1. Introduction

The setting and background information, storyline, and peak episodes of the Mbodomo\(^1\) folktale narrative each have contrastive pragmatic features. In the context of these pragmatic features, the tense/aspect system plays an important role. The past tense is the normal verb inflection for communicating background information and for detailing the setting in Mbodomo narrative. In the storyline and in the peak, tense/aspect is not usually marked except where the coherence of the narrative is in some way disrupted. Tense/aspect is one of the means used to mark the point of disruption and, at the same time, maintain overall coherence in the narrative.

The texts referred to in this paper are primarily the folktales *The Girl and the Serpent* and *Hyena and Squirrel*, recounted to and recorded by Bagoutou

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* Many thanks go to Bagoutou Djembélé Sylvain and the many other people of Gandima Tongo and Garoua Yaka who helped me learn Mbodomo. Also my appreciation is due to Ngezéré Guillaume for correcting my errors in Mbodomo and to Myles Leitch, Keith Snider, Rhonda Thwing, Steve Anderson, and Phil Noss for their input, comments, and encouragement. Many thanks also go to Dianne Friesen who proof read this paper.

\(^1\) Mbodomo is a Gbaya language spoken in eastern Cameroon. It is in the Adamawa-Ubangi group of the Niger-Congo language family. Although the name of the language is Mbódômô, the English spelling will be used throughout this paper.
Djembé Sylvain in the Mbodomo village of Gandima Tongo (see APPENDIX). Four other texts, from the same source, are used, but to a lesser extent. The Bongo is a folk tale of a man who goes hunting for bongo. He reserves the best portion for himself, but each of his four wives steals some of it. In an effort to find the guilty person, he puts them all to a test, which all but one pass with flying colors. Mbádimbáŋ is a tale of a fighting contest between the title character, whose name signifies a filthy, rude person, and the Spider “Tò”. Báfiá tells the tale of what happens to Tò when he insists on exchanging noses with his friend Báfiá who has an immense nose. In both of the latter two tales, Tò gets himself into trouble and needs to be rescued by others who show more wisdom than he. Zùbèlà is the tale of a great hunt which the title character leads. Due to a lack of foresight, the hunters fail to bring water with them. After a very successful hunt, everyone is feasting and making merry until everyone but Zùbèlà is dying of thirst.

2. The structure of the Mbodomo verb

The basic structure of the verb consists of a verb root plus either an inflectional suffix or an auxiliary verb. The past tense is formed by adding a past tense suffix -à, whose surface form alternates according to vowel harmony constraints governed by the main vowel of the verb root. All other tense/aspects are formed with auxiliary verbs, some of which precede the verb, others which follow. These forms are considered auxiliaries, following Noss [1981] in his description of Yaayuwe, a language closely related to Mbodomo. The Mbodomo verb takes only one tense/aspect inflection at a time. The forms listed in (1) summarize the relevant tense/aspect inflections found in Mbodomo (note: V = verb root).

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2 In going over this data with a colleague, it became clear that in reality both tense and aspect are marked on the verb: tense and secondary aspect (HAB, PROG, etc.) are marked by the presence of either the suffix or of one of the auxiliaries mentioned above, and basic aspect by tone on the verb root. There are two basic aspects in Mbodomo: perfective and imperfective. Perfective is indicated by a low tone on the verb root, and imperfective by a high tone. However, the tense/aspect system in Mbodomo is frozen and completely predictable, and there are no constructions where the only difference is one of tone. Furthermore, the basic aspect marked by tone on the verb root can be entirely factored out and the system still make sense. The tree below illustrates the grammatical choices available:

```
T/A <  
   |  
   |  Perfective <  
   |  |  PRF  
   |  |  CON  
   |  |  PST  
   |  Imperfective <  
   |  |  FUT  
   |  |  HAB  
   |  |  PROG  
   |  |  PST PROG
```
(1) Perfective:

- v-à past
- ù v só perfect
- màa ù consecutive

Imperfective:

- tà ù future
- ù kà (pres.) habitual
- á ù (pres.) progressive
- dùn-ù ù past progressive

Verbs that are non-present tense are explicitly marked for tense, either future, as in (2), or past, as in (3), and are not marked for secondary aspect.

(2) Future tense: Future Aux + Verb^3

kóé tà tò yòmbö.
woman FUT pound cassava
'The woman will pound cassava.'

(3) Past tense: Verb + past tense suffix

tòló yar-à kò-m.
dog lick-PST hand-1S.INALN
'The dog licked my hand.'

Verbs that are in the present tense are explicitly marked for secondary aspect only, either habitual imperfective, as in (4), or progressive imperfective, as in (5a) and (b).

(4) Habitual (present): Verb + Habitual Aux

mús bòŋ lá kà á lí yarà.
cat 1S.ALN sleep HAB PREP top bed
'My cat habitually sleeps on the bed.'

^3 The following abbreviations are used in this article:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALN</th>
<th>AUX</th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>CAUS</th>
<th>COMP</th>
<th>CON</th>
<th>CONJ</th>
<th>COP</th>
<th>DEM</th>
<th>EXCL</th>
<th>FOC</th>
<th>FUT</th>
<th>HAB</th>
<th>INALN</th>
<th>INT</th>
<th>INTR</th>
<th>LOG</th>
<th>NOM</th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>POSS</th>
<th>PREP</th>
<th>PRF</th>
<th>PROG</th>
<th>PST</th>
<th>PURP</th>
<th>REL</th>
<th>RELX</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>SIM</th>
<th>TOP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alienable poss.</td>
<td>auxiliary verb</td>
<td>benefactive prep.</td>
<td>causative marker</td>
<td>complementizer</td>
<td>consecutive action</td>
<td>conjunction</td>
<td>copula</td>
<td>demonstrative</td>
<td>exclamation</td>
<td>focus</td>
<td>future tense</td>
<td>habitual aspect</td>
<td>inalienable poss.</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
<td>intransitive suffix</td>
<td>logophoric pronoun</td>
<td>nominal suffix</td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>possession</td>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>perfect aspect</td>
<td>progressive aspect</td>
<td>past tense</td>
<td>purpose conj.</td>
<td>relative clause mark</td>
<td>reflexive pronoun</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>simultaneity</td>
<td>topical marker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(5) Progressive (present): Progressive Aux + Verb (intransitive suffix)
   a. kóé á gí súgà.
      woman PROG cook cassava greens
      ‘The woman is cooking cassava greens.’

   b. màtùà á lák-né.
      vehicle PROG leave-INTR
      ‘The car is leaving.’

The perfect aspect is marked by the auxiliary, só, as shown in (6). The periphrastic verbal structure, dùŋ ‘to sit, remain’ plus the past tense marker, -à, preceding the verb, as in (7), expresses a past progressive.

(6) Perfect: Verb + Perfect marker
   kóé yèśidì só é-mò wà fèt
   squirrel arrange PRF PL-things 3S.ALN already
   ‘Squirrel had already arranged his things...’ [HS 11]

(7) Past progressive: dùŋ + past tense suffix + verb root
   élé dùŋ-ú wór mò odile mà hò-à.
   1P stay-PST talk something Odile SIM arrive-PST
   ‘We were talking when Odile arrived.’

In narrative discourse, a verbal construction occurs which is not found elsewhere. Welmers [1973:364] and Longacre [1990] call this narrative-unique predicate form the “consecutive tense”, which in Mbodomo is formed by juxtaposing the auxiliary verb mà before the verb root, as in (8). The consecutive tense functions as a past perfective within the storyline of a narrative text.

(8) Consecutive tense: Consecutive Aux. + Verb
   Mbádímbáŋ mà kàŋ Tò lò á nù.
   Mbádímbáŋ CON pick up To throw PREP ground
   ‘Mbadimbang (then) picked up To and threw (him) to the ground.’

The consecutive tense marker mà, though superficially similar to the simultaneous marker mà, has a completely different function. The simultaneous marker is used only in compound or complex sentences and indicates the relationship between the clauses (see (7) above and sentences [GS 31] and [GS 33] in the

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4 Although there is reason to question the notion of the perfect as an aspect, I am following Comrie’s [1976: 52-3] lead in identifying it as aspect in view of the fact that, in many languages, the perfect may occur with several different tenses but does not occur with other aspects.

5 The code indicates the sentence number and text which can be found in the appendix.
appendix). The simultaneous marker may occur in a dependent clause and is always found with a verb marked for tense/aspect, whereas the consecutive tense marker is never found in dependent clauses nor with any other tense/aspect inflection in the main clause in which it is found.

3. Role of tense/aspect in Mbodomo narrative

In the discussion of the role of tense/aspect in Mbodomo narrative, it is important to distinguish between background material and foreground or mainline material in the narrative. Hopper and Thompson [1980: 280] describe these as follows:

“That part of a discourse which does not immediately and crucially contribute to the speaker’s goal, but which merely assists, amplifies, or comments on it, is referred to as BACKGROUND...the material which supplies the main points of the discourse is known as FOREGROUND.”

Peak is described by Longacre [1996: 37] as “...any episode-like unit set apart by special surface structure features and corresponding to the climax or denouement...

Also important in the description of the grammatical structure of the Mbodomo folktale narrative is how

“...verb and noun morphosyntax are used to sort out strands of information relevance in a discourse. Thus the mainline of a discourse can be marked (...) by a characteristic tense, aspect..., by word order in the clause, or by a mystery particle. Various other features can also mark the more pivotal parts of the mainline from the more routine parts and can classify background, supportive and depictive material so that the more crucial bits of such information stand out.” [Longacre 1996: 2-3]

Tense/aspect constitute one of the means used in Mbodomo narrative to distinguish between the types of information as well as marking points of discontinuity in the text.

3.1 The Mbodomo narrative. The prototypical Mbodomo folktale narrative consists of a formulaic invitation, a setting, various episodes that increase in tension to an action peak, a denouement, a didactic peak or moral, and a formulaic closure.

In Mbodomo narrative, the mainline, or storyline, is generally not marked for tense/aspect, except at points of discontinuity. Background information, however, is generally marked PAST, especially in the narrative setting. The peak, like the storyline, is not generally marked for tense/aspect except at points of discontinuity. The main syntactic features of peak, both the main peak and sub-peaks, are: word order variation where the object is fronted (OSV), as in (9); nominalized verb phrases which function as tail-head or “summary”-head linkage repeating the information in the preceding clause, and the focus marker na occurring before the main clause verb, both shown in (10). The peak of the narrative may use some or all of these features.
(9) pì-bòlò kà kóé pí á nú bàklà.
put-iron that squirrel put PREP mouth hyena
‘(It is) that bit, that Squirrel put in Hyena’s mouth.’ [HS26]

(10) hò-á mé gók wàn-dòl-bòlò ná tò-à
arrive-PST.NOM POSS serpent chief-fashion-iron FOC strike-PST
‘When the serpent arrived, the blacksmith struck it on
zù gók gbé.
head serpent kill
its head, killing it.’ [GS 24]

3.2 Continuity and discontinuity in Mbodomo narrative. A coherent discourse has the tendency to evoke the same referents, revolve around recurring themes, and develop along locational, temporal, or logical parameters [Payne 1997:344]. Givón [1990:896-97] states that “coherent discourse tends to maintain, over a span of several propositions, respectively:

a) the same referent (“topic”);
b) the same or contiguous time;
c) the same or contiguous location;
d) sequential action.”

So, when there is a change of reference—topic or participant, change of situation—time or location, or change in sequential action, there is a discontinuity in the text. At these points of discontinuity certain devices are employed “to indicate discontinuities in a coherent monologue...[and] to maintain the overall unity and continuity of the text by guiding the listener...across the discontinuity” [Levinsohn 1994:4-5]. Mbodomo uses tense/aspect as one of its devices to mark these points of discontinuity in the narrative. In general, where there is discontinuity in the text, tense/aspect will be marked on the main clause verb. The main clause verb will not be marked for tense/aspect where there is no discontinuity.

While tense/aspect inflection marks discontinuity, it is not possible to fully predict which tense/aspect inflection will occur with each type of discontinuity based on the texts used for this study. The most that can be said is that Mbodomo restricts the use of certain tense/aspect inflections. For example, the consecutive tense is used only where there is consecutive or sequential action in the storyline. As a result, the consecutive tense is not found in the background information of a narrative. Furthermore, the future and the perfect constructions are used only where there is a disruption of temporal sequence. In other words, the consecutive tense may permit discontinuities of reference or situation, but not discontinuity of sequential action, and the future tense/aspect and the perfect occur only when there are discontinuities of temporal sequentiality.

Figure 1 summarizes the roles the different tense/aspects play in Mbodomo narrative text. Although the tense/aspect usage is identical in both the story line
and the action peak, other syntactic features distinguish the story line from the action peak.

Another technique used in Mbodomo narrative to mark certain types of discontinuity, in particular discontinuity of situation, is the use of adverbial phrases and certain conjunctions. While these adverbial phrases and conjunctions are often used in tandem with tense/aspect marking on the verb, this is not always the case, especially with the conjunction à ‘but/then’. This conjunction will be discussed in further detail below.

3.3 The role of tense/aspect in narrative continuity. As mentioned above, the marking of tense/aspect inflection is one means that Mbodomo uses to mark discontinuities in the narrative. Markedness, however, is not absolute. What may be the marked form in one context, may be the unmarked form in another context [Givón 1990:946]. In the Mbodomo narrative, PAST is marked when it appears in the storyline or peak of a narrative but unmarked elsewhere.

3.3.1 Past tense as normal inflection in the setting and background. The past tense is the normal verb inflection in main clauses in the narrative setting and background. Given that background is that “which...assists, amplifies, or comments on” the speaker’s goal [Hopper and Thompson 1980: 280], both examples (11) and (12) give background information. However, while there is continuity between the two sentences in (11), and, hence, the use of the normal, unmarked inflection, there is discontinuity of time and action between the storyline sentence in (12a) and action referred to in the background sentence (12b). Example (12b) reflects this discontinuity by the use of a marked inflection. Even before Hyena had returned home, Squirrel was ready.

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6 The unmarked verb has not yet been found in the background information of a narrative.
(11) dùŋ-ù nè bàklà hìnè kóé.
sit-PST PREP hyena PREP squirrel
‘There was once a hyena and a squirrel.’ [HS 2]

wà dùŋ-ù ndáŋ kàrá.
3P sit-PST one long.time
‘They were friends (lit. one) for a long time.’ [HS 3]

(12) a. làk-à mé bàklá á kí, ná sì-à né leave-PST.NOM POSS hyena PREP DEM FOC return-PST go
á lé wà.
PREP village 3S.ALN
‘(When) Hyena left that place, (he) returned to his (own) village.’  
[HS 10]

b. kóé yèṣiɗì só é-mò wà fét, fár là fét.
squirrel arrange PRF PL-thing 3S.ALN already wash clothes already
‘Squirrel had already arranged his things (and) washed (his) clothes.’  
[HS 11]

The past tense also occurs in dependent clauses that provide background information. Examples (13) and (14) illustrate the use of relative clauses which provide background information to the narrative. The example in (15), which also includes a relative clause providing background information, shows the contrasting marked inflection.

(13) wíli bòŋ kà tè-à gò.
man 1S.ALN REL come-PST that
‘That one, who is coming, is my husband!’ [GS 7]

(14) ...é-yí mé lé kà dùŋ-ù á nò kpàtà...
PL-people POSS village REL sit-PST PREP drink beer
‘...the people of the village, who sat drinking corn beer,...’ [HS 29]

(15) kóé fár-à tè nè, pí là kà wènè fár só squirrel wash-PST body 3S.INALN put clothes REL 3S wash PRF
‘Squirrel washed his body (and) put on the clothes that he had already

fét
already
washed.’ [HS 23]
3.3.2 Verbs uninflected for tense/aspect as normal inflection in storyline.
The unmarked verb construction in independent clauses in the storyline is uninflected for tense/aspect. Once the context is established, main clause verbs are uninflected for tense/aspect where there is continuity of referent, time, location and action. The sentence in (16a) introduces a new episode. Tense/aspect marking is used in the first sentence marking the point of discontinuity (in this case of location and action), but the main clause verb of the second sentence (16b), which maintains contiguous time, location, and action and the same referents is unmarked for tense/aspect. The main clause verbs in examples (16a-b) are underlined.

(16) a. kà kóé dák pér, bàklà dè-à náñá á yù, when squirrel pull cord hyena set-PST feet PREP flight
    ‘Then Squirrel pulled the cord (and) Hyena started running (lit. put his feet into flight)

súŋ nè dóló lé.
toward PREP road village
toward the road to the village.’ [HS 28]

b. kà é-yí mé lé kà dùŋ-ù á nò kpàtà,
    when PL-people POSS village REL sit-PST PREP drink corn beer
    ‘When the people of the village, who sat drinking corn beer,

dé lí á dóló hò wá nzòk ná kóé á zū bàklà
    set eye PREP road field 3P see FOC squirrel PREP head hyena
    looked toward the field path, they saw Squirrel on Hyena's head,

kà hónj yù té-né.
    REL run flight come-INTR
    who was running.’ [HS 29]

However, Mbodomo narrative tends to limit to approximately two the number of sentences in a string where there is continuity of referent, time, location and action. Other devices, in particular verb chains, are more commonly used in these situations. Verb chains in Mbodomo consist of an independent clause followed by a series of verbs that are not marked for tense/aspect and which do not have overt subjects [Boyd 1997:134]. The sentences in (17) from the folktale, Zuɓèlə, and (18) illustrate such verb chains. The verbs are underlined. Other examples of verb chains can be found in the appendix: [GS 24, 26], [HS 46, 48].

(17) é-yí ndòkò má gbè é-nám, dé gbàk kàùù nè kpòò...
    PL-people DEM:PL CON kill PL-animal make shelf dry PREP meat...
    ‘Those people killed animals, made drying shelves (and) dried meat...’
(18) kóe fàr-à tè nè, pì là . .
squirrel wash-PST body 3S.INALN put clothes
‘Squirrel washed his body (and) put on the clothes...[HS 23]

3.3.3 Verbs uninflected for tense/aspect as normal inflection in peak. The unmarked verb construction in independent clauses that make up the peak or sub-peaks of the narrative are also uninflected for tense/aspect. Except where there is discontinuity, the verb does not generally have tense/aspect inflection in the action peak or in episodal sub-peaks. In the peak of the story, *The Girl and the Serpent*, the girl arrives at the road leading home (change of location, and also first sentence of peak episode, so the main clause is marked for tense/aspect), (19a), but the following sentence, example (19b), maintains the same referent, location, time, and action as the preceding sentence and is hence unmarked for tense/aspect.

(19) a. hɔ-ã wà a dólo, à bùr-ù-gòè ndè
arrive-PST.NOM 3S.ALN PREP road 3S.TOP untie-PST wrap COMP
‘When she arrived at the road, she untied the wrap

é nzi₆k gbàlàn g₅k.
LOG see bone serpent
to see the serpent bone.’ [GS 28]

b. bùr-ú-ã wà, à nzi₆k ná bè g₅k...
untie-PST-NOM 3S.ALN 3S.TOP see FOC small serpent
‘(When) she untied (the wrap), it’s a baby serpent, she saw...’ [GS 29]

3.4. The role of tense/aspect in narrative discontinuity. As mentioned above, when continuity of action, time, location, or participant is disrupted, various methods are used at the point of discontinuity to maintain the overall coherence of the text. Givón [1983:18] notes that when there is discontinuity, “more coding material” is required than would otherwise be necessary if there were no discontinuity. Therefore, it stands to reason that less tense/aspect marking would occur where there is continuity and more tense/aspect coding would occur where there is discontinuity. Levinsohn [1994:11] notes that in Makaa, another language of Cameroon, “...tense markers typically occur only at points of discontinuity in a narrative...” This pattern is also found in Mbodomo narrative.

3.4.1. Discontinuity at episodonal boundaries. In Mbodomo narrative, tense/aspect markers occur at points of discontinuity, including the initial sentence of each episode. One can thus argue that the initial independent clause of each episode marks an important type of discontinuity, that between two separate parts of the narrative: the discontinuity between establishment of the story setting and the launching of the action of the story. This explains the presence of the tense/aspect inflection in the first sentence of the first episode. The examples in (20) and (21) are the first sentences after the story setting of the folk tales, *The
Girl and the Serpent and The Hyena and the Squirrel, respectively; both have tense/aspect inflection on the main verb.

(20) \textit{ke øŋ wili ndé gbàk-tè-nè-pòndò}  
\textit{then certain man COMP borrow-body-PREP-grass}  
\textit{‘Then a certain man called “He-who-changes-bodies-with-the-grass”}  
\textit{nè-à nè sèndì tè...}  
\textit{go-PST and change body}  
\textit{came and changed his body...’ [GS 6]}

(21) \textit{k6e lâk-à øŋ sóe nè bò á lé...}  
\textit{squirrel leave-PST certain day and say PREP village}  
\textit{‘One day Squirrel went and said to (the people of) the village...’ [HS 4]}

However, it is not only the first episode that is inflected for tense/aspect. Later episodes also mark tense/aspect on the episode-initial sentence. The sentences in example (22a) are the last sentences of the peak episode. The sentence immediately following it in (22b) is the first sentence of a new episode (the denouement), and thus is inflected for tense/aspect. For another example showing tense/aspect inflection on the episode-initial sentence see, in the appendix, sentences [HS 27] and [HS 28]. [HS 27] functions as part of the episodal peak and [HS 28] is the first sentence of the following episode.

(22) a. \textit{bùr-ú-à wâ, à nzók ná bé gòk}  
\textit{untie-PST-NOM 3S.ALN 3S.TOP see FOC small serpent}  
\textit{‘(When) she untied (the wrap), it was a baby serpent that she saw}  
\textit{kà sikí á nù.}  
\textit{REL fall PREP ground}  
\textit{(which (i.e. the serpent)) fell to the ground.’ [GS 29]}

\textit{wènè mà kpò yù hórò.}  
\textit{3S CON begin flight again}  
\textit{‘She started fleeing again.’ [GS 30]}

b. \textit{kà wènè hó á sòrsí gòk mà gbàŋ-à.}  
\textit{as 3S arrive PREP ahead serpent SIM grow-PST}  
\textit{‘As she advanced, the serpent grew.’ [GS 31]}

3.4.2. Discontinuity of action. Mbodomo marks tense/aspect at points of discontinuity of action. Action continuity may be defined as “...pertaining primarily to \textit{temporal sequentiality} within [the] thematic paragraph, but also to temporal \textit{adjacency} therein...actions are given primarily in the natural sequential order in which they actually
occurred, and most commonly there is small if any temporal gap...between one action and the next.” [Givón 1983:8; italics in original]

Mbodomo marks tense/aspect at points where temporal sequentiality is disrupted. The most obvious examples of interrupted temporal sequentiality are flashbacks to a previous event or looking forward to a future event. In examples (23a-b), Squirrel has arranged his affairs prior to Hyena’s return to his village, but in the telling of the narrative it occurs after. This interruption in sequence is marked by tense/aspect inflection in both main clauses. In (24) the event referred to in the main clause occurs prior to that referred to in the dependent clause.

(23) a. làk-à mé bàklà á kí, ná sì-à né leave-PST.NOM POSS hyena PREP DEM FOC return-PST go á lé wà, PREP village 3S.ALN ‘(When) Hyena left that place, (he) returned to his (own) village.’ [HS 10]

b. kóe yèsìdí só é-mò wà fêt, fár là fêt. squirrel arrange PRF PL-thing 3S.ALN already wash clothes already ‘Squirrel had already arranged his things and washed (his) clothes.’ [HS11]

(24) kà wènè mà nè-à á hò á lé, when 3S SIM go-PST PREP arrive PREP village ‘when she arrived at the entrance of the village,

gók kìfi só gbà gók fêt. serpent become PRF big serpent all the serpent had already become a big serpent again.’ [GS 33]

Discontinuity in temporal sequence is also marked in clauses to indicate future time. In (25), taken from the tale, The Girl and the Serpent, the Serpent transforms itself into human form so that he can marry the girl sometime in the future.

(25) kè ònụ wili ndé gbàk-tè-nè-pòndò then certain man COMP borrow-body-PREP-grass ‘Then a certain man called “He-who-changes-bodies-with-the-grass”

nè-à nè sëndì tè mé tà sì nè bé-kóe kè go-PST and change body PURP FUT marry PREP young-woman DEM came and changed his body so that (he) could marry this young woman.’ [GS 6]
Most often, the future tense occurs in reported speech and indicates future intent, as is seen in example (26) from the story *The Hyena and the Squirrel*. In this story, Squirrel informs the people of the village that he will ride Hyena the next week.

(26) kóé làk-à ñṅ sóé nè bō á lé ndé
squirrel leave-PST certain day and say PREP village COMP
‘Squirrel went one day and said to (the people of) the village that:

ñṅ sóé sónđè kà té kí é tà ḳáng bàklà
certain day week REL come DEM LOG FUT mount hyena
Next week (lit. day week that comes)

dám zàñ lé
throughout bowels village
he would ride hyena throughout the village.’ [HS 4, 5]

Discontinuities of action are also found when the action of the narrative is interrupted by discourse (as at the beginning of example (26) above), by background comment, or at the beginning of a new episode.

In Mbodomo folk tale narratives, quoted speech may play a major role in the telling of the story. In the story, *The Hyena and the Squirrel*, approximately half of the sentences are direct or indirect speech. When speech carries a large part of the information in a story, and whenever there is a shift from reported speech to actual action, tense/aspect is marked. In example (27a), Squirrel tells Lion what he is going to do; then in the following sentence (27b), he carries out the action. In the same manner, Squirrel taunts Hyena in example (28a) before he carries out the action of riding Hyena throughout the village in (28b). Note that in each case the main verb of the action sentence is inflected for tense/aspect.

(27) a. kóé má bō á dílà ndé...
  squirrel CON say PREP lion COMP
  ‘Squirrel said to Lion that... [HS 50]

  mí tà kú mé nè dè á tùà mè.
  1S FUT take 2S and put PREP house 2S.ALN
  ‘...I will take you to your house.’ [HS 51]

b. kóe má kù dílà nè dè á zàñ kírà wá
  squirrel CON take lion and set PREP bowels compound 3S.ALN
  ‘Squirrel (then) took Lion to his compound.’ [HS 52]
(28) a. kóé tè-à tè ák bàklà ndé: mí bô mà?
squirrel come-PST PURP ask hyena COMP 1S say ?
‘Squirrel then asked Hyena: “Didn’t I say that

ndé mí tà əgà gà mé ná?
COMP 1S FUT mount 2S NEG.INT
I would ride you?” [HS 27]

b. kà kóé dák pér, bàklà dè-à nàŋá á yù,
when squirrel pull cord hyena set-PST feet PREP flight
‘Then Squirrel pulled the cord (and) Hyena started running (lit. put his
feet into flight)

súŋ nè dóló lé.
toward PREP road village
‘toward the road to the village’. [HS 28]

3.4.3. Discontinuities of situation. Mbodomo marks tense/aspect at points of
discontinuity of situation. Levinsohn [1994:5] defines discontinuity of situation as
“...changes in the time and location of the contents of the text.” Often changes in
situation are indicated by temporal expressions which indicate a change of time or
place and certain conjunctions. Some of the more common of these temporal
expressions are as follows:

sóe sóndè ‘day Sunday ((next) Sunday or week)’
yàrè vàk ‘bed two (two days (later))’
kè əŋ sóé ‘then one day’
kà mà kàrà ‘when later’
mbèà ‘afterwards’
kè ‘and then’

The main clause verb following such adverb phrases is always inflected for
tense/aspect. In examples (29) to (33) below, the sentence introducer is in bold
and, in each case, the verb is inflected for tense/aspect. Where there are serial

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7 There is not enough information to adequately identify this particle. It is not to be confused
with the SIM marker which occurs before the verb. The only other context in which I have
found it is in imperatives. The particle mà is found in more polite imperatives and in negative
imperatives as seen below:

mè tì nàŋ mà nìnà ‘You must take the medicine’
2S.IMP must eat ? medicine

mè nàŋ mà ná ‘Do not eat!’
2S.IMP eat ? NEG
verbs or verb chains, only the first verb is inflected for tense/aspect, as in (29), (31), and (32).

(29) **sóé sóndè bàklà gbò-à té á ngò kòe.**
    day Sunday hyena exit-PST come PREP home squirrel
    ‘The next week, Hyena left and went to Squirrel’s house.’ [HS 12]

(30) **yàrà vàk, kpátá kà dìlà hā só há kòe mā yèk.**
    bed two skin REL lion give PRF BEN squirrel CON rot
    ‘Two days (later), the skin that Lion had given to Squirrel was rotten.’
    [HS 56]

(31) **wìlì kè mā ñèŋ ñò.**
    man DEM CON walk walk
    ‘This man walked and walked.’ [Bongo 6]

    **kè ñè sóe, wènè mā lāk nè kpá mbòngá**
    then one day 3S CON leave go find bongo
    ‘Then one day, he left and went to find a bongo.’ [Bongo 7]

(32) **kè kòe kpò-à ngàn̂gà bàklà sùŋ nè dòlò hò.**
    then squirrel begin-PST mount hyena toward PREP road field
    ‘Then Squirrel began to ride Hyena (back) toward the path leading to the
    farms.’ [HS 31]

(33) **kè kòe mā kpò dòngá:**
    then squirrel CON begin sell.NOM
    ‘Then Squirrel began to sell.’ [HS 57]

While the adverb phrase marks the presence of discontinuity, which tense/aspect inflection is used to mark that discontinuity is determined by the context in each particular case. In the case of example (30), the discontinuity is temporal and the PRF tense clarifies the type of temporal discontinuity (flashback) in this particular context. In the case of example (31), the discontinuity is probably of location and possibly of time, but the implied action of walking remains contiguous. While examples (32) and (33) above seem very similar in isolation, their contextual situation is very different. Example (33) is in the middle of an episode, and the CON tense indicates the sequential action in the storyline. Example (32), on the other hand, is background information which “...consists of scene-setting statements and evaluative commentary...” [Hopper and Thompson 1980: 281]. Example (32) ([HS 31] ff.), sets the scene for the main action peak of the story. In the sentence preceding example (32), sentence [HS 30], Squirrel has given Hyena a serious public insult, which Hyena will try to pay back in the main action peak ([HS 34] ff.). Sentences [HS 31, 32, 33] set the scene for that attempted payback. Being background, rather than storyline, example (32) is therefore marked PST,
which is the normal, unmarked tense/aspect for background information (see figure 1).

The conjunction à ‘but’ or ‘then’ also indicates discontinuity. Unlike the temporal expressions and conjunctions mentioned above, the conjunction à does not occur in tandem with tense/aspect marking on the verb. Each time the conjunction à occurs, the main clause verb is uninflected for tense/aspect; see example (34) taken from *The Bongo*, and examples (35) and (36). These can be compared also with other examples from the texts in the appendix, [HS 9, 24, 33, 35, 53, 54, and 60].

(34) á wâ kék mé gôn yèrè dê á é-nú
    but 3PL search CONJ cut lie abandon PREP PL-mouth
    ‘But they look for ways to tell lies, never abandoning the ways (lit. mouth)
    béñ ná.
    child NEG
    of children.’

(35) à wènè tê bò á kòé kè ndé,
    but 3S come say PREP woman DEM COMP
    ‘Then he came and said to this young woman...’ [GS 25]

(36) à dìlà ák mò ndé dê á gè yâm?
    then lion ask thing COMP do PREP INT uncle
    ‘Then Lion asked, “what (are you) doing, Uncle?”’[HS 43]

Discontinuity of situation may occur where there is no overt sentence introducer. In example (37a), the verbs làk sì né ‘leave return go’ imply motion toward a goal, not necessarily arrival at that goal, while the verb lâ ‘sleep’ in (37b) implies a given location. Therefore, there is a change implied between the going in the sentence in (37a) and the activity at a given location in sentence in (37b).

(37) a. wâ má làk sì né á ngô wîlí kè.
    3P CON leave return go PREP home man DEM
    ‘They left and were returning to the home of this man.’ [GS 18]

    b. wâ má là á kí.
    3P CON sleep PREP DEM
    ‘They slept there.’ [GS 19]

Often there is more than one cause for the discontinuity. It is not unusual for there to be discontinuity of both situation and action, or of both referent and action.
3.4.4. Discontinuity of reference. Mbodomo marks tense/aspect at points of discontinuity of reference. In particular, where there is a change of referent, the introduction of a new referent, or the re-introduction of an old referent, there is discontinuity (i.e., a new set of referents is on stage). As in other types of discontinuity, the verb is inflected for tense/aspect whenever there is referential discontinuity. Very often, where there is sequential action and contiguous time and location but where there is a back-and-forth shift between two referents, the discontinuity of referents is indicated by the consecutive tense. The consecutive tense indicates merely sequential action, not continuity in general. All tense/aspects, including the consecutive tense, are used to mark the discontinuity and to guide the listener across it [Levinsohn 1994:4-5].

This is seen most clearly in (38) where the topical referent of each sentence changes; first the Lion, then the Squirrel, then back to the Lion again. Lion has been digging at the hole where Squirrel is hiding when Hyena attacks him. Lion falls to the ground in pain and at this moment, Squirrel looks out of his hole and begins to talk to Lion. Since the location remains constant: the mouth of the hole in which the Squirrel was hiding, the time is contiguous and the action sequential, the discontinuity is referential and is marked by the tense/aspect inflection on the verb.

(38) a. *dilà má sìk á nù kpó bì-ä.*
   lion CON fall PREP ground begin groan-PST.NOM
   'Lion fell to the ground and began to groan.' [HS 47]

   b. *kóé má gbò sàŋ ák mò kà làk-à á á dilà.*
   squirrel CON exit now ask thing REL pass-PST PREP lion
   'Squirrel exited at this time, and asked (Lion) what had happened to (him).' [HS 48]

   c. *dilà má bò á nè fèt.*
   lion CON say PREP 3S all
   'Lion told him everything.' [HS 49]

   d. *kóé má bò á dilà ndé á în-ì ndé*
   squirrel CON say PREP lion COMP 3S.TOP know-PST COMP
   'Squirrel said to Lion that he knows that

   bàklà ná wàn-sílà, wàn-yèrè kà dùŋ-ù gó.
   hyena COP proprietor-liver proprietor-lie REL stay-PST like.that
   Hyena is a greedy person, a liar who has always been that way.' [HS 50]

In the sentences in (39), taken from the folk tale, The Bongo, each of the man’s wives is brought into the story individually after they have been introduced as a group. The tense/aspect inflection signals the change of participant as each
wife arrives on the scene and plays her part. The sentences in (39a-b) are sequential.

(39) a. kà mà kàrà ñø kòè nè-à nè bërkìdi kpdò mbøngà
dem come-PST CONJ break meat bongo
‘After a time, one of the wives came and cut off some of this bongo meat

kè ñøŋ. è ñø ndé nà gùlà vè.
DEM eat LOG say COMP COP co-wife LOG:POSS
(and) ate (it). She (will) say that it was her co-wife (who did it).’

[Bongo sent. 11-12]

b. ñø kòè nè-à hòrö nè bërkìdi kpdò mbøngà kè ñøŋ...
dem eat again and break meat bongo DEM eat
‘Another wife came and cut off some of this bongo meat (and) ate (it)...’

[Bongo sent. 13]

Minor participants, as with main participants, are signaled by tense/aspect inflection as is seen in the folktale, Bâfiâ, when a minor character, the rooster, is introduced (example (40)). As is expected with discontinuity, the verb is inflected for tense/aspect.

(40) wà má tôm wîlì-kùàrà kè.
3P CON send male-chicken DEM
‘They sent this Rooster.’

Discontinuity of reference also occurs where a previously introduced referent is brought back into the narrative after a long absence, even if the referent in question is a major referent. This is the case with the husband in the narrative The Bongo. For most of an episode, the action has focused on the activities of his wives as, one by one, they steal the meat he has put a curse on. Then the man re-enters the scene to find much of his special cache of meat gone. The narrative brings the man back on the scene, example (41), by using the verb, dùŋ-ù, ‘to sit’ which is habitually used in presentative constructions, as in (42). Other presentative constructions like that of example (42) are found in the appendix, [GS 2] and [HS 2].

(41) wîlì dùŋ-ù.
man sit-PST
‘The man returned.’

(42) dùŋ-ù ñø wîlì nè dökà kòè.
sit-PST certain man PREP many wife
‘There once was a man with many wives.’
As is the case with discontinuity of action and situation, discontinuity of reference is also marked by tense/aspect inflection on the verb, whether it pertains to shifting of participant or topic, or to the introduction or reintroduction of referents.

4. Summary

Tense/aspect marking is an important means of marking continuity and discontinuity in Mbodomo narrative. Except in the story setting and in background information elsewhere in the narrative, tense/aspect marking is only found on main clause verbs at points of discontinuity. These discontinuities can be either discontinuities of action, of situation, or of reference, or a combination of these. There are also specific points within the narrative that always signal discontinuity. These narrative-generated discontinuities are found at the beginning of each new episode, after reported speech, or after a background comment. All of these discontinuities signal a change in sequence of action and are therefore marked by tense/aspect inflection.
APPENDIX

*Bé-kọé*  *nè gók*
young-woman with serpent
‘The Girl and the Serpent’

**Formulaic invitation**

GS1  ènè  nzél  tô  bọŋ
2P.IMP listen story 1S.ALN
‘Listen to my story!’

**Setting**

GS2  dùŋ-ù  ọŋ  bè-kọé.
it-PST certain young-woman
‘There was once a young woman.’

GS3  dıkà  nán  wâ  bèl-à  nè  wènè
since mother 3S.ALN give.birth-PST PREP 3S
‘who since her mother bore her,
à  tí  sì  mà  wílì  bèl ná.
3S.TOP must marry IMP man since NEG
she had never gotten married.’
(lit. she must not marry man since [imperative structure in third person])

GS4  kà  wílì  té  à  sèŋ-à.
when man come 3S.TOP refuse-PAST
‘When(ever) a man came, she refused him.’

GS5  wílì  kè  tè-à  à  sèŋ-à  kàgjà.
man DEM come-PST 3S.TOP refuse-PAST like.that
‘(When) this man came, she absolutely (lit. like that) refused him.’

**Episode 1**

GS6  kè  ọŋ  wílì  ndé  gbàk-tè-ñe-pongò  nè-à  nè
then certain man COMP borrow-body-PREP-grass go-PST and
‘Then a certain man called “He-who-changes-bodies-with-the-grass” came and
sènđì  tè  mè  tà  sì  nè  bè-kọé  kè.
change body CONJ FUT marry PREP young-woman DEM
changed his body so that (he) could marry this young woman.’

GS7  pírà  gbàk-tè-ñe-pongò  hò-à  kè  bè-kọé  kè
place borrow-body-PREP-grass arrive-PST.NOM DEM young-woman DEM
‘At (lit. place) He-who-changes-bodies-with-the-grass’s arrival, this young woman
ndé  é  dà  wílì  bọŋ  kà  tè-à  gọ.
COMP EXCL father man 1S.ALN REL come-PST like.that
exclaimed that “Father, that one, who is coming, is my husband!”’
Tense and aspect in Mbodomo narrative discourse

GS8 mi tə sí ná wènè.
1S FUT marry FOC 3S
"Him, I will marry."

GS9 àse wíli kè ná gbà gók.
but man DEM COP big serpent.
'But this man is really a big serpent.'

Episode 2

GS10 wá sì-ì mà tè kál mà ní nè nè á ngó
3P marry-PST together CONJ gather together return and go PREP home
'They got married, then they gathered everything and returned to the home

gbà gók.
big serpent
of the big serpent.'

GS11 hò-à mùá á dóló, wíli kè ndé wènè
arrive-PST.NOM 3P.REFL PREP road man DEM COMP 3S
'At their arrival on the road, this man told her

á kédi í sék.
AUX wait LOG little
to wait for him for a little.'

GS12 pírá wènè lè-á mò kè;
place 3S enter-NOM thing DEM
'There, he entered (the bush);'

GS13 kà bê-kóé kè pí lì, à nzók ná gók gà
when young-woman DEM throw eye 3S.TOP see FOC serpent like.
'these young woman glanced (over there) it’s a serpent, she saw

kà bò á nè ndé dóló lák.
REL say PREP 3S COMP LOG.IMP leave
who tells her that they will go now.'

GS14 bê-kóé kè ndé é kédi vé ná wíli vè.
young-woman DEM COMP LOG wait LOG.REFL COP man LOG.ALN
'This young woman said that it’s her husband that she is waiting for.'

GS15 gók ndé dóló lák voló áè ná é wíli wà.
serpent COMP LOG.IMP leave LOG.REFL because COP LOG man 3S.ALN
The serpent responded that they will go because it is he who is her husband!

GS16 bê-kóé kè má dè náŋá á yù.
young-woman DEM CON put/set feet PREP flight
'This young woman started fleeing.'
Studies in African Linguistics 29(1), 2000

GS17 gòk mà hìn wènè gò nè bà.
serpent CON chase 3S like.that and catch
'The serpent chased her and caught her.'

GS18 wà mà làk sì nè à ngò wìlì kè.
3P CON leave return go PREP home man DEM
'(Then) they left and where returning to the home of this man.'

GS19 wà mà là á kí.
3P CON sleep PREP DEM
'They slept there.'

Episode 3

GS20 kàrà kè bë-kòê kè ndé é tà sì nè
later then young-woman DEM COMP LOG FUT return go
'After some time there, this young woman said that she would return

á ngò bàŋ vè.
PREP home father LOG.ALN
to her father’s house.'

GS21 wènè mà kpò yù.
3S CON begin flight
'She started to flee.'

GS22 gòk mà hìn wènè gò nè hò á ngò ɔŋ wàŋ-dòl-bòlò.
serpent CON chase 3S like.that and arrive PREP home certain chief-fashion-iron
'The serpent chased her and (they) arrived at the home of a blacksmith.'

GS23 bë-kòê mà lè bò zù yù wà
young-woman CON enter say head flight 3S.ALN
'The young woman entered, telling her whole story

á wàŋ-dòl-bòlò kè fét.
PREP chief-fashion-iron DEM all
to the blacksmith.'

Episode sub-peak

GS24 hò-á më gòk wàŋ-dòl-bòlò nà tò-â zù
arrive-PST.NOM POSS serpent chief-fashion-iron FOC strike-PST head
'When the serpent arrived, the blacksmith struck it on its head,

gòk gbé.
serpent kill
killing it.'

Episode 4

GS25 à wènè tè bò á kòê kè ndé, kpòó gòk kè
but 3S come say PREP woman DEM COMP meat serpent DEM
'Then he came and said to this young woman: “This serpent meat,
mè njọ mè tí kù mà gbàlà gòk ké lák né ná. 2S.IMP eat 2S must take IMP bone serpent DEM leave PREP NEG you must eat. But you must not take any bone of this serpent with you.”

GS26 bé-kóé kè má njọ gòk kán ďẹ gbàlà hér young-woman DEM CON eat serpent carry certain bone attach ‘This young woman ate the serpent, but (she) carried away a bone tied up

á nụ goè. PREP mouth wrap in her wrap.’

GS27 làk-à wá á kí ndé é sí nê leave-PST.NOM 3S.ALN PREP DEM COMP LOG return go ‘When she left there, she said that she would return

á ọgọ báị là. PREP home father 3S.ALN to her father’s house.’

Peak episode

GS28 họ-à wá á dóló, à bùr-ụ goè arrive-PST.NOM 3S.ALN PREP road 3S.TOP untie-PST wrap ‘When she arrived at the road,

ndé é nzọk gbàlà gòk. COMP LOG see bone serpent she untied the wrap to see the serpent bone.’

GS29 bùr-ụ-à wá, à nzọk ná bé gòk kà untie-PST-NOM 3S.ALN 3S.TOP see FOC small serpent REL ‘(When) she untied (the wrap), it’s a baby serpent, she saw (which (i.e. the serpent))

sìkì á nụ. fall PREP ground fell to the ground.’

GS30 wènè mà kpò yù hórò. 3S CON begin flight again ‘She started fleeing again.’

Denouement

GS31 kà wènè hó á sòrsí gòk mà gbànj-à. as 3S arrive PREP ahead serpent SIM grow-PST ‘As she advanced, the serpent grew.’

GS32 wènè kà hón yù. 3S that run flight ‘It was she who was fleeing.’
When she arrived at the entrance of the village, the serpent had already become

big serpent all
a big serpent again.'

When she said (to herself) that she’s arrived at her father's house,

the serpent caught, killed her (and) swallowed her whole.’

‘Now you, young woman, when a man arrives at your house (wanting) to marry

you, it is the chance that God has given to you.’

‘But if you refuse the man that comes, you’ll suffer the same fate

(as) that girl who ignored good counsel (did) (and) die a horrible death.’

‘That is the end of my story. Your story!’
Tense and aspect in Mbodomo narrative discourse

Formulaic invitation

HS1 gbii tò bọŋ sìkì á lì gbírím.
(noise) tale 1S.ALN fall PREP water (noise)
‘My tale sounds like falling water.’

Setting

HS2 dùŋ-ù nè bàklà hìnè kóé.
sit-PST PREP hyena PREP squirrel
‘There was once a hyena and a squirrel.’

HS3 wà dùŋ-ù ndán kàrá.
3P sit-PST one long.time
‘They were friends (lit. one) for a long time.’

Episode 1

HS4 kóé lâk-à òŋ sòé nè bọ á lé ndé
squirrel leave-PST certain day and say PREP village COMP
‘One day Squirrel went and said to (the people of) the village

dám zàŋ lé.
throughout bowels village
throughout the village.’

HS5 òŋ sòé sòndè kà té kì é tà ñgàŋ bàklà
certain day Sunday REL come DEM LOG FUT mount hyena
that: Next week (lit. day week that comes) he would ride hyena

HS6 yì tà nzák pirá é tà ñgàŋ zù bàklà dám zàŋ lé
people FUT see place LOG FUT mount head hyena throughout bowels village
‘Everyone will see him ride on hyena’s head throughout the village.’

HS7 mbè-à bàklà gbò-à lé à yì mé lé bọ á nè ndé:
after-NOM hyena exit-PST village but people POSS village say PREP 3S COMP
‘Later Hyena left his village (and went to another), and the people of (that) village said to him that...

HS8 è bọ mà ndé kóé tà ñgàŋ mé dám zàŋ lé
3S.INDF say COMP squirrel FUT mount 2S throughout bowels village

á sòndè kè kà té ná?
PREP week DEM REL come NEG.INT
“They say that Squirrel will ride you throughout the village next week, won’t he?”

HS9 à bàklà kifi-dì è ké, kóé lèm-à mé ñgàŋ è?
but hyena change-CAUS EXCL CONJ squirrel able-PST CONJ mount INT
‘But (or then) Hyena responded, “Well then? Is Squirrel able to ride?”’
HS10 ḥak-á mé ṣaklā á kí, ná sì-á né leave-PST.NOM POSS hyena PREP DEM FOC return-PST go á lé wâ. PREP village 3S.ALN
‘(When) Hyena left that place, (he) returned to his (own) village.’

HS11 kóé yēsidi sō é-mó wâ fêt fær là fêt. squirrel arrange PRF PL-thing 3S.ALN already wash clothes already 'Squirrel had already arranged his things and washed (his) clothes.'

Episode 2

HS12 sóé sóndé ṣaklā gbó-á té á ngä kóé. day Sunday hyena exit-PST come PREP home squirrel ‘On Sunday, Hyena left and went to Squirrel’s house.’

HS13 kóé ná mé kà bō-á ndé é tâ ngàñ mi. squirrel FOC 2S REL say-PST COMP LOG FUT mount 1S ‘Squirrel, is it you who said that you will ride me?’

HS14 mè gbó tè tè ngàñ mi 2S.IMP exit come PURP mount 1S ‘(So) come out and ride me!’

HS15 kóé kífi-dí ṣaklā: ná ó gôn yèrè kí á mé é? squirrel change-CAUS hyena FOC who cut lie DEM PREP 2S INT ‘Squirrel responded to hyena: “Who told you that lie?”

HS16 tè mi kà him-him gâ mi bō bóŋ ngū gè sóé é? body 1S.INALN REL hurt-hurt like.that 1S say debt DEM that day INT ‘With my body that hurts so much, would I make such a (lit. that) commitment that day?’

HS17 ṣaklā ndé ògū kà dúŋ ná yèrè, kóé á té á wâ hyena COMP then if remain FOC lie, squirrel AUX:IMP come PURP 3P né nè āk á lé. go and ask PREP village ‘Hyena (said) that if it is a lie, Squirrel must go (with him, so that) they could go and ask (the people of) the village.’

HS18 kóé ndé fólâ kà é tâ né né á lé zí-ná squirrel COMP means REL LOG FUT go go PREP village exist-NEG ‘Squirrel (said) that he doesn’t have the ability to go to the village.’

HS19 é lèm mé nè nô ná. LOG is.able PURP go walk NEG ‘He is not able to walk.’
Tense and aspect in Mbodomo narrative discourse

**Episode 2 sub-peak**

**HS23**

Hyena said he must hurry up.

**HS24**

But Squirrel (then) came and said to Hyena:

**HS25**

(Hyperbole) because cold that he1 has, he2 must let

a nú nè é bā nè mó gō é zīgā sik ná.

PREP mouth 3S.INALN LOG catch 3S thing like.that LOG FUT.NEG fall NEG

him1 put a small cord in his2 mouth, (so that) he1 (can) hold (on to) him2 (so) he1 will

not fall off.'

**HS26**

(It is) that bit, that Squirrel put in Hyena's mouth.'

**HS27**

Squirrel then asked Hyena: "Didn't I say that

mí tà ńgān mé ná?

1S FUT mount 2S NEG.INT

I would ride you?"

**Episode 3**

**HS28**

Then Squirrel pulled the cord (and) Hyena started running (lit. put his feet into flight) toward the road to the village.'
When the people of the village, who sat drinking corn beer, looked toward the field, they saw Squirrel on Hyena's head, who was running.

'Squirrel rode hyena throughout the entire village, (and) in that manner tired him out.'

Then Squirrel began to ride Hyena (back) toward the path leading to the farms.

When Squirrel arrived at the entrance to his hole, (he) jumped (from Hyena and) entered into the hole.

But Hyena asked, "Is it really you, Squirrel, that (can) embarrass me in the eyes of the village people, (and) in the eyes of my lover? You will see!"

Hyena begins to dig Squirrel's hole.

Then Lion says that he leaves.

'It's Hyena (that) Lion saw digging in the ground.'

'Lion (asks), “Uncle, uncle, what are (you) doing?”'
Tense and aspect in Mbodomo narrative discourse

**HS38** ɓàklà ndé dìlà ná gbèlè bé kóé ñgàŋ-à é dám
hyena COMP lion FOC simple little squirrel mount-PST LOG throughout
‘Hyena (said) “Lion, (it’s a) simple little squirrel (that) rode me throughout

zàŋ le sèmti nè é.
bowels village embarrass PREP LOG
the village embarrassing me.”

**HS39** dìlà ndé yàm ɓàklà ná é tà gbàkđi nè á zà kò.
lion COMP uncle hyena FOC LOG FUT help 3S PREP dig hole
‘Lion (said), “Uncle Hyena, (it is) I (who) will help you to dig the hole.”

**HS40** dìlà kpɔ̀-à zà kò.
lion begin-PST dig hole
‘Lion began to dig the hole.’

**HS41** ɓàklà á mbè à vèkò gàsá fàlá dìlà kà gbò-à nè mbè.
hyena COP behind PURP measure big testicles lion REL protrude-PST PREP behind
‘Hyena was behind (Lion) measuring Lion’s large testicles that were protruding behind (him).’

**HS42** kà dìlà kífídi lì à nzòk nà ɓàklà kà pèm fàlá nè.
when lion turn eye 3S.TOP see FOC hyena REL stare testicle 3S.INALN
‘When Lion turned his eye, it’s Hyena, he sees who is staring at his testicles.’

**HS43** à dìlà ák mò ndé dè á gè yàm?
then lion ask thing COMP do PREP INT uncle
‘Then Lion asked, “what (are you) doing, Uncle?”’

**HS44** ɓàklà ndé yàm ná mí pèm ná kóé kà wènè gbó á
hyena COMP uncle FOC 1S stare FOC squirrel when 3S exit PURP
‘Hyena (responds), “Uncle, (it’s) me watching for Squirrel, (so that) when he exits,

mì bá nè.
1S catch 3S
I (can) catch him.”

**HS45** dìlà kà wà ná zà-à kò.
lion that 3S.REFL FOC dig-PST hole
‘It is Lion, himself, who dug the hole.’

**Denouement**

**HS46** kpèd-à mè ɓàklà, ná mgbàn-à fàlá dìlà lák-nè.
jump-PST.NOM POSS hyena FOC tear.off-PST testicle lion leave-INTR
‘Then Hyena jumped, (he) tore off Lion’s testicles (and) ran away.’

**HS47** dìlà má sík á nù kpɔ̀ bì-à.
lion CON fall PREP ground begin groan-PST.NOM
‘Lion fell to the ground and began to groan..
Squirrel CON exit now ask thing REL pass-PST PREP lion
'Squirrel exited at this time, and asked (Lion) what had happened to (him).'

Lion CON say PREP 3S all
'Lion told him everything.'

Squirrel CON say PREP lion COMP 3S.TOP know-PST COMP hyena COP
'Squirrel said to Lion that he knows that Hyena is

proprietor-liver proprietor-lie REL stay-PST like that
a greedy person, a liar that has always been that way.'

'I will take you to your house.'

Squirrel (then) took Lion to his compound.

Then Squirrel said to Lion that he will cause Hyena

PREP lion PURP catch 3S
to come to Lion so that (he) could catch him.'

Then Squirrel asked Lion, “Lion, if you still have a skin, give (it) to me;”

'I will put (it out) to rot.'

Two days (later), the skin that Lion had given to Squirrel was rotten.

Then Squirrel began to sell: Rotten skin, rotten skin, rotten skin, rotten skin!

Hyena CON exit now: price PREP INT 100 (francs).
'Hyena exited then (and asked): “How much?” (Squirrel responded) “100 francs.”'
Tense and aspect in Mbodomo narrative discourse

HS59 ṅ̀ak̀là má hè sàŋ ngóng fèt.
   hyena CON buy now eat completely
   ‘Hyena bought (it) and ate it all up.’

HS60 à kóé bò á wènè ndé, ṅ̀ak̀là dókà hánàŋ á tòà.
   then squirrel say PREP 3S COMP hyena many exist PREP house
   ‘Then Squirrel said to him, “Hyena, there are many (more) at the house.”’

HS61 wà má lák né á ngó dìlà.
   3P CON leave go PREP home lion
   ‘They left and went to Lion’s house.’

HS62 hò-à múà né á kí dìlà ná bà-à ṅ̀ak̀là gbé.
   arrive-PST:NOM 3P.POSS go PREP DEM lion FOC catch-PST hyena kill
   ‘At their arrival, Lion caught Hyena killing him.’

Didactic peak

HS63 ndé ná sìlà mé ṅ̀ak̀là gbé wènè é.
   COMP FOC liver POSS hyena kill 3S EXCL
   ‘(Now) that’s how the greediness of Hyena killed him!’

Formulaic closure

HS64 ndé nzègȋ bò bò ngó é!
   COMP end tale 1S.ALN like that EXCL
   ‘(Now) that’s how my tale ends!’

HS65 tò mè é!
   tale 2S.ALN EXCL
   ‘Your tale!’
REFERENCES


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