of the verb phrase as may be seen in example (15):

(15) Example of the habitual marker preceding a stative modifying verb

Verb	Example Sentence
ῥβότνέ ῥκῆῶ 'to run slowly'	A lῶ ῥβότνέ ῥκῆῶ. 3S HAB be_soft run "S/He usually runs slowly."

It is important to note that, since they have distinct aspectual meanings, the two present imperfective markers for dynamic verbs – *sé* the Present Progressive and *lῶ* the Present Habitual – cannot co-occur in the verb phrase. Its use with other tense markers is also not allowed. It may and often does, however, occur in clauses where there is a time word intensified by the use of quantifiers such as *tsuu* 'all' or *ηγῶη...tsuu* 'every', which seem to reinforce the habitual meaning.

The Present Habitual in Ngomba is most commonly employed to express generic statements involving a dynamic verb and is indicated by the presence of the marker *lῶ* followed by a verb (either the main verb or some intervening modifying verb) with the high-tone verbal prefix as may be seen in the example (16):

(16) Examples of verbs in the present habitual

Verb	Example Sentence
ῥγῶ 'to go/leave for'	A lῶ ῥγῶ né μετάα ηγῶη πῆμῶτάα ⁴⁴ tsuu núu nem saambá. 'S/He usually goes to the market every major market day at 7 o'clock.'
ῥμμα' πῆῶ 'to hunt'	Πύ'ntuu lῶ ῥμμα' πῆῶ netú' 'The lion usually hunts at night.'
ῥτό 'to come'	A lῶ ῥτό ῥδί. 'S/He usually comes late.'

It is not clear what the lexical source of this marker is.

2.3.3 (Non-present) Imperfective – ῥβῶ / πῶ ῥ!-

To mark a dynamic verb as imperfective in aspect, though not necessarily specified as to progressive or habitual, for tenses other than the present, a form of the verb *ῥβῶ* 'to be' is employed in conjunction with the required tense markings. Its use in the verb phrase generally signals an ongoing action in whichever time frame is indicated by the tense marking, be it past or future, though future use is rare. It may be given a habitual/frequentative interpretation when it co-occurs with an appropriate time expression such as *ηγῶη ῥκά tsuu* 'every time/ all the time'. Typically, a past imperfective is employed

⁴⁴ *Mῶτάα* (pl *πῆμῶτάα*) is the name of the major market day in Mbouda which is the seat of the district where the traditional homeland of the Ndaa is located and it occurs once every eight days.

in narrative discourse to set the stage for some other action. Thus, while a past imperfective clause may be able to stand alone syntactically, pragmatically, it more often cannot, as it leads the audience to expect some other action. It resembles the various non-present progressives in English in that the tense is indicated by the appropriate form of the auxiliary verb. The tense marking and required form of *mbó*, functioning as an auxiliary verb, precede the main verb. This is also accompanied by downstep between the prefix and root of the main verb as may be seen in example (17):

(17) Examples of verbs in the (non-present) imperfective

Verb	Example Sentence
ńzá' 'to cut'	N dá' m!bó ń!zá' mbap. 'I (P1)was cutting meat (earlier today).'
ńcú!lé 'to meet'	Mɛnaa-tét pó ń!cú!lé ndá-fɔɔ wɪnɛ lík yé ka pó Púntuu. 'The animals of the field (P0)were meeting at the house of the chief, whose name (P4)was Lion.'
ńtsó' 'to pull up'	A ka pó ń!tsó' netsɛn-mekúu núu ŋkaa-pesé!súu, lá nó cŵět rívuute wɛ. 'S/He (P4)was pulling up bean plants on an anthill, then a snake came out and startled him/her.
ńgɛ 'to go/leave for'	A ka pó ń!gɛ né metáa ŋgɔŋ pɛmôtáa tsuu. 'S/He (P4)was going to the market every major market day.'

As was mentioned in a footnote in §0.2, there is some flexibility of word order in a (non-present) imperfective verb phrase as may be seen in example 18. (Note, also, how the forms of the modifying verb and the imperfective marker *mbó* vary according to their position relative to the tense marker.):

(18) Example of variation in word order in an imperfective verb phrase with a modifying verb

Verb	Example Sentence
ńbótné éfa' 'to work slowly'	A ka pó ń!bótné éfa'. 'S/He (P3)was working slowly.'
	A ka pótné ńbó é!fa'. 'S/He (P3)slowly was working.'

The lexical source for this marker, as has been indicated above, is the verb 'to be', which is also employed in the language in non-present (i.e., past or future) locative or existential clauses.

2.3.4 Iterative -- *tɛ*

To mark a verb as iterative in aspect, the derivational suffix⁴⁵ *-tɛ* is employed. Its basic meaning is to indicate that the action of the verb is "repeated on a particular occasion"⁴⁶, as opposed to habitual, where an action may also be repeated, but on a number of occasions over a longer period. Thus, when affixed to a dynamic and telic verb such as *ńkít* 'to jump', it

⁴⁵ This type of suffix is also referred to as a verbal extension.

⁴⁶ Bybee et al. (1994:127)

yields *ɲkítte* ‘to jump repeatedly’ or ‘to jump up and down’. It is not limited to this basic meaning, however, as Bybee et al. (1994:161) have observed:

“The plurality or repetition in iterative meaning does not apply just to the action itself...a gram used for iterative action may also convey the idea that multiple participants were involved in the action or that the action was distributed over several separate agents, goals, or locations.”

Thus when affixed to the verb *ɲtswet* ‘to pour’ it adds the meaning of multiple goals or recipients of the action as may be seen in the following example (19):

(19)

Verb	Example Sentence
<i>ɲtswette</i> ‘to pour repeatedly/ to irrigate or water’	A <i>tswette</i> ⁴⁷ <i>peflúwa</i> . 3S pour.IT pl-flower He/she watered the flowers.

For verbs that are not telic, i.e., lacking a definite cycle of beginning and ending, the use of this suffix does not yield a meaning of repetitive action, but of the action having a longer duration.⁴⁸ Hence, when added to the verb *ɲkwanɛ* ‘to think’, the result is *ɲkwanɛte* (*nú nu*), which may be glossed in English as ‘to think (something over), to consider or reflect (about a matter)’. While the suffix *-te* is productive as a device for adding or changing aspectual meaning, it must be noted that it often seems to cross the line from grammatical to lexical derivation.

As has been seen, the marker here is a derivational suffix. This suffix may be considered toneless, as it seems to fit into the tonal melody of the verb to which it is affixed. Thus, in the nominalised form of a lexically low-tone verb, it will carry a low tone, while with the nominalised form of a lexically high-tone, it will carry a high tone, as may be seen in the following examples: *netswette* ‘watering/irrigation’, *nekítte* ‘jumping (repeatedly)’.

The lexical source for this marker is not clear, although it does resemble the adverbial *te/te'* [*tɛ/tɛ'*] ‘until, to the point of’, which is often used conversationally as a sort of intensifier or emphatic marker.

2.3.5 Iterative or Durative Aspect – stem!reduplicated stem-*nɛ*↑

Another way to mark a verb phrase for iterative aspect is by the phonological process of reduplication coupled with the addition of the suffix *-nɛ*. The meaning of this form is similar

⁴⁷ The following high of the P0 in this case maps onto the toneless suffix, so instead of low rising, you find L H.

⁴⁸ Bybee et al. 1994:169 “A less well defined activity, such as thinking, if continued, is not so much repeated, as increased in duration.”

to that accorded by the addition of suffix *-te* just mentioned, i.e., for telic verbs it communicates the idea of repetition of the event and for atelic verbs the idea of long duration of the event. It is important to note that the second occurrence of the stem in this form is pronounced in a slightly lower tone register (indicated by an exclamation mark in the example). The register is then reset back to the original level (indicated by an up arrow in round brackets in the example below) for the repetition of the reduplicated form as well as for the completion of the sentence with another clause. This entire reduplicated form may also be repeated.

It is not clear what precise function the suffix *-ne* has in this construction. Overall in the language it acts as a valence-lowering device and occurs in reciprocal and middle constructions as well marking verbs in relative clauses. In discourse, the entire reduplicated form with *-ne* often occurs as a non-initial clause in a same subject chain, repeating (and amplifying) the main verb in the initial clause of the chain. There it is marked as part of a same-subject clause chain by the presence of the phonologically-conditioned high-tone prefix that we have seen in many other verb forms. As a non-initial chain, it gets its tense from the initial clause. In example (20) below we see examples taken from discourses and each has the reduplicated form repeated:

(20) Examples of reduplication

Verb	Example Sentence
ńdɔɔ 'to seek/ look_for'	A cwět né pii mbō ńdɔɔ mōŋgɔ ¹ ; ńdɔɔ!lɔɔné (↑)ńdɔɔ!lɔɔné (↑) rńbɔɔ júɔ. 3S exit(P0) to outside for seek small.stone, seek(2x) seek(2x) NEG see He went outside to look for the grinding stone; he looked and looked and looked and looked for it without finding it.
ńtúŋtɛ (núu) 'to dig (into)'	ŋ ka túŋtɛ núu nu -cú -lá ¹ ; ńtúŋtɛ!túŋtɛné (↑) ńtúŋtɛ!túŋtɛné (↑) 1S P4 dig.IT into problem -of_talk -of_village; dig.IT(2x) dig.IT (2x) I dug repeatedly into the problem of the local language; I dug and dug and dug and dug into it te ⁴⁹ ńniitɛ mík -ŋwa'nɛ. till prepare marks-of_writing until I came up with an alphabet.

This verb form may also occur apart from a clause chain as in the sentence: *A gɔɔgɔɔné.*
'He/she has been sick a long time.'

There is no need to look for a lexical source for this method of aspect marking. However, Bybee et. al's (1994:159) observation seems very a propos :

“...iterative is the most iconic aspectual sense for reduplication...in our data iterative is the most common meaning expressed by total reduplication”.

⁴⁹ The IT suffix *-té* does not appear to be related to the word *te* 'until/to the point of' that serves as a conjunction.

While it is not a separate tense/aspect form per se, it is interesting to note that the use of reduplication in Ngomba discourse may even extend to an entire clause or sentence of more than one clause. This may be seen in example (21) taken from a folk tale about a man, his cat, his dog and a magic ring:

- (21) Mbaŋ-shú lɛɛ, a jwí.
 grain-of_fish pass(P0), 3S kill(P0)
 Mbaŋ-shú lɛɛ, a jwí.
 grain-of_fish pass(P0), 3S kill(P0)
 Mbaŋ-shú lɛɛ, a jwí,
 grain-of_fish pass(P0), 3S kill(P0)
- te ntó nepóm-wecó mbaŋ-shú ; mbɛn ícwɛɛte fyɛt ɛwá ŋkóɔne ;
 until come stomach-of_certain grain-of_fish return get_out ring that now
- Whenever a fish passed by, he(the cat) killed it (and this went on) until he came to the belly of a certain fish and got that ring out now.

Before going on to the negative markers in Ngomba, let's review the affirmative ones. We saw that a verb phrase that is not specifically marked for aspect receives its aspect interpretation from the inherent aspectual category of the main verb (perfective or imperfective) and that this, in turn, is the basis for the tense interpretation of the unmarked P0 form (recent past for the perfective and present for the imperfective). We also saw that because of the system's dependence on inherent aspect, there exists a number of markers used to mark dynamic (inherently perfective) verbs as imperfective, two of which (*sé* and *lo*) also mark them for present tense. In Table I, the high-tone verbal prefix for the main verb is represented by *N̂-* and the stem of the main verb is not represented. The forward slash (/) is used to separate alternate forms with roughly the same meaning:

Table I: Summary of Affirmative Tense and Aspect Markers in Ngomba

Tense	Not Marked for Aspect	Marked Imperfective
P4	ka lá' N̂-! / ndá' N̂-!	ka lá' m!bó N̂-!
P3	ka...'	ka pó N̂-!
P2	N̂- "	m!bó N̂-!
P1	lá' N̂-!	lá' m!bó N̂-!
P0	...' (interpreted as RECENT PST PERF w/ dynamic verbs and PRES PROG w/ stative verbs)	pó N̂-! sé N̂-! (PRES PROG) lo N̂- (PRES HAB) REDUP [stem!redup-ne↑] (IT)
F1	gě N̂-... ' / gě N̂-... '	gě m!bó N̂-! / gě m!bó N̂-!
F2	N̂-... '	m!bó N̂-!
F3	ndó N̂-... ' / ngě N̂-... '	ndó m!bó N̂-! / ngě m!bó N̂-!
F4	ntáa N̂- / ndá' N̂-!	ntáa m!bó N̂-! / ndá' m!bó N̂-!

lɔɔ is the negative form of the Habitual, being glossed in English with ‘never’.

It was noted above in §0.3 that several of the markers - *ɨkàa*, *ɨkaa* (for the P3), *lɔɔ* and (for the F2) *ké* - do double duty. For example, *ɨkàa* (P2) and *ɨkaa* (P3) are each employed to indicate a specific tense and that the verb phrase is negative. One wonders if there is some kind of relationship between the fact that these markers indicate two things at once and that many of them have lengthened vowels. One possible explanation is that there has been a fusion of tense/aspect markers with negative markers at some earlier point in the history of the language. Evidence to support the plausibility of such an explanation may be seen in the fact that phrase-level contractions involving partial vowel assimilation are quite common in Ngomba – after nouns with possessive pronouns or indicative markers and after verbs with object pronouns – and these often result in phonetic lengthened vowels (Satre 1997:6-7).⁵³

Another noticeable feature of nearly all negative verb phrases in Ngomba (those with *lɔɔ* being the only exceptions) is that whichever verb immediately follows the negative marker, whether it be the main verb or some auxiliary of manner or tense, it cannot in that position carry the high-tone verbal prefix. This feature occasions some collapsing and/or switching around of the marking of certain tense distinctions in negative verb phrases as opposed to their affirmative counterparts as may be seen by comparing Table II with Table I and this will be discussed below in sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2, and 3.1.4.

Combinations of tense and negation

P4 (Distant Past) and P3 (Non-recent Past) Negative Marker – *ɨkaa*

For the past tenses P4 and the P3 that employ the marker *ka* in the affirmative, the negative form consists of replacing that marker with the negative marker *ɨkaa*. In the P3 this marker immediately precedes the verb root and in portmanteau fashion is both tense and negative marker. In the P4 it is followed by *lá'* and then the main verb with its high-tone prefix. There can be no alternate P4 marker *ndá'* in the negative, due to the apparent prohibition in Ngomba against prefixing any verb that immediately follows a negative marker. Hence, there is some collapsing of tense markers in the negative P4 verb phrase as is evident when one compares the third sentence in example (22) with example (7):

⁵³ Here are a few of examples: 1) the underlying form of the noun phrase /ndá yu/ is typically pronounced [ndóó] 2) The clause /tó ntsé'lé waa/ ‘Come greet me!’ is typically pronounced [tó ntsé'là:] 3) The clause /mbó a nem waa/ ‘Can he bite me?’ is typically pronounced [mbàà nēm a:].

(22) Examples with the negative marker *ɨkaa*

Verb	Example Sentence
ɨjí 'to know'	Kɔɨjéɔ ɨkaa jí yúu lík yé lɔkɨɛ ɨcú pɔ. 'Kodjeuo didn't(P3) know what his name meant.'
ɨgɛ 'to go/leave'	ŋgán, Yósep ɨkaa gɛ né Yawúnde ɨgap yí pɔ. 'No, Joseph did not(P3) go to Yaoundé last week.'
ɨtó 'to come'	ŋgán, <i>Ahidjo</i> ɨkaa lá' ɨ(!)tó Mbu'ndaa, né ɨgu' tá' tóɔshi né ɨkɛ yénépfú'ú né mɛgém saamba' pɔ. 'No, Ahidjo didn't(P4) come to Mbouda around 1970.'

One may speculate that this marker is a fusion of the tense-marker *ka* with a negative marker, perhaps *ká*, or perhaps some other form.

P2 (Pre-hodiernal past) Negative Marker – *ɨkàa*

The P2 tense has a marker that combines both negation and tense. It looks like the P3/P4 negative marker, but it has the distinctive P2 'super low' tone on its root:

(23) Examples of P2 Negative clauses

Verb	Example
ɨtó 'to come'	ŋgú'ɔ ɨkàa tó zón pɔ. 'Ngouo did not come yesterday'
ésuk 'to wash'	Mɔ ɨkàa suk matúwa zón pɔ. 'I did not wash the car yesterday.'

This is a case of the tense marking, instead of being realised on the main verb, being realised on the negative marker. This appears to be the fusion of a negative marker, perhaps *ká*⁵⁴, with the P2 tense-marking (*ŋ*- "). One might object, however, that the vowel length is not adequately accounted for by this hypothesis.

ká... ' – P1 (Hodiernal Past) and P0 (Present or Immediate Past) Negative Marker

The marker *ká* is employed in P1 and P0 negative verb phrases. Unlike P3 and P4 in the negative, where it seems one marker replaces another, here, the marker *ká* is inserted into the verb phrase for both P1 and P0 tenses with no further changes in tone. This may be seen, for example, if one compares the second sentence in the example (24) with the first sentence in example (3) or the last sentence in example (24) with the last sentence in example (4):

(24) Examples with the negative marker *ká*

Verb	Example
ɨtó 'to come'	ŋgú'ɔ ká tó. 'Ngouo didn't(P0) come.' (implies he is not present)
ɨndɛ 'to be sweet'	Mɛnik ká lɛɛ. 'The milk isn't(P0) sweet.'
ésuk 'to wash'	ŋ ká lá' é! suk matúwa mba'mba' lɔ'ɔ pɔ. 'I didn't(P1) wash the car this morning.'

⁵⁴ One might further speculate that originally, *ká* was a generally used non-future negative marker.

The implications of the two tenses do not change in the negative, that is, what is reported is thought to still hold true for the moment of speaking with the P0, whereas with the P1 no such assertion is made.

It is interesting to note that, in the negative, the P1 is distinguished from the P4 only by the difference in negative markers, otherwise they would be identical. This is a good example of the rather complex interplay of tense and negative markers in Ngomba. In order to maintain the contrast between the P1 and the P4, the tense distinction is shifted to the difference in negative markers, while the distinction between the P1 and the P0 is maintained by the P1 tense marking.

3.1.4 Alternate Negative Marker for P1 (Hodiernal Past)⁵⁵ – *mbɔɔ*

The marker *mbɔɔ* is another marker that may be employed to mark the verb phrase for negation when speaking of situations that are located in time earlier in the day the same day that utterance is made. What is unusual about this marker is that it follows rather than precedes the P1 tense marker *lá'* as may be seen in example (25). The presence of the high-tone nasal prefix on the negative marker *mbɔɔ* seems to be occasioned by the tense marker. That, in turn, would indicate that this negative marker is an auxiliary verb rather than an invariable particle. The *lá' mbɔɔ* negative construction is interchangeable with the *ká lá'*, as may be seen below (note the use of P1 and P0 together in the top example):

(25) Examples of P1 negative sentences showing alternative negative markers

Verb	Example
ɲgɛ 'to go'	A <i>lá' mbɔɔ gɛ</i> mɛtáa mba'mba' pó, lá a gɛ tɛt. 'He (P1) did not go to the market this morning, but he went(P0) to the field.' A <i>ká lá' ɲ(!)gɛ</i> mɛtáa mba'mba' pó, lá a gɛ tɛt. 'He did not(P1) go to the market this morning, but he went(P0) to the field.'
ńtɔ 'to come'	A <i>lá' mbɔɔ tɔ</i> núu tãm pó. 'He (P1) did not come on time. (earlier today)' A <i>ká' lá' ń(!)tɔ</i> núu tãm pó. 'He did not(P1) come on time. (earlier today)'

It is interesting to note the lengthened vowel in the negative marker *mbɔɔ* which may be taken as an evidence of marker fusion. It seems most likely that this form arose in the other construction where it occurs – a modal ability or root possibility construction (see footnote #52) – and then had its use extended to this tense.

3.1.5 Negative Marker of Future Tenses – *ké...*

The marker *ké* is used to mark all future tense verb phrases for negation. As in the case of the P0 and P1 negative marker *ká*, it is inserted into the verb phrase before the main verb (in

⁵⁵ Another use of *mbɔɔ/pɔɔ* is as the negative marker in modal constructions of ability or root possibility. For example, *Mbɔɔ tɔ* 'You can come' (affirmative) vs *Mbɔɔ pɔɔ tɔ* 'You cannot come' (negative).

the F2) or before the auxiliary marking the tense. As has been noted with the other negative markers, the verb that immediately follows this marker, auxiliary or main verb, may not be prefixed as may be seen in example (26):

(26) Examples of negative verb phrases with *ké*

Tense	Verb	Example Sentence
F1	ńtó 'to come'	Súu waa ké gě ńtó ntsun̄kw̄e' pó. 'My friend will not come this evening.'
F1	ńḡu 'to go/leave'	Yós̄ep ké gě ńḡu né Fu'usap n̄em n̄egém pó. 'Joseph will not leave for Bafoussam at 10 o'clock.'
F2	ńzúu 'to buy'	Súu waa ké zúu m̄mbí zón. 'My friend is about to buy a goat tomorrow.'
F2	ńḡu 'to go/leave'	Ŋ ké ḡu kwa' ŋk̄ó pó. 'I am not about to leave right now.'
F3	m̄bíi 'to pay'	Súu waa ké l̄ m̄bíi ndík yé zón pó. 'My friend will not pay his debt tomorrow.'
F3	m̄bí 'to sow/plant'	Panḡé ké l̄ m̄bí ŋgesán n̄ũ pesan̄ pépá pó. 'The women will not plant corn in February.'
F4	ésá' 'to rule'	Mó̄o w̄on̄e ké táa ésá' ŋḡon̄ w̄on̄e. 'This child shall not (one day) rule this country.'
F4	éfa' 'to work'	A ké !lá' é!f̄e'ne éfa' pó. S/He shall not (ever) work quickly.

Note that the main verb stem in the F2 negative retains the following grammatical high tone that was present in the affirmative.

Here again, the suppression of the high-tone verbal prefix following the negative marker makes for some interesting variations in how the contrasts are maintained. For example, with the loss of the prefix, the main verb in the F2 is the same form as the P0, but the contrast is not lost, because it is maintained by their respective negative markers *ké* and *ká*. The loss of the high-tone verbal prefix on the auxiliary in the F3 negative form means that there can only be one auxiliary to mark the tense, *l̄*, as *ńḡě* is no longer available, since it becomes identical to the F1 tense marker *gě*.

The negative forms of present progressive and (non-present) imperfective verb phrases all employ *m̄bó* in conjunction with the required tense and negative markers mentioned in § 3.1.1-5 as was shown above in Table II.

Negative Marker for Habitual Aspect – *l̄ō N̄...'*

The marker *l̄ō* is the negative form of the present habitual marker *l̄o* and may be glossed as 'never' in English. It is employed for negative habitual, gnomic or generic statements and is interpreted as holding true at the moment of speaking, hence it also has present tense connotations. As has been noted above in §3, the verb immediately following it does carry the high-tone verbal prefix as may be seen in the example (27):

(27) Examples with *lɔɔ*

Verb	Example Sentence
ńgɛ 'to go/leave for'	A <i>lɔɔ</i> <i>ńgɛ</i> nɛ metáa nɛm saambá pó. 'S/He never goes to the market at 7 o'clock.'
mbí 'to sow/plant'	Pangé <i>lɔɔ</i> <i>mbí</i> ńgesáj nũu pɛsaj pɛpá pó. 'The women never plant corn in February.'

There appears to be a close relationship between the affirmative and negative habitual markers. As was mentioned in §3, one may speculate that this marker is the result of a fusion of the affirmative habitual marker *lɔ* and a negative marker.

4 Summary

In this paper I have set forth the tense, aspect and negation markers in Ngomba employed to produce nine tense distinctions (Past 0-4 and Future 1-4) and three marked aspectual distinctions (Present Progressive, Present Habitual and (Non-Present) Imperfective) . I have shown the important role that the inherent aspectual meanings of verbs plays in the tense interpretation of the P0 form and as *raison d'être* for the imperfective markers. I have shown how the variety of negative markers probably arose from a fusion of tense and aspect markers with negative markers.

In the area of Tense/Aspect/Mood, Mood, which also occasions two negative markers in Ngomba (*mbɔɔ* for ability/root possibility and *kɔɔ* for the imperative), remains to be thoroughly investigated and described.

References

- Anderson, Stephen, C. 1983. 'Tone and morpheme rules in Bamileke-Ngiemboon.' PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Unpublished manuscript.
- Bybee, Joan, Revere Perkins & William Pagliuca. 1994. *The evolution of grammar : tense, aspect, and modality in the languages of the world*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Chung, Sandra & Alan Timberslake. 1985. Tense Aspect Mood. In Timothy Shopen, ed. *Language typology and description, Vol. 3*, pp. 202-58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1976. *Aspect*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1985. *Tense*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dahl, Östen. 1984. 'Temporal distance: remoteness distinctions in tense-aspect systems.' In Brian Butterworth, Bernard Comrie & Östen Dahl, eds., *Explanations for language universals*, pp. 105-22. Berlin: Mouton.
- Dahl, Östen. 1985. *Tense and aspect systems*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Dieu, Michel and Patrick Renaud 1983. *Atlas linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM)*. Yaounde : DGRST / Institut des sciences humaines.
- Grant, C. A. 1993. A rapid appraisal survey of Ngomba (Nda'a) [Bamboutos Division, West Province]. Unpublished manuscript.
- Grimes, Barbara F., ed. 2000. *Ethnologue: languages of the world*. 14th Edition. Dallas: SIL.
- Harro, Gretchen and Nancy Haynes 1991. *Grammar Sketch of Yemba (Preliminary Draft)*. Unpublished manuscript. Yaounde: SIL.
- Hyman, Larry M. 1980. 'Relative time reference in the Bamileke tense system', *Studies in African Linguistics* 11, 227-237.
- Marchese, Lynell. 1986. *Tense/Aspect and the Development of Auxiliaries in Kru Languages*. DALLAS: SIL & University of Texas at Arlington.
- Payne, John R. 1985. 'Negation.' In Timothy Shopen, ed. *Language typology and syntactic description, Vol. 1*, pp. 197-242. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Satre, Scott A. 1997. *Phonology Sketch of Ngomba*. Unpublished manuscript. Yaoundé : SIL
- Satre, Scott A. 1999. *The simple clause in Ngomba*. Unpublished manuscript. Yaoundé : SIL
- Welmers, William E. 1968. *Efik*. (Occasional Publication, No. 11) Ibadan: Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.
- Welmers, William E. 1973. *African Language Structures*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Watters, John R. and Jacqueline Leroy 1989. 'Southern Bantoid'. In John Bendor-Samuel, ed. *Niger-Congo Languages*, pp. 430-449. Lanham: University Press of America.

Appendix 1

A comprehensive chart of the Ngomba Tense-Aspect system showing the various markers/auxiliaries, the presence or absence of the nasal prefix on the main verb, whether or not there is downstep between the prefix and main verb root.