

THE ROLE OF TENSE AND ASPECT IN MBODOMO
NARRATIVE DISCOURSE*

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In Mbodomo, a Gbaya language spoken in Cameroon, the tense/aspect of the verb plays an important role in narrative discourse. In general, tense/aspect is not marked on main clause verbs except in the story setting. Outside of the story setting, tense/aspect inflection is used for marking discontinuity of reference (topic, participants), situation (time, location), or action within the narrative text.

1. Introduction

The setting and background information, storyline, and peak episodes of the Mbodomo¹ 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 story line 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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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 Mbódòmò, the English spelling will be used throughout this paper.

Djembélé 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. *Mbádĩmbánj* is a tale of a fighting contest between the title character, whose name signifies a filthy, rude person, and the Spider “Tò”. *Báfiq* tells the tale of what happens to Tò when he insists on exchanging noses with his friend Báfiq 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 Yaayuwee, a language closely related to Mbodomo. The Mbodomo verb takes only one tense/aspect inflection at a time.² The forms listed in (1) summarize the relevant tense/aspect inflections found in Mbodomo (note: V = verb root).

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:

		PST
Perfective	<	PRF
		CON
T/A	<	
		FUT
Imperfective	<	HAB
		PROG
		PST PROG

(1) Perfective:

\check{v} -à	past
\check{v} só	perfect
màa \check{v}	consecutive

Imperfective:

tà \acute{v}	future
\acute{v} kà	(pres.) habitual
á \acute{v}	(pres.) progressive
dún-ú \acute{v}	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 + Verb³

kóé tà tó yòmbò.
 woman FUT pound cassava
 'The woman will pound cassava.'

(3) Past tense: Verb + past tense suffix

tòlò yâr-à kó-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 yàrà.
 cat 1S.ALN sleep HAB PREP top bed
 'My cat habitually sleeps on the bed.'

³ The following abbreviations are used in this article:

ALN	alienable poss.	FUT	future tense	PREP	preposition
AUX	auxiliary verb	HAB	habitual aspect	PRF	perfect aspect
BEN	benefactive prep.	IMP	imperative	PROG	progressive aspect
CAUS	causative marker	INALN	inalienable poss.	PST	past tense
COMP	complementizer	INT	interrogative	PURP	purpose conj.
CON	consecutive action	INTR	intransitive suffix	REL	relative clause mark
CONJ	conjunction	LOG	logophoric pronoun	RFLX	reflexive pronoun
COP	copula	NEG	negative	S	singular
DEM	demonstrative	NOM	nominal suffix	SIM	simultaneity
EXCL	exclamation	PL	plural	TOP	topical marker
FOC	focus	POSS	possession		

- (5) Progressive (present): Progressive Aux + Verb (intransitive suffix)

a. *kóé á gí sùgà.*
 woman PROG cook cassava.greens
 'The woman is cooking cassava greens.'

b. *màtúà á lák-né.*
 vehicle PROG leave-INTR
 'The car is leaving.'

The perfect aspect⁴ is marked by the auxiliary, *só*, as shown in (6). The periphrastic verbal structure, *dún̄* '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 yèsìdì só é-mò wā fét
 squirrel arrange PRF PL-things 3S.ALN already
 'Squirrel had already arranged his things...' [HS 11]⁵

- (7) Past progressive: *dún̄* + past tense suffix + verb root

éIé dún̄-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 *má* 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

Mbádímbán má kàn̄ Tò lò á nù.
 Mbádímbán CON pick.up To throw PREP ground
 'Mbadimbang (then) picked up To and threw (him) to the ground.'

The consecutive tense marker *má*, 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

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 *ná* 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-â 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

Predicate forms/ Key narrative parts	Background		Story line		Action peak	
	cont.	discont.	cont.	discont.	cont.	discont.
Past tense	X			X		X
Consecutive tense				X		X
Unmarked verb		--- ⁶	X		X	
Perfect		X		X		X
Future		X		X		X

Figure 1. Tense/aspects inflections and their roles in narrative.

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.

⁶ The unmarked verb has not yet been found in the background information of a narrative.

- (11) *dùŋ-ù nè b̀àklà h́ínè kóé.*
 sit-PST PREP hyena PREP squirrel
 ‘There was once a hyena and a squirrel.’ [HS 2]
- wā dùŋ-ù ndáŋ kàrá.*
 3P sit-PST one long.time
 ‘They were friends (lit. one) for a long time.’ [HS 3]
- (12) a. *l̀àk-â mé b̀àklà á ḱí, ná s̀ì-à né*
 leave-PST.NOM POSS hyena PREP DEM FOC return-PST go
á lé wā.
 PREP village 3S.ALN
 ‘(When) Hyena left that place, (he) returned to his (own) village.’
 [HS 10]
- b. *kóé ỳèsìd̀ì s̀ó é-m̀ò wā f̀ét, f̀ár là f̀ét.*
 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) *ẃílí b̀òŋ kà t̀è-à g̀ô.*
 man 1S.ALN REL come-PST that
 ‘That one, who is coming, is my husband!’ [GS 7]
- (14) *...é-ýí mé lé kà dùŋ-ù á ǹò kp̀àtà...*
 PL-people POSS village REL sit-PST PREP drink beer
 ‘...the people of the village, who sat drinking corn beer,...’ [HS 29]
- (15) *kóé f̀àr-à t̀è nè, pí là kà ẁènè f̀àr s̀ó*
 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
f̀ét
 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 nájá 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 nè 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 zǔ 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 hóŋ 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, *Zùbèlà*, 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 kátiti nè kpòó...*
 PL-people DEM:PL CON kill PL-animal make shelf dry PREP meat...
 ‘Those people killed animals, made drying shelves (and) dried meat...’

- (18) *kóé fàr-à tè nè, pí 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. *hò-â wâ á dóló, à bùr-ù gòè ndé*
 arrive-PST.NOM 3S.ALN PREP road 3S.TOP untie-PST wrap COMP
 ‘When she arrived at the road, she untied the wrap

é nzók gbàlà gók.
 LOG see bone serpent
 to see the serpent bone.’ [GS 28]

- b. *bùr-ú-à wâ, à nzók ná bé gók...*
 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 episodal 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) *kè òṅ wílí 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 sèndí tè...
 go-PST and change body
 came and changed his body...’ [GS 6]

- (21) *kóé làk-à òṅ sóé nè bós á lé...*
 squirrel leave-PST certain day and say PREP village
 ‘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. *bùr-ù-à wá, à nzók ná bé gók*
 untie-PST-NOM 3S.ALN 3S.TOP see FOC small serpent
 ‘(When) she untied (the wrap), it was a baby serpent that she saw

kà siki á nù.
 REL fall PREP ground
 (which (i.e. the serpent)) fell to the ground.’ [GS 29]

wènè má kpò yù hórò.
 3S CON begin flight again
 ‘She started fleeing again.’ [GS 30]

- b. *kà wènè hó á sòrsí gók mà gbàṅ-à.*
 as 3S arrive PREP ahead serpent SIM grow-PST
 ‘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

“...pertain[ing] primarily to *temporal sequentiality* within [the] thematic paragraph, but also to *temporal 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. *lâk-â mé bàklà á kí, ná sî-à 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.’

[HS 10]

b. *kóé yèsîdî só é-mò wâ 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.’

[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 kîfi só gbà gók fét.
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 òŋ wílí 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 séndî tè mé tà sí nè bé-kóé 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 lāk-à òŋ sóé nè bó 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:

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

dám zàŋ 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 bò á ðilà ndé...*
 squirrel CON say PREP lion COMP
 ‘Squirrel said to Lion that... [HS 50]

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

b. *kóé má kù ðilà nè dé á zàŋ kírà wâ*
 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 bò mà⁷*
 squirrel come-PST PURP ask hyena COMP 1S say ?
 ‘Squirrel then asked Hyena: “Didn’t I say that

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

- b. *kà kóé dák péér, bàklà dè-à náṅá 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)

súṅ 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:

<i>sóé sóndè</i>	‘day Sunday ((next) Sunday or week)’
<i>yàrà vák</i>	‘bed two (two days (later))’
<i>kè òṅ sóé</i>	‘then one day’
<i>kà mà kàrà</i>	‘when later’
<i>mbèâ</i>	‘afterwards’
<i>kè</i>	‘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

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 tí ñòṅ mà ñínà ‘You must take the medicine’
 2S.IMP must eat ? medicine

mè ñóṅ 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 sǒndè bàklà gbò-à té á ñgò kóé.*
 day Sunday hyena exit-PST come PREP home squirrel
 ‘The next week, Hyena left and went to Squirrel’s house.’ [HS 12]
- (30) *yàrà vāk, kpátá kà ðilà hâ só há kóé má 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) *wílí kè má ñèñ nò.*
 man DEM CON walk walk
 ‘This man walked and walked.’ [Bongo 6]
- kè òñ sóé, wènè má làk né 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 kóé kpò-à ñgàñ bàklà sún nè dóló 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 kóé má kpò ðòngá:*
 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 wā kék mé gòn yèrè dé 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)

béŋ ná.
 child NEG
 of children.’

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

- (36) *à ðilà ák mò ndé dè á gē yǎm?*
 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 *lák sí né* ‘leave return go’ imply motion toward a goal, not necessarily arrival at that goal, while the verb *là* ‘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. *wā má làk sí né á ŋgò wílí kè.*
 3P CON leave return go PREP home man DEM
 ‘They left and were returning to the home of this man.’ [GS 18]
- b. *wā 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. *dílà má sùk á nù kpó bì-â.*
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 dílà.*
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. *dílà má bô á nè fét.*
lion CON say PREP 3S all
'Lion told him everything.' [HS 49]
- d. *kóé má bô á dílà ndé à ìn-ì ndé*
squirrel CON say PREP lion COMP 3S.TOP know-PST COMP
'Squirrel said to Lion that he knows that
- bàklà ná wàn-silà, 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 òŋ kóé nè-à nè bérkìdì kpòó mbòŋgá*
 when SIM later, certain wife come-PST CONJ break meat bongo
 ‘After a time, one of the wives came and cut off some of this bongo meat

kè ñòŋ. é bó ndé ná gùlá 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. *òŋ kóé nè-à hórò nè bérkìdì kpòó mbòŋgá kè ñòŋ...*
 certain wife come-PST 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, *Báfíá*, when a minor character, the rooster, is introduced (example (40)). As is expected with discontinuity, the verb is inflected for tense/aspect.

- (40) *wá má tòm wílí-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) *wílí dùŋ-ù.*
 man sit-PST
 ‘The man returned.’

- (42) *dùŋ-ù òŋ wílí nè dóká kóé.*
 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-kóé *nè gók*
 young-woman with serpent
 'The Girl and the Serpent'

Formulaic invitation

GS1 *ènè nzél tò bòŋ*
 2P.IMP listen story 1S.ALN
 'Listen to my story!'

Setting

GS2 *dùŋ-ù òŋ bé-kóé.*
 it-PST certain young-woman
 'There was once a young woman.'

GS3 *díkà náj wā bël-à nè wènè*
 since mother 3S.ALN give.birth-PST PREP 3S
 'who since her mother bore her,

à tí sì mà wílí bé 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 wílí té à sèŋ-à.*
 when man come 3S.TOP refuse-PAST
 'When(ever) a man came, she refused him.'

GS5 *wílí kè tè-à à sèŋ-à kàgó.*
 man DEM come-PST 3S.TOP refuse-PST like.that
 '(When) this man came, she absolutely (lit. like that) refused him.'

Episode 1

GS6 *kè òŋ wílí ndé gbàk-tè-nè-pòndò 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

séndi tè mé tà sí nè bé-kóé kè.
 change body CONJ FUT marry PREP young-woman DEM
 changed his body so that (he) could marry this young woman.'

GS7 *pirá gbàk-tè-nè-pòndò hò-à kè bé-kóé 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 dā wílí bòŋ kà tè-à gô.
 COMP EXCL father man 1S.ALN REL come-PST like.that
 exclaimed that "Father, that one, who is coming, is my husband!"'

GS8 *mí tà sí ná wènè.*
1S FUT marry FOC 3S
‘‘Him, I will marry.’’

GS9 *àsé wílí kè ná gbà gók.*
but man DEM COP big serpent.
‘But this man is really a big serpent.’

Episode 2

GS10 *wá sì-ì màì tèt kál màì sí nè nè á ngò*
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 *hà-à mùá á dóló, wílí 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 kédí é sèk.
AUX wait LOG little
to wait for him for a little.’

GS12 *pìrá wènè lè-à mò kè;*
place 3S enter-NOM thing DEM
‘There, he entered (the bush);’

GS13 *kà bé-kóé kè pí lí, à nzók ná gók gà*
when young-woman DEM throw eye 3S.TOP see FOC serpent like.that
‘when this young woman glanced (over there) it’s a serpent, she saw

kà bós á nè ndé òlò lāk.
REL say PREP 3S COMP LOG.IMP leave
who tells her that they will go now.’

GS14 *bé-kóé kè ndé é kédí vé ná wílí 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 òlò lāk vóló áè ná é wílí wā.*
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 *bé-kóé kè má dè náǵá á yù.*
young-woman DEM CON put/set feet PREP flight
‘This young woman started fleeing.’

GS17 *gók má hìn wènè gó nè bā.*
 serpent CON chase 3S like.that and catch
 'The serpent chased her and caught her.'

GS18 *wā má làk sí né á ñgò wílí kè.*
 3P CON leave return go PREP home man DEM
 '(Then) they left and where returning to the home of this man.'

GS19 *wā má là á kí.*
 3P CON sleep PREP DEM
 'They slept there.'

Episode 3

GS20 *kàrà kè bé-kóé kè ndé é tà sí né*
 later then young-woman DEM COMP LOG FUT return go
 'After some time there, this young woman said that she would return

á ñgò báñ vè.
 PREP home father LOG.ALN
 to her father's house.'

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

GS22 *gók má hìn wènè gó nè hó á ñgò òñ wàn-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 *bé-kóé má là bós zù yù wā*
 young-woman CON enter say head flight 3S.ALN
 'The young woman entered, telling her whole story

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

Episode sub-peak

GS24 *hò-á mé gók wàn-dòl-bòlò ná tò-à zù*
 arrive-PST.NOM POSS serpent chief-fashion-iron FOC strike-PST head
 'When the serpent arrived, the blacksmith struck it on its head,

gók gbé.
 serpent kill
 killing it.'

Episode 4

GS25 *à wènè tè bós á kóé kè ndé, kpòò gók 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 n̄òŋ mè tí kù mà gbàlà gók 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 n̄òŋ gók káŋ òŋ gbàlà hêr*
 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 nú gòè.
 PREP mouth wrap
 in her wrap.'

GS27 *làk-â wâ á kí ndé é sí né*
 leave-PST.NOM 3S.ALN PREP DEM COMP LOG return go
 'When she left there, she said that she would return

á ŋgò báŋ wâ.
 PREP home father 3S.ALN
 to her father's house.'

Peak episode

GS28 *hò-â wâ á dóló, à bùr-ù gòè*
 arrive-PST.NOM 3S.ALN PREP road 3S.TOP untie-PST wrap
 'When she arrived at the road,

ndé é nzók gbàlà gók.
 COMP LOG see bone serpent
 she untied the wrap to see the serpent bone.'

GS29 *bùr-ù-à wâ, à nzók ná bé gók 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))

sìkí á nù.
 fall PREP ground
 fell to the ground.'

GS30 *wènè má kpò yù hórò.*
 3S CON begin flight again
 'She started fleeing again.'

Denouement

GS31 *kà wènè hó á sòrsí gók mà gbàŋ-à.*
 as 3S arrive PREP ahead serpent SIM grow-PST
 'As she advanced, the serpent grew.'

GS32 *wènè kà hóŋ yù.*
 3S that run flight
 'It was she who was fleeing.'

- GS33 *kà wène mà nè-à á hò á lé, gók kifi só*
 when 3S SIM go-PST PREP arrive PREP village serpent become PRF
 'When she arrived at the entrance of the village, the serpent had already become

gbà gók fét.
 big serpent all
 a big serpent again.'

- GS34 *kà wènè bó ndé é lé tùà mé bán wā,*
 when 3S say COMP LOG enter house POSS father 3S.ALN
 'When she said (to herself) that she's arrived at her father's house,

gók ná bà wènè gbè, gúr wènè nè kílí-â.
 serpent FOC catch 3S kill swallow 3S PREP whole-NOM
 the serpent caught, killed her (and) swallowed her whole.'

Didactic peak

- GS35 *ndé mé bé-kóé, kà wílí h́s á ngò mé mé tà sí*
 COMP 2S young-woman when man arrive PREP home 2S CONJ FUT marry
 'Now you, young woman, when a man arrives at your house (wanting) to marry

mé, ná sónsí mè kà sò há há mé.
 2S COP chance 2S.ALN REL God give BEN 2S
 you, it is the chance that God has given to you.'

- GS36 *á wílí kà té, mé ná séŋ á kè, mé kék ná gènzàgà*
 but man REL come 2S FOC refuse PREP DEM 2S search FOC same.thing
 'But if you refuse the man that comes, you'll suffer the same fate

ndé zúná gàn-à mbòrà fè-à fìyò tà zù.
 COMP girl ignore-PST counsel die-PST death without head
 (as) that girl who ignored good counsel (did) (and) die a horrible death.'

Formulaic closure

- GS37 *ndé nzégìlí tò bòn góè. tò mè é.*
 COMP finish tale 1S.ALN like.that tale 2S.ALN EXCL
 'That is the end of my story. Your story!'

bàklà nè kóé
hyena PREP squirrel
'Hyena and Squirrel'

Formulaic invitation

HS1 gbúì tò bòŋ sìkì á ì gbírìm.
(noise) tale 1S.ALN fall PREP water (noise)
'My tale sounds like falling water.'

Setting

HS2 dùŋ-ù nè bàklà hínè kóé.
sit-PST PREP hyena PREP squirrel
'There was once a hyena and a squirrel.'

HS3 wá dùŋ-ù ndáŋ kàrá.
3P sit-PST one long.time
'They were friends (lit. one) for a long time.'

Episode 1

HS4 kóé làk-à òŋ sóé nè bós 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

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

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

HS6 yí tà nzók pìrá é tà ŋgáŋ 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 yí mé lé bós 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 é bò mà ndé kóé tà ŋgáŋ mé dám zàŋ lé
3S.INDF say ? COMP squirrel FUT mount 2S throughout bowels village

á sòndè kè kà tè 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 kífí-dí é kè, kóé lè-m-à mé ŋgàŋ é?
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 *làk-à mé bàklà á kí, ná sì-à 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 yèsìdì sò é-mò wâ 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.'

Episode 2

HS12 *sóé sòndè bàklà gbò-à té á ngò 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 bò-à ndé é tà ngán mí.*
 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 ngán mí*
 2S.IMP exit come PURP mount 1S
 "'(So) come out and ride me!'"

HS15 *kóé kifi-dì bàklà: ná ò gón 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 mí kà hím-hím gâ mí bós bón ngĩ 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 *bàklà ndé ògò kà dúg ná yèrè, kóé à tē á wâ*
 hyena COMP then if remain FOC lie, squirrel AUX:IMP come PURP 3P
né nè ák 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 fólà kà é tà né né á lé zì-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 lé m mé nè nò ná.*
 LOG is.able PURP go walk NEG
 'He is not able to walk.'

- HS20 *bàklà ndé wènè à tē é tà káŋ nè.*
 hyena COMP 3S AUX.IMP come LOG FUT carry 3S
 'Hyena₁ (said) that "he₂ must come, (and that) he₁ will carry him₂.'
- HS21 *kóé ndé wènè à kédî bîn é fár tè é dój.*
 squirrel COMP 3S AUX.IMP wait a.little LOG wash body LOG first
 'Squirrel₁ (said) that he₂ must wait a little, (while) he₁ washes himself₁ first.'
- HS22 *bàklà ndé wènè à dē bélé.*
 hyena COMP 3S AUX.IMP do quickly
 'Hyena said he must hurry up.'

Episode 2 sub-peak

- HS23 *kóé fār-à tè nè, pí là kà wènè fār só fét*
 squirrel wash-PST body 3S.INALN put clothes REL 3S wash PRF already
 'Squirrel washed his body (and) put on the clothes that he had already washed.'
- HS24 *à kóé tè bós á bàklà ndé:*
 but squirrel come say PREP hyena COMP
 'But Squirrel (then) came and said to Hyena:
- HS25 *gǎŋ-mò kà dé ná é kè wènè à dē é pí bé pér*
 cold-thing REL do FOC LOG then 3S AUX put.IMP LOG throw little cord
 '(Because of) the cold that he₁ has, he₂ must let
- á nú nè é bá nè mò gó é zígà sík 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 *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.'
- HS27 *kóé tè-à tè ák bàklà ndé: mí bò mà ndé*
 squirrel come-PST PURP ask hyena COMP 1S say ? COMP
 'Squirrel then asked Hyena: "Didn't I say that
- mí tà ngáŋ mé ná?*
 1S FUT mount 2S NEG.INT
 I would ride you?"'

Episode 3

- HS28 *kà kóé dák pér, bàklà dè-à náŋá á yù, súŋ nè dóló lé.*
 when squirrel pull cord hyena set-PST feet PREP flight toward PREP road village
 'Then Squirrel pulled the cord (and) Hyena started running (lit. put his feet into flight) toward the road to the village.'

HS29 *kà é-yí mé lé kà dùŋ-ù á nò kpàtà dé lí á*
 when PL-people POSS village REL sit-PST PREP drink corn.beer set eye PREP
 'When the people of the village, who sat drinking corn beer, looked toward

dóló hò wā nzòk ná kóé á zǔ bàklà kà hóŋ yù té-né.
 road field 3P see FOC squirrel PREP head hyena REL run flight come-INTR
 the field path, they saw Squirrel on Hyena's head, who was running.'

HS30 *kóé má ngàŋ bàklà dām zàŋ lé gó támpì bàklà.*
 squirrel CON mount hyena throughout bowels village like.that tire hyena
 'Squirrel rode hyena throughout the entire village, (and) in that manner tired him out.'

Scene-setting to peak episode

HS31 *kè kóé kpò-à ngàŋ bàklà súŋ nè dóló 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.'

HS32 *hò-á mé kóé á nú kò wā,*
 arrive-PST:NOM POSS squirrel PREP mouth hole 3S.ALN
 'When Squirrel arrived at the entrance to his hole,

kóé ná kpèd-à lé zǎŋ kò.
 squirrel FOC jump-PST enter bowels hole
 (he) jumped (from Hyena and) entered into the hole.'

HS33 *à bàklà ák mò ndé kóé tén ná mé kà sèm-à mí á*
 but hyena ask thing COMP squirrel true FOC 2S REL embarrass-PST 1S PREP
 'But Hyena asked, "Is it really you, Squirrel,

lí yí mé lé á lí wànzà bòŋ? mé tà nzók!
 eye people POSS village PREP eye lover 1S.ALN 2S FUT see
 that (can) embarrass me in the eyes of the village people, (and) in the eyes of my lover?
 You will see!"

Peak episode

HS34 *bàklà má kpò zà kò mé kóé.*
 hyena CON begin dig hole POSS squirrel
 'Hyena begins to dig Squirrel's hole.'

HS35 *à ðilà bó ndé é lāk.*
 then lion say COMP LOG leave
 'Then Lion says that he leaves.'

HS36 *ðilà nzók ná bàklà kà zá nù.*
 lion see FOC hyena REL dig ground
 'It's Hyena (that) Lion saw digging in the ground.'

HS37 *ðilà ndé yām yām dè á gè?*
 lion COMP uncle uncle do PREP INT
 'Lion (asks), "Uncle, uncle, what are (you) doing?"'

- HS38 *bàklà ndé ðilà ná gbèlè bé kóé ngàṅ-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
zàṅ lé sémtì nè é.
 bowels village embarrass PREP LOG
 the village embarrassing me.'"
- HS39 *ðilà ndé yám bàklà ná é tà gbákḍi 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 *ðilà kpò-à zà kò.*
 lion begin-PST dig hole
 'Lion began to dig the hole.'
- HS41 *bàklà á mbè á vèkì gásá fálá ðilà 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 ðilà kífíḍí lí à nzók ná bàklà kà pém fálá 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 ðilà ák mò ndé ðè á gè yám?*
 then lion ask thing COMP do PREP INT uncle
 'Then Lion asked, "what (are you) doing, Uncle?"'
- HS44 *bàklà ndé yám ná mí pém 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 *ðilà kà wà ná zà-à kò.*
 lion that 3S.REFL FOC dig-PST hole
 'It is Lion, himself, who dug the hole.'

Denouement

- HS46 *kpèḍ-á mé bàklà, ná mgbàn-à fálá ðilà lák-né.*
 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 *ðilà má sùk á nù kpó bì-á.*
 lion CON fall PREP ground begin groan-PST.NOM
 'Lion fell to the ground and began to groan..'

- HS48 *kóé má gbò sàṅ ák mò kà làk-à á ðilà.*
squirrel CON exit now ask thing REL pass-PST PREP lion
'Squirrel exited at this time, and asked (Lion) what had happened to (him).'
- HS49 *ðilà má bò á nè fét.*
lion CON say PREP 3S all
'Lion told him everything.'
- HS50 *kóé má bò á ðilà ndé à ìn-ì ndé bàklà ná*
squirrel CON say PREP lion COMP 3S.TOP know-PST COMP hyena COP
'Squirrel said to Lion that he knows that Hyena is
wàn-silà, wàn-yèrè kà dùṅ-ù gó.
proprietor-liver proprietor-lie REL stay-PST like.that
a greedy person, a liar that has always been that way.'
- HS51 *mí tà kú mé nè dé á tùà mè.*
1S FUT take 2S and put PREP house 2S.ALN
'"I will take you to your house."
- HS52 *kóé má kù ðilà nè dé á zàṅ kírà wā*
squirrel CON take lion and set PREP bowels compound 3S.ALN
'Squirrel (then) took Lion to his compound.'
- HS53 *à kóé bó á ðilà ndé é tà kimbìlì bàklà té né*
then squirrel say PREP lion COMP LOG FUT cause hyena come go
'Then Squirrel said to Lion that he will cause Hyena
á ðilà á bá nè.
PREP lion PURP catch 3S
to come to Lion so that (he) could catch him.'
- HS54 *à kóé ák ðilà ndé: ðilà kà mè dúṅ nè kpátá, mè há á mí.*
then squirrel ask lion COMP lion if 2S stay have skin 2S give BEN 1S
'Then Squirrel asked Lion, "Lion, if you still have a skin, give (it) to me;"
- HS55 *à mí nè dé á yèk.*
then 1S go put for rot
'"then I will put (it out) to rot."
- HS56 *yàrà vāk, kpátá kà ðilà há só há kóé má yèk.*
lit two skin REL lion give PRF BEN squirrel CON rot
'Two days (later), the skin that Lion had given to Squirrel was rotten.'
- HS57 *kè kóé má kpò d'òṅgā: kùlù kùlù kùlù kùlù*
then squirrel CON begin sell.NOM rotten.skin rotten.skin rotten.skin rotten.skin
'Then Squirrel began to sell: Rotten skin, rotten skin, rotten skin, rotten skin!'
- HS58 *bàklà má gbò sàṅ: gèné á gē? góm màì.*
hyena CON exit now: price PREP INT 100 (francs).
'Hyena exited then (and asked): "How much?" (Squirrel responded) "100 francs."

- HS59 *bàklà má hè sàŋ ñóŋ fét.*
 hyena CON buy now eat completely
 'Hyena bought (it) and ate it all up.'
- HS60 *à kóé bós á wènè ndé, bàklà dókâ háŋàŋ á tùà.*
 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 *wâ má làk né á ŋgò ðilà.*
 3P CON leave go PREP home lion
 'They left and went to Lion's house.'
- HS62 *hò-â mùà né á kí ðilà ná bà-à bàklà 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 silà mé bàklà 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 nzégìlì tò bòŋ gò ê!*
 COMP end tale 1S.ALN like.that EXCL
 '(Now) that's how my tale ends!'
- HS65 *tò mē ê!*
 tale 2S.ALN EXCL
 'Your tale!'

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