



THE -BE RELATIVE TENSES OF ZULU

by

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- My familie, vriende en kollegas vir al hulle belangstelling, aansporing en bystand.

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## SAMEVATTING

### DIE -BE RELATIEWE TYDVORME VAN ZULU

Uit 'n literatuuroorsig van die sogenaamde voortdurende verlede tye van die Bantutale met besondere verwysing na Zulu blyk dit dat daar heelparty wanopvattinge bestaan by grammatici in verband met hierdie tydvorme. Tradisionele grammatici verwys na hierdie werkwoordvorme as voortdurende verlede tye, saamgestelde tye (of samegestelde tye), die perfektiewe vorm van die verlede tyd, verlede saamgestelde tye, kontingente vorm/modus/tyd, partisipiale tye, saamgestelde tye en modi en imperfektiewe aspek. Hierdie terme is almal ontoepaslik.

Posthumus (1983, 1988, 1990, 1999) is die enigste Bantuïse wat na die relatiewe tydvorme van Zulu verwys as relatiewe tye. Sy analisering en beskrywing van die grammatiese tye van Zulu is geskoei op die Reichenbach-model van tydanalise. Alhoewel etlike Europese grammatici (aanvanklik veral Duitse navorsers) die Reichenbach-model nagevolg het, het geeneen van die Bantuïste (behalwe Posthumus) die beskrywingsmodel gebruik nie.<sup>1</sup> Trouens die Bantuïste se analisering van grammatiese tyd (soos vervat in grammatikas, handboeke en artikels in vakwetenskaplike tydskrifte) is nie wetenskaplik gefundeerd nie.

In hierdie studie word die onderskeid wat Posthumus tref tussen absolute en relatiewe tyd, nagevolg.

Dit is nodig om duidelik te onderskei tussen grammatiese tyd en tempus enersyds en tussen tyd en aspek andersyds omdat grammatici hierdie kategorieë verwar. Daar moet verder duidelik onderskei word tussen absolute en relatiewe tyd.

Alhoewel Posthumus 'n wetenskaplik gefundeerde beskrywing van die strukturele en semantiese aard van die relatiewe tye gee, asook 'n skematiese opsomming van die verskeidenheid relatiewe tye wat in Zulu aangetref word, is daar veral drie aspekte van hierdie tye wat nie in sy publikasies (voldoende) aangespreek is nie en dus in hierdie ondersoek onder die loep geneem word.

Eerstens word die volle spektrum van die relatiewe tye met -be aangedui en 'n wetenskaplik verantwoordbare analise daarvan gegee. 'n Relatiewe tyd word gedefinieer as **die werkwoordvorm wat die verhouding tussen koderingstyd, verwysingstyd en gebeuretyd uitdruk.**

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1. Comrie in sy standaardwerk getiteld *Tense*, wat in 1985 gepubliseer is, en dus na Posthumus (1983) verskyn het, tref ook 'n onderskeid tussen absolute en relatiewe tye.

Tweedens word die verkorte vorms van elkeen van die relatiewe tye ook nagegaan en sistematies ontleed. Die afleiding van die verkorte variante vorme van die oorspronklike hulpwerkwoordgroepe word vervolgens in tabelvorm weergegee.

Derdens word daar besondere aandag gegee aan 'n geskikte term om na die sogenaamde saamgestelde verlede tye (as superordinaat) te verwys asook geskikte benaminge vir die individuele relatiewe tydvorme.

Die uitgangspunt in hierdie studie is dat die gepaste benoeming van taalwetenskaplike kategorieë van kardinale belang is omdat dit wanopvattinge verhoed. Trouens dit is juis die gebrek aan die gebruik van toepaslike terme vir die relatiewe tye kollektief, asook vir die individuele relatiewe tye, wat gedeeltelik daartoe bygedra het dat opeenvolgende geslagte Bantutaalgrammatici hierdie werkwoordvorme totaal ontoereikend beskryf het. Hierdie toedrag van sake blyk duidelik uit die literatuuroorsig.

'n Deeglike literatuurstudie oor die tradisionele beskrywings en benoemings van die relatiewe tye is ook 'n aangeleentheid wat nie pertinent in Posthumus se werke aandag geniet het nie en wat hier onder die loep geneem word. Uit die literatuurstudie blyk dat verkillende en selfs teenstrydige beskrywings van die relatiewe tye bestaan en dat daar ook verskillende benamings vir die sogenaamde saamgestelde tye bestaan (waarvan die meeste totaal ontoepaslik is).

'n Omvattende literatuuroorsig met die klem op die beskrywing van die sogenaamde saamgestelde verlede tye is noodsaaklik om die tradisionele beskrywing en analisering daarvan in perspektief te plaas. Sodanige literatuuroorsig is onderneem en het al die amptelike Bantutale van Suid-Afrika ingesluit behalwe Suid-Ndebele. Suid-Ndebele is nie by die oorsig ingesluit nie omdat daar nie 'n grammatika beskikbaar is nie en inligting oor die relatiewe tye van hierdie taal ook nie in enige ander publikasie geredelik beskikbaar is nie.

In hierdie studie word oorsigtelik onderskei tussen die kategorieë tyd, tempus en aspek (wat dikwels deur grammatici verwar word). 'n Duidelike onderskeid word ook getref tussen absolute en relatiewe tye.

'n Volledige beskrywing van die struktuurkenmerke van die onderskeie relatiewe tye word hierna gegee. In hierdie bespreking word die relatiewe tydvorme bespreek wat bestaan uit 'n hulpwerkwoordgroep (met die hulpwerkwoordstam *-be* wat diakronies van die kopulatiewe werkwoordstam *-ba* afgelei is). Die strukturele en semantiese kenmerke van beide die hulpwerkwoordgedeelte en die komplementêre gedeelte word volledig in hierdie studie bespreek.



'n Uiteensetting word gegee van die komplement wat 'n hoofwerkwoord (soos in die voorbeeld zibe zigijima (> bezigijima) izingane ... 'hulle was besig om te hardloop, die kinders ...'), 'n hulpwerkwoordgroep (soos in die voorbeeld zibe zinele zigijime (> bezinele zigijime) izingane ... 'sodra hulle besig was om te hardloop, die kinders ...') of 'n kopulatiewe woordgroep (soos in die voorbeeld zibe ziba zinkulu (> beziba zinkulu) izingane ... 'hulle was besig om groot te word, die kinders ...') kan wees. Dit is egter nie moontlik om al hierdie tipes komplemente in die bestek van hierdie studieverlag volledig te bespreek nie, daarom val die fokus op dié voorbeelde waarin 'n hoofwerkwoord as komplement optree.

Die semantiese kenmerke van die relatiewe tye is vervolgens bespreek en laastens is voorstelle gemaak vir die benoeming van die onderskeie relatiewe tydvorme wat in Zulu aangetref word.

Die terme wat voorgestel word as beskrywende terme vir die benoeming van die individuele relatiewe tye is geskoei op die semantiese kenmerke van hierdie tye. Die terme vir die benoeming van die sestien relatiewe tydvorme word gemotiveer en sistematies uiteengesit.

Vanweë die beperkte omvang van 'n navorsingverslag soos hierdie word die benoeming van die relatiewe tydvorme met 'n kopulatief as komplement nie bespreek nie. Daar word voorts ook net verwys na die insluiting van die (defisiënte) hulpwerkwoordstam *-se* in die relatiewe tydvorme. 'n Volledige bespreking van hierdie aspektuele onderskeiding val egter ook buite die bestek van hierdie skripsie.

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SUMMARY

THE -BE RELATIVE TENSES OF ZULU

From a literary review of the so-called continuous past tenses of the Bantu languages with special reference to Zulu it becomes quite clear that a number of misconceptions prevail amongst grammarians concerning these tense forms. Traditional grammarians refer to these verbal forms using labels such as continuous past tenses, compound tenses, the perfect form of the past tense, past compound tenses, contingent form/mood/tense, participial tenses, compound tenses and moods and imperfective aspect. These terms are all inappropriate names for these tenses.

Posthumus (1983, 1988, 1990, 1999) is the only Bantuist who refers to the relative tense forms of Zulu as the relative tenses. His analysis and description of the grammatical tenses of Zulu are based on the Reichenbach model for tense analysis. Even though a number of European grammarians (initially especially German researchers) followed the Reichenbach model, none of the Bantuists (except Posthumus) employed this model of tense analysis². In fact, the Bantuists' analyses of tense (as contained in grammars, hand books and articles in scientific journals) are not scientifically grounded.

The distinction that Posthumus draws between absolute and relative tenses is also adhered to in this research.

It is essential to distinguish clearly between tense and time reference on the one hand and between tense and aspect on the other hand because grammarians frequently confuse these categories. A clear distinction must, furthermore, be made between absolute and relative tense.

Posthumus supplied a scientifically sound description of the structural and semantic characteristics of the relative tenses and has included a schematic representation of the array of relative tenses that occur in Zulu - however, three aspects of these tenses remain that have not been addressed adequately in his publications that will be scrutinized in this research.

Firstly, the full spectrum of relative tenses with -be will be given and a scientifically sound analysis will be given thereof. A relative tense is defined as **the verb form that marks the relationship between coding time, reference time and event time.**

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2. Comrie, in his well known publication entitled *Tense*, published in 1985, which thus appeared after Posthumus's (1983) publication also distinguishes between absolute and relative tenses.

Secondly, the contracted forms of the relative tenses are recorded and analysed systematically. The derivation of the abridged forms from the original full auxiliary verb groups is indicated and the various variants are listed in table form.

Thirdly, attention is devoted to finding an appropriate label for the so-called compound tenses (as a super ordinate term) and to finding suitable names for the individual relative tense forms.

The point of departure in this study is that the appropriate naming of scientific grammatical categories is of the utmost importance because that prevents misunderstanding. In fact, it is partly because of the use of inappropriate terms for the relative tenses collectively, and for the individual relative tense forms, that consecutive generations of Bantu grammarians have continued to offer inapt descriptions of these language forms. This state of affairs is quite evident from the literary survey.

A thorough literary survey of the traditional descriptions and the labelling of the relative tenses are also aspects that have not received adequate attention in Posthumus's publications and will therefore be pursued in this research. From the literary survey of the relative tenses it transpires that different and sometimes opposing views exist concerning their description and that different names exist for the so-called compound tenses (most of them being totally inapplicable).

A comprehensive literary survey focussing on the description of the so-called compound past tenses is essential to put the traditional descriptions and analyses of these tenses in perspective. Such a literary survey was undertaken and included all the official Bantu languages of South Africa except South Ndebele. Southern Ndebele was not included in the survey because there is no grammar available on this language and information on the relative tenses of this language is not readily available either.

An outline distinction is drawn in this study between the categories tense, time reference and aspect (which are often confused by grammarians). A clear distinction is also drawn between absolute and relative tenses.

An exhaustive description of the structural characteristics of the individual relative tenses is offered. In this discussion the relative tense forms consisting of an auxiliary verb group (comprising the auxiliary verb stem –be diachronically derived from the copulative verb stem –ba) are discussed in detail. The structural and semantic characteristics of both the auxiliary verb part and the complementary part are discussed in detail in this study.

An exposition is supplied of the complement that may be a main verb (as for instance in the example *zibe zigijima* (> *bezigijima*) *izingane ...* 'they were busy running, the children ...'), an auxiliary verb group (as in the example *zibe zinele zigijime* (> *bezinele zigijime*) *izingane ...* 'as soon as they are busy running, the children ...') or a copulative word group (as in the example *zibe ziba zinkulu* (> *beziba zinkulu*) *izingane ...* 'they were busy becoming big, the children ... / they were becoming grown up, the children ...'). However, it is not possible to discuss the different types of complements exhaustively in this research report, therefore the focus will be on those examples where a main verb occurs as complement.

The semantic traits of the relative tenses are discussed and finally names are proposed as labels for the individual relative tenses that occur in Zulu.

The names proposed for the individual relative tenses are descriptive terms based on the semantic characteristics of these tense forms. The terms suggested for the sixteen individual relative tenses are motivated and listed in a systematic exposition.

Due to the limited nature of a research report of this nature, the naming of the relative tense forms with a copulative as complement are not discussed. Furthermore, mere mention is made of the possible inclusion of the (deficient) auxiliary verb stem *-se* in the relative tense forms. A comprehensive discussion of this aspectual distinction also falls outside the scope this mini-dissertation.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

#### 1.1 Introduction

The verb and the noun are the two word categories with the highest frequency of usage. The verb is without doubt the most complex word category in Zulu (and the Bantu languages in general). In spite of this, the traditional grammars (and other Zulu handbooks) do not offer a systematic analysis thereof. Any verb is necessarily in a particular mood and tense, is either in the positive or negative, and can furthermore, contain an aspectual distinction. The verb is thus complex due to the intertwined verbal categories pertaining to it. One of the factors preventing traditional Bantu linguists from offering an exhaustive and coherent description of the relative tenses is that they have not used a scientific model for tense analysis. Even the analysis of the absolute tenses is not done systematically (consider Welmers 1973:344 *et seq.* and Du Plessis 1986) and it is therefore not surprising that the analyses of the relative tenses are totally inadequate. In spite of the high frequency of usage, some standard Bantu grammars do not include a discussion on the relative tenses at all, while the majority discuss only a few possible forms of the relative tenses, notably the so-called 'recent past continuous' and 'remote past continuous' tenses. It is, again, not surprising that the relative tenses are probably one of the least studied topics of Zulu grammar. Most Bantu grammars offer an account of the morphological structure of the tense forms that they include in their discussion, but none of the existing grammars offers an accurate account of the semantic import of these tense forms. The terms that Bantu grammarians use to refer to the relative tenses are based on either the structural or the semantic characteristics. One of the popular terms used to refer to these tense forms in terms of their structure, namely 'compound tenses', has prompted a large number of grammarians to describe the semantic significance of these tenses erroneously in terms of a combination of two tenses. Consider in this regard the analyses offered by Suter, Doke, Van Eeden and Poulos & Msimang.

The other popular term used by grammarians to refer to the so-called compound tenses is the term 'continuous (past) tenses'. This term is equally unfit because these tenses do not indicate a past tense *per se*. Furthermore, these tenses do not imply continuity at all. Continuity is expressed by the progressive aspectual morpheme *-sa-* in Zulu and not by the auxiliary verb stem *-be*.

In order to give an appropriate scientific analysis of tenses in general and the relative tenses in particular, it is essential to take cognisance of the description of tense cross-linguistically, while at the same time taking the uniqueness of the particular language into account. A theory of tense cannot be applied *holus bolus* to any language without taking the language data into account. It is

equally true though that regardless of how elaborate the language data may be, they cannot be analyzed systematically without the application of a scientifically sound theory. It is evident from the literature review that the Bantuists have not used a scientific basis for tense analysis. The misinterpretations have merely been perpetuated since the publication of the earliest grammars.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

None of the existing Zulu grammars (or the Bantu grammars in general for that matter) has employed a proper scientific framework to analyze the relative tenses, neither do these grammars give a systematic exposition of the array of relative tenses. Consequently, the Bantu grammarians do not even distinguish the same number of relative tenses or offer a proper definition of tense in general. The semantic descriptions offered for relative tense in general and for individual relative tenses are utterly inapt. Since the terminology generally used to label the relative tenses collectively as well as the individual relative tenses is based on their semantic description, it is obvious that these labels are also inappropriate.

## **1.3 The aims of this study**

The aims of this mini-dissertation are to:

- conduct a comprehensive literature review of the so-called compound tenses of the Bantu languages with particular reference to Zulu;
- offer a systematic account of the spectrum of relative tenses that occur in Zulu;
- give an analysis of the structure of the individual relative tense forms (including an account of all the possible contracted forms that occur);
- give an explanation of the semantic significance of the relative tense forms, and
- propose suitable terms to refer to the so-called compound tenses collectively as well as to the individual relative tenses.

## **1.4 Delimitation of the topic**

This mini-dissertation focuses on the relative tenses. Even though this research focuses on the relative tenses it is essential to distinguish clearly between relative and absolute tense on the one hand and between tense and time reference and tense and aspect on the other hand. This is necessitated by the fact that both traditional and modern Zulu grammarians have not distinguished between absolute and relative tense, and have furthermore not distinguished tense from time reference nor have they distinguished properly between tense and aspect. Since the use of the term 'contingent mood' is restricted to some traditional grammarians only to refer to

particular forms of the relative tense, it is deemed unnecessary to discuss mood as a verbal category in this study.

### 1.5 Terminology and symbols used in this mini-dissertation

The term 'compound (past) tenses' is initially used to refer to the tenses discussed in this mini-dissertation. This term, which was coined by traditional grammarians, is used in order to project their views unimpeded. After indicating that this term (and the other terms used by traditional grammarians to refer to these particular tense forms) is not fitting, the term used cross-linguistically and introduced to the Bantu languages by Posthumus, namely 'relative tenses' or 'relative tenses with -be', is used to refer to these so-called compound tenses. The phrase 'with -be' is added to the term 'relative tenses' because there are other types of relative tense in Zulu that do not employ an auxiliary verb. Certain uses of the situative mood constitute such a relative tense. Consider examples 1 and 2 below.

1. Abantwana bahamba becula.  
'The children walk (while) singing.'
2. Abantwana bahambe becula.  
'The children walked (while) singing.'

In the two examples above the verb *becula*, which is in the situative mood, indicates a present and a past event respectively in spite of the fact that the structure of this particular verb remains unchanged. The temporal interpretation of the 'sing' event is thus dependent on the first event for its interpretation. This type of verb should thus be interpreted as a relative tense. However, these types of relative tenses will not be discussed in this mini-dissertation.

The plus sign (+) is used in the structural analyses to separate the individual morphemes constituting a word.

The orthographic word does not always coincide with the scientific word in Zulu and it is thus sometimes necessary to distinguish between these two types of words. The hash sign (#) is used in this mini-dissertation to indicate a scientific word boundary.

### 1.6 Method of research

Initially, Zulu grammars and other sources such as text books and dissertations and theses pertaining to the so-called compound tenses were scrutinized in order to gain a clear understanding of these tenses of Zulu. It soon transpired that it would be advantageous to investigate the description of the so-called compound tenses of the Bantu languages of South

Africa. This research revealed that these tense forms are not analysed in a uniform way. In fact the depiction of their semantic implication and the terms used to identify the individual tenses are totally inappropriate. This shortcoming necessitated a proper study of the theory of tense. Different approaches to the analysis of tense then had to be synthesized in order to account for the language-specific data. The bulk of language data was collected from literary texts. The different tense forms selected from texts were then subjected to the developed approach to tense analysis in order to develop an adequate description of the relative tense forms of Zulu.

Finally, the naming of the relative tense forms received attention. It transpired that the semantic classification of the relative tenses was the best point of departure for naming the relative tenses.

## **1.7 Exposition of chapters**

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter. This chapter includes a short introduction to the topic, the problem statement, aim of the research, method of research, delimitation of the topic and exposition of chapters.

Chapter 2 is a literary review of the topic. First some representative grammars of South African Bantu languages are studied with a view to determining their treatment of the so-called compound tenses. The focus is basically on the analysis, description and naming of these tense forms. The majority of Zulu grammars are scrutinized from older to more recent ones.

The aim of this chapter is to gain a proper perspective on the descriptions of the so-called compound tenses of the African languages in general and of Zulu in particular.

The analyses of, and approaches to compound tenses (or relative tenses as they are aptly called) are scrutinized cross-linguistically in chapter 3. The theory of tense and the approaches to tense analysis cross-linguistically are discussed and a synthesis is made of some prominent approaches to tense analysis. This approach is then employed to analyse and describe the tenses of Zulu. A clear distinction is also drawn between tense, time and aspect while the relative tenses are set apart from the absolute tenses. This chapter serves as the theoretical basis for the analysis and description of relative tenses that follows in chapters 4 and 5.

The full range of the possible relative tense forms of Zulu is discussed in chapter 4. The various structures of the auxiliary part and the complementary part of this verb group are discussed in detail. The contractions that take place in the various relative tenses are discussed in detail. The contractions that take place with first or second person or a noun from the noun classes as subject and the possible variant forms that occur in the language, are presented in table form.



The use of an auxiliary verb group or a copulative word group as complement of the auxiliary verb with the stem –be to express relative tense is also discussed in some detail in this chapter. Finally, the negation strategy of the relative tenses is discussed.

The semantic significance of the relative tense forms is considered in chapter 5. It is emphasized that even though the relative tense forms consist of two parts, an auxiliary and a complement, these two parts express a single tense. The form of the auxiliary part of the verb group marks the indexing of the reference point in relation to coding time, while the complementary part expresses the event time in relation to the established reference point.

The coining of appropriate terminology to refer to the relative tenses collectively and individually is discussed in chapter 6. The semantic description of the relative tenses serves as a criterion for labelling them.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERARY SURVEY OF LINGUISTS' VIEWS ON THE SO-CALLED COMPOUND TENSE FORMS OF THE BANTU LANGUAGES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ZULU

2.1 Aims

The aims of the literary review of the relative tenses of the Bantu languages with particular reference to Zulu, are to:

- gain an understanding of especially the naming of the so-called compound tenses,
- determine the structural and semantic characteristics of these tense forms as expounded by the traditional Bantu grammarians, and
- establish the spectrum of relative tenses occurring in Zulu.

2.2 Introduction

In this chapter a literary review will be made of the approach to and analysis of the so-called compound or continuous past tenses of the South African Bantu languages. Representative views of grammarians of the individual languages will be construed, while a more thorough investigation will be done of the views of the Zulu grammarians on this topic. For this purpose some representative grammars of the Bantu languages (other than Zulu) will be scrutinized while a large number of (older and recently published) Zulu grammars will be scrutinized in order to obtain a clear picture of the treatment of the so-called compound tense forms of the Bantu languages of the South-Eastern zone.

Since the grammatical description of the so-called compound tenses offered in this research deviates substantially from that offered in the standard Zulu grammars, a literary review of this nature is essential in order to put the present analysis in perspective.

This investigation will include a discussion on the so-called compound tenses of Venda, Tsonga, Tswana, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swazi, Xhosa and finally Zulu.

2.3 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Venda

Ziervogel and Ndaou (1961:162) refer to the past tense with *-vha* of Venda as the continuous past tense. They say :

The continuous past tense is expressed by means of the auxiliary verb **-vha**. The **-vha** has a perfect tense s.c. and is followed by the main verb in the participial mood. The main verb also has its own s.c. referring to the same subject as the s.c. of **-vha**.

These scholars point out that the 'main verb' of the continuous past tense may assume the various tense forms as if it were standing by itself.

Poulos (1990:293 *et. seq.*) refers to the various compound tenses as the 'compound tenses of the indicative and the potential'. He (1990:295) subcategorizes these tenses as the (1) past; (2) future and (3) potential series. He points out that these verb forms 'are based on the auxiliary verb root **-vh-** which is the verb "to be" in Venda'. It turns out that this subcategorization is based on the form of the auxiliary part of what he calls 'compound tenses which consist of two parts'.

Although Poulos (1990:293) mentions that the auxiliary part and the complement make up one compound tense he still describes these tenses as 'past + present' (1990:335); 'future + perfect' or 'past + future + present' (1990:337), etc.

Poulos (1990:294), like most grammarians, highlights the fact that the complementary verb is in the participial mood.

2.4 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Tsonga

Junod does not discuss the compound tenses of Tsonga under a separate heading. He (1932:55) does, however, distinguish a 'future perfect' and a 'perfect conditional'. He explains the formation of these two tenses as follows:

Combining the Perfect tense with the Future of the substantive verb **ku va**, we obtain the Future Perfect, and in prefixing to that Future Perfect the Auxiliary of the Imperfect Mood, we get the Perfect Conditional.

He then supplies the following illustrative examples:

Future Perfect:

Ndi ta va ndi vonile : I shall be I have seen, viz. I shall have seen.

Perfect Conditional:

A ndi ta va ndi vonile : I would be I have seen, viz. I would have seen.

Baumbach (1987:226), on the other hand, categorises a form similar to Junod's future perfect as a perfect aspect of the future tense. Among the examples cited by him is the example:

ndzi ta va ndzi rimile : I shall have ploughed.

He (1987:226) explains these verb forms as follows:

This construction consists of two verbs which are combined in one compound predicative. The first part consists of the copulative verb -va which is preceded by the future tense -ta, and this part is therefore responsible for the "future" meaning of the whole construction. Then follows the main verb of the compound predicative, to which is suffixed the perfect aspect -ile. This last part is therefore responsible for the "aspectual" meaning of the whole construction.

2.5 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Southern Sotho

Doke and Mofokeng (1957:252 *et. seq.*) discuss the tense forms with *-ne* and *-be* under a section on the conjugation of deficient verbs. They describe the tense forms formed by means of '–ne (a perfect form used in past time) followed by various tenses of the participial sub-mood' as follows:

These tenses may be described as past-continuous, whether indicative of action or state.

They (1957:252 *et. seq.*) use terms such as past continuous (*ke ne ke reka*), past perfect (*ba ne ba lapile*), past future (*ke ne ke tla reka*), future continuous (*ke tla be ke reka*) and future perfect (*ke tla be ke rekile*) to refer to the individual compound tense forms³.

Guma's analysis of the tenses of Southern Sotho is remarkably similar to that of Doke (1957) for Southern Sotho and Cole (1955) for Tswana. He includes the so-called compound tenses in a discussion of the tenses of the indicative mood, and also (1971:168) uses the terms 'past perfect' (*ke ne ke rekile*), 'past continuous' (*(Monna) o ne a bapala*), 'past future' (*ke ne ke tla reka*), 'past future continuous' (*ke ne ke tla be ke reka*), 'future perfect' (*ke tla be ke rekile*) and 'future continuous' (*ke tla be ke reka*) to distinguish between the different compound tenses.

Guma's (1971:174 *et. seq.*) explanation of the formation and semantic significance of the various tense forms corresponds to that offered by Cole for Tswana.

3. Many of the 'tenses' distinguished by these two scholars in their paradigm of tenses either do not relate to the so-called compound tenses under discussion or do not constitute separate tenses at all and are therefore not discussed here.

Ferreira (1964:82) refers to the so-called –ne past tenses of Southern Sotho as the ‘voortgaande verlede tye’ (the continuous past tenses).

2.6 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Tswana

Cole refers to a Tswana verb form such as *ke ne ka reka*⁴ as a past tense (1955:249), while referring to forms such as *ke ne ke reka* and *ke ne ke rekile* as the ‘past continuous tense’ (1955:251) and ‘past perfect tense’ (1955:252) respectively. He labels forms such as *ke tla bo ke reka* a ‘future continuous tense’ (1955:255) and *ke tla bo ke rekile* the ‘future perfect tense’ (1955:255).

Cole’s analyses of and terminology for the so-called compound tenses are very similar to that used earlier by Doke (his senior colleague) for Zulu and Southern Sotho. (Doke and Cole were colleagues in the Department of Bantu Studies at Wits for many years).

Cole mentions that Tswana uses both –ne and –be as auxiliaries to form the so-called compound tenses. In a footnote Cole (1955:249) expresses the view that the auxiliary ‘... –ne is probably a perfect form of the copulative verb –na (be)’.

He (1955:255) explains the formation of what he calls the future perfect tense as follows:

Like the future continuous, the future perfect tense is formed by the use of the formative –tla- with the deficient stem –bo [-be], followed by the perfect participial ... as complement.

He (1955:251) maintains that the semantic significance of the past continuous tense is that:

It signifies that the action was continuing or in progress at a given point in past time.

With reference to the meaning of the ‘future continuous tense’, Cole (1955:255) states:

This tense signifies that the action will be in progress or continuing at a given point in future time.

Pretorius (1997:164 *et. seq.*) is the only Bantu language scholar, except for Posthumus (see the discussion on Zulu later in this chapter) who refers to the so-called compound tenses of the Bantu

4. Although the examples are taken verbatim from Cole, the orthography has been adapted to the standard Tswana orthography.

languages as 'relative tenses'. Since his analysis of the relative tenses of Tswana is largely based on that of Posthumus (for Zulu), his analysis will not be discussed here.

2.7 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Northern Sotho

Ziervogel *et. al.* refer to the compound tenses as 'continuous past tenses'. They seem to distinguish tenses within the so-called continuous past tenses in terms of the form of the complementary verb. In their discussion of the continuous past tense they (1988:90) claim:

We have already dealt with the "present tense" of the continuous past tense in 36.8. An auxiliary verb stem *-bê* was followed by a present tense, *ke bê ke nyaka* (I was looking for) in which the *ke nyaka* is the present tense of the participial mood ...

These scholars (1988:90) then list examples illustrating the possible combinations of the auxiliary (in different tenses) with a complementary verb in different tenses. After listing these examples they then mention that the auxiliary can be used in different tenses (including the future). Noting that the term 'continuous past tense' is a misnomer, they consequently switch to the term 'continuous tense' instead of 'continuous past tense'.

Lombard *et. al.* do not discuss the so-called compound tenses at all. They (1985:186) merely include an example of the use of the auxiliary verb stem *-bê* in their discussion of the auxiliary verb stems followed by the situative mood.

To Van Wyk (1981:101) the *-be* has a 'neutral existential meaning' as explained in the quotation below:

Die beginsel van samestelling berus daarop dat die hulpwerkwoordstam *-ba* met 'n neutrale eksistensiële betekenis, vertaalbaar as 'wees (in die omstandigheid dat)' gebruik word.

Van Wyk *et. al.* (1995:117) refer to the compound tenses with *-bê* of Northern Sotho as the 'onvoltooide perfektum' (incomplete perfectum). However, in the English version of this manual they use the term used by most grammarians, namely past continuous tense. According to them these tenses express 'a particular type of past tense' which is therefore conveniently referred to as the **bê**-past tense.

Poulos and Louwrens's (1994) analysis of the so-called compound tenses is very similar to that of Poulos (1990). They (1994:249 *et. seq.*) too subdivide the discussion of the compound tenses into three parts, namely a past, future and potential series. This division is based entirely on the form of the auxiliary verb. Poulos and Louwrens (1994:250) describe the semantic significance of the past series as follows:

Note that, from a semantic point of view, we are dealing here with the past form of the present tense.

2.8 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Swazi

Taljaard *et. al.* (1991:144) describe the *-be* of Swazi as follows:

The auxiliary verb stem *-be* is the stative perfect form of the copula auxiliary *-ba*. It denotes a continuing action or state that takes place at a certain point in time, and can be used in the past, present or future tense.

These scholars (1991:145) remark that the 'main verb of the compound predicate can take all the tenses and aspects of the situative form'.

They refer to verbal forms such as *ngibe ngibona > bengibona* 'I was seeing' as the 'present continuous form', while referring to forms with the auxiliary part in the remote past tense, such as *Ngabe ngifuna tintfo tami* : 'I was at the time looking for my things', as the 'continuous past tense'.

These scholars, furthermore, mention that the auxiliary part of the so-called compound tenses can occur in the situative or relative form as well. They (1991:147) also include examples of the so-called compound tenses with copulative complements in their discussion.

It is evident from their discussion that Taljaard *et. al.* do not realise that when the auxiliary verb *-be* is used with copulative complements, it may express an absolute past tense apart from expressing a relative tense.

2.9 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Xhosa

Bennie (1939:108) distinguishes past compound tenses that 'describe action in the recent or the remote past, either as actually proceeding (the **Continuous**) ; or as completed (the **Completed**) ; or as contemplated or about to occur (the **Contemplated**) – at the time referred to.' He (1939:109) distinguishes a 'recent' and a 'remote' form of these past continuous tenses. The 'recent past continuous tense' contains the auxiliary with the basic structure subject morpheme +

-be followed by a complementary verb while the 'remote continuous past tense' is marked by the remote past tense subject morpheme + -ye followed by a complementary verb.

Louw and Jubase (1963:221) express the view that the auxiliaries -be and -ye of Xhosa can be used with the appropriate subject concord to express a near or remote past tense. They also make special mention of the use of the auxiliary with a 'perfektumstam wat in die partisipiale modus optree' (perfect stem which occurs in the participial mood) as complement. Louw and Jubase's discussion of the so-called compound tenses of Xhosa is very inadequate because it does not nearly include the full range of forms found in this language.

Like Doke, these scholars also distinguish 'contingent forms'. However, they (1963:228) refer to these verbal forms as the 'kontingente tydvorme' (contingent tenses), whereas Doke reserves the term 'contingent mood' for those compound tenses with the auxiliary part containing a future tense morpheme. Louw and Jubase on the other hand use the term 'kontingente tydvorme' for those instances where the future tense morpheme is included in the complementary verb. Consider the two examples below quoted from them (1963:228):

ndibe ndiza kuthanda > bendiza kuthanda : ek sou bemin
waye eya kuthanda > wayeba kuthanda : hy sou bemin

2.10 Analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Zulu

Wanger (1917:426 *et. seq.*) refer to the compound tenses as 'partizipial-zeiten' (participial tenses). He explains that these tense forms comprise an auxiliary verb ukuba followed by a main verb in the participial form, hence the term 'participial tenses'. According to him (1917:425), the auxiliary verb ukuba (like many auxiliaries of Zulu) changes its ending to -e. (He obviously does not realise that the -be with the verbal final morpheme -e is the past tense form of -ba.)

Suter (*n.a.*:49) describes the formation of the Zulu compound tense in what he calls the 'pluperfect or past perfect tense' as formed by 'combining the perfect of -ba with the participle of the perfect of the verb'. Under the 'recent time' he includes examples such as be ngi bonile, 'I had seen' and be si bonile, 'we had seen'. Under 'remote time' he (*n.a.*:50) includes examples such as nga ngi ya, 'I was (then) going' and wa u ya, 'you were (then) going'.

Doke categorizes some of the so-called compound tenses as tenses. He (1981:190 *et. seq.*) refers to a verbal form such as bengithanda as an 'immediate past continuous tense' while he labels a form such as bengilele an 'immediate past perfect tense'. He calls the form ngangithanda a 'remote past continuous tense' while he calls the form ngangilele a 'remote past perfect tense'.

Doke (1981:195 *et. seq.*) categorises those forms of the so-called –be past tenses that express ‘unfulfilled or unaccomplished intention’ as comprising the ‘contingent mood’. According to him (1981:195) these verbal forms include a past and future auxiliary. Examples of what Doke calls the simple implication of the contingent mood supplied by him are *bengizaukuthanda* and *bengiyaukuthanda* which contract to *bengo : thanda* ‘I would have loved’.

Griesel (1982:145) refers to the verbal forms containing the so-called compound tenses as ‘saamgestelde tye en modi’ (compound tenses and moods). To him the distinction between the forms with the auxiliary part in the remote past tense and those forms with the auxiliary part in the near past tense is that the latter indicates that the process expressed by the complementary verb has occurred a short time ago or at a specific time in the past while the former refers to the past in general.

Of all the Zulu grammarians Van Eeden offers the most exhaustive discussion of the so-called compound tenses with –ba / -be. He (1956:320) calls these tense forms ‘samegestelde tydvorms (met -ba / -be)’ (compound tenses (with -ba / -be)). He makes an important point, namely that these verb forms should be seen as a single grammatical and semantic whole. Van Eeden (1956:320 *et. seq.*) distinguishes between a ‘voortdurende nabye verlede tydvorm’ (continuous near past tense form) for example *bengibona* (I was busy seeing); a ‘voltooide nabye verlede tydvorm’ (perfect near past tense form) for example *bengibonile* (I have seen); a ‘statiese nabye verlede tydvorm’ (stative near past tense form) for example *bengilambile ebusuku* (I had been hungry at night); a ‘voortdurende verre verlede tydvorm’ (continuous remote past tense form) for example *ngangibona* (I was busy seeing (long ago)); ‘voltooide verre verlede tydvorm’ (perfect remote past tense form) for example *ngangibonile* (I had seen (long ago)); a ‘statiese verre verlede tydvorm’ (stative remote past tense form) for example *ngaleso sikhathi wawuhlezi nje* (at that time (long ago) you had merely been sitting); ‘kontingente tydvorm: nabye verlede tyd’ (contingent tense form: near past tense) for example *bengiza(u)kubona* (I was going to see); ‘kontingente tydvorm: verre verlede tyd’ (contingent tense form: remote past tense) for example *ngangiza(u)kubona* (I was going to see (long ago)); ‘voortdurende toekomstige tydvorm’ (continuous future tense form) for example *ngiya(u)kuba-ngibona* (I will be seeing); ‘voltooide toekomstige tydvorm’ (perfect future tense form) for example *ngiya(u)kuba-ngibonile* (I will have seen) and a ‘statiese toekomstige tydvorm’ (stative future tense form) for example *nobe-nikhathele* (You (plural) will be tired) .

The term ‘saamgestelde tydvorms’ (compound tense forms) is also used by Engelbrecht (1962:96) when denoting the so-called compound tenses of Zulu. He does not offer any analysis of these tense forms but merely lists some examples with their Afrikaans translations.

Van Rooyen maintains that the *-be* of Zulu expresses imperfect aspect. He (1977:204 *et. seq.*) declares:

Deur die bybring van be-, kry die handeling 'n aspek wat aandui dat dit aan die plaasvind was. Daar word geen begin (inchoatief) of afloop (perfektief) gesuggereer nie, maar juis die gebrek aan hierdie aspekte word aangedui deur be-. M.a.w. be- dui aan dat die handeling aan die gang was sonder om te impliseer waar dit begin en geëindig het. Daarom is be- 'n imperfektiewe vormelement.

Taljaard and Bosch (1988:149) explain the derivation and semantic significance of the stem *-be* as follows:

The auxiliary verb stem *-be* is the stative perfect form of the copula auxiliary *-ba*. It denotes a continuing action or state that takes place at a certain point in time, and can be used in the past, present or future tense.

They refer to the compound tense with the auxiliary part in the remote past tense form as the 'continuous past tense'.

They (1988:150) also discuss the use of the so-called compound tenses to express polite requests.

These scholars furthermore include examples of compound tenses with 'copula constructions' as complements, and with the auxiliary part in the 'relative construction'.

Poulos and Msimang (1998:306) also use the term 'compound tenses' to refer to the so-called compound tenses of Zulu. These scholars grapple with the question of naming the individual tense forms. They suggest two possible strategies for the naming of the individual compound tenses and remark as follows (1998:307):

Firstly, one could give a name that reflects the combinations of the tenses involved, so for example, in the above instance, one could refer to this tense (Sibe singahlali eThekwini 'We did not (use to) live in Durban' – my insertion) as the perfect present (or past present) tense. ...

The second possible way of dealing with this problem is simply to identify the various mono-verbal tenses that combine to form this compound tense, without trying to give the tense a specific name. ...

Following the first approach above, we could give this compound tense a name such as the future present tense.

Following the second approach, we would just refer to this compound tense as being a combination of a future tense and a present tense and leave it at that, without giving it a specific name.

These scholars distinguish the same subcategories of compound tenses as that used by Poulos (1990) and Poulos and Louwrens (1994). They do, however (apart from the potential and future series) also distinguish between a past and a perfect series. They (1998:308) regard the past series as those verbal forms with the auxiliary part in the remote past tense form, while they refer to the forms with the auxiliary part in the near past tense form as the perfect series.

(Note that these scholars (1998:265 *et. seq.*) employ the terms 'perfect' and 'past tense' to refer to the absolute tenses as well. They use the terms 'perfect tense' and 'past tense' to refer to the near past and remote past tense respectively.)

Posthumus (1983, 1988, 1990 and 1999) is the only scholar who refers to the so-called compound tenses of Zulu with *-ba / -be* as 'relative tenses'. He follows the Reichenbach approach to tense analysis and draws a clear distinction between absolute and relative tense.

He emphasises the fact that the auxiliary verb *-be* together with its complementary part expresses a single tense form. The difference between the interpretation of an absolute tense form and a relative tense form is that in the former the temporal interpretation of the event is done from coding time (the deictic centre), while in the latter type of tense the temporal interpretation of the event is done in terms of a selected (and marked) reference point which is, in turn, interpreted in relation to coding time. Consider the explanation of the temporal interpretation of example 1 below.

1. Izitshudeni zazifundile (< zabe zifundile) mhla ngizivakashela.
'The students had learnt on the day when I visited them.'

In this example the temporal significance of the event - the 'having learnt' of the students - should not be interpreted from now (coding time). It has to be interpreted from another point, namely my 'visiting them'. The position of this second reference point in relation to coding time is marked by the form of the auxiliary part containing the basic verb stem *-ba*. Since in this particular example, the form of the auxiliary verb part is a remote past tense form (*zi + a + be > zabe-*), the reference time is marked as situated long before coding time.

The complementary part of the verb (*zifundile*) is in the past tense form and thus indicates that the 'learning' had already occurred at that particular reference point established by the auxiliary (*zabe-*).

Posthumus makes it clear that the selected reference point in the case of the relative tense forms with –ba/-be can be in one of four positions. It can be long before, shortly before, shortly after and long after coding time. This obviously rules out the possibility of a relative tense being a type of present or ‘imperfect’ tense.

Posthumus’s suggestion for naming the individual relative tenses with –be implies that a verb form such as *inja ibigijima* (<*ibe igijima*) ‘the dog was running’ should be labelled ‘a relative tense with reference time shortly before coding time and event time coinciding with reference time’.

To offer a detailed discussion of Posthumus’s analysis of the relative tenses here would be superfluous because his principles of analysis will be dealt with aptly in the relevant chapters.

2.11 A synthesis of the major trends in the analysis of the so-called compound (past) tenses of the Bantu languages of the South-Eastern zone

The aim in this section is to synthesize the views of grammarians in order to identify misinterpretations and shortcomings in the analysis of the so-called compound tenses of Bantu languages.

2.11.1 General shortcomings in the analysis of relative tenses

It is evident from the preceding discussion that the analyses of the relative tense forms are generally not nearly exhaustive or systematic enough. Confusion reigns as far as the interpretation and analysis of the so-called relative past tenses are concerned. Different labels are used to refer to these tense forms collectively and individually.

The confusion of categories such as mood, tense and aspect has resulted in incomplete and unsystematic analyses of the relative tenses with –be. Consider for instance the fact that the relative tenses containing the potential –nga- have been included in the analyses of a number of scholars while the forms containing the progressive –sa- have not been included in their discussion. This state of affairs can be ascribed to the fact that the potential has been regarded as constituting a mood while the progressive has not been regarded as a mood. The scholars obviously tried to indicate in which moods the relative tense forms can occur. On the other hand, the fact that relative verbal forms such as *izingane ezidlalayo* ... ‘the children who are playing ...’ have not been regarded by traditional grammarians as constituting a separate mood, has generally led to the exclusion of these relative tense forms with –be (in the relative (qualificative) mood) from their analyses.

The use of inappropriate names to refer to these tense forms (collectively and individually) has contributed to the misinterpretation of, especially, the semantic significance of these verbal forms. This confusion is aggravated by the fact that many scholars have not demarcated and defined verbal categories such as mood, tense and aspect properly.

The fact that in many instances grammarians have simply followed the analyses of earlier scholars has also perpetuated the confusion. In some instances grammarians have misinterpreted earlier grammarians' analyses. A good example is, for instance, that Louw and Jubase categorize the relative tense forms containing the future tense morpheme in the complementary part as 'contingent' forms, while Doke considers those relative tense forms containing the future tense morpheme in the auxiliary part, as 'contingent' forms.

2.11.2 An umbrella term for the so-called compound tenses

The names most commonly used to refer to the so-called compound tenses collectively (or particular forms of the compound tenses) are, compound tenses, compound tenses and moods, past tense with *-vha (-ba) / -ne* past tenses / *-be* past tenses, past continuous tenses / continuous past tenses, perfect tense, perfect aspect, imperfect aspect, incomplete perfectum, contingent form / contingent mood / contingent tense, deficient verb forms, participial tenses and relative tenses.

Most of the terms used by Bantu language scholars to refer to so-called compound tenses are inappropriate.

Terms referring to these forms as an aspect or a mood are unsuitable because these forms constitute tenses. These verbal forms cannot be named using labels containing the words 'perfect' or 'imperfect' since these terms relate to aspect and not to tense. Furthermore, the auxiliary part of these verbal forms does not express continuity or completeness at all.

Although the complementary part of the so-called compound tenses is in the participial mood, the term 'participial tenses' is inappropriate because the auxiliary part (which incidentally determines the mood of the whole verb group) can be in various moods.

The term 'compound tense' may be a suitable term to distinguish these tenses from the other types of tenses, but it is confusing. It is not always clear whether the term 'compound' has a bearing on the structural properties (in other words, the fact that this verbal form comprises two verbal parts) or the temporal properties (in other words that this verbal form is a combination of two tenses). This term has probably contributed to the fact that most scholars have tried to name

the individual so-called compound tenses by referring to the ‘tenses’ of the auxiliary and the complementary part.

The only term that is perfectly apt is the term ‘relative tenses’. Firstly, this term is used cross-linguistically and is a well-established one. The term ‘relative tense’ has been used by a large number of scholars since Reichenbach’s 1949 publication. Secondly, this term makes provision for all the possible combinations of auxiliaries and complements within this tense paradigm. This prevents the illogical fragmentation of the analysis into various seemingly unrelated subsections as is the case with Doke’s and other scholars’ distinction between ‘compound tenses’ and ‘contingent forms’.

It is proposed that the term ‘relative tenses with –be’ be used to refer to the so-called compound tenses of Zulu. The reason for the addition of the part ‘with -be’ is essential because there are also other types of relative tenses that do not employ the auxiliary verb –be. (These tenses are not discussed in this mini-dissertation.)

2.11.3 Terminology used to refer to the individual relative tense forms

The super-ordinate terms used to refer to the relative tenses discussed in 2.10.2 above, have led to inappropriate terms being used for the individual relative tense forms with –be of Zulu (and the other Bantu languages). An account of the names used to refer to the relative tense with the auxiliary part in the near past tense form and the complementary verb in the present tense form will reveal the inconsistency in the naming practice of these tense forms.

The labels used to refer to a relative tense form such as that illustrated in example 2 below are: voortgaande verlede tyd (continuous past tense), past-continuous tense, immediate past continuous tense, voortdurende nabye verlede tyd (continuous near past tense), past present tense, present tense of the past continuous, incomplete perfectum, present continuous tense, imperfect aspect, relative tense with reference time shortly before coding time and event time coinciding with reference time.

2. Izingane bezidlala (< zibe zidlala) ngenkathi sisebenza ehhovisini.
‘The children were (busy) playing at the time we were working in the office’

The only relevant term to name the relative tense form contained in example 2 above is the last one in the list above. The term ‘relative tense with reference time shortly before coding time and event time coinciding with reference time’ actually denotes a single tense. (Refer to chapter 6 of this study for a more comprehensive discussion on this topic.)

2.12 Conclusion

The literary survey highlights some serious shortcomings and misinterpretations in so far as the description and analysis of the relative tenses are concerned. These shortcomings and misinterpretations are addressed in this research. Even though Posthumus offers a satisfactory analysis of the relative tenses with –be of Zulu, there are a number of areas where this mini-dissertation can make a valuable contribution. The most important areas are briefly indicated below.

A concise description of the categories time, tense, absolute tense, relative tense and aspect needs to be done to avoid confusion.

Secondly, it is essential to offer a systematic and concise presentation of the full spectrum of possible combinations of the different auxiliary forms with the different complements.

Thirdly, appropriate names for the array of individual relative tense forms with –be that occur in Zulu have to be coined. The need for this has been spelled out by, amongst others, Poulos and Msimang. They (1998:307) say :

The question that may now arise is: should we give names to these compound tenses? Obviously for reference purposes, it would be practical to give names. But what names do we give? How do we determine the names for these tenses?

A distinction is drawn between the terms: tense, time and aspect in chapter 3. The distinction between absolute and relative tense forms is also discussed in chapter 3.

Chapter 4 comprises an exposition of the structural characteristics of the relative tense forms while the semantic significance of the relative tenses is explained in chapter 5.

The question of naming the individual relative tense forms is dealt with in chapter 6.

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## CHAPTER 3

### ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE TENSE, TIME REFERENCE AND ASPECT

#### 3.1 Aims

The aims of this chapter are to distinguish between:

- tense and time reference,
- tense and aspect, and
- absolute and relative tense.

#### 3.2 The need to distinguish between the categories of tense, time and aspect

It is impossible to suggest appropriate terms for the two tense systems of Zulu or the individual tenses distinguished within each of these tense systems without an in-depth study of the authoritative sources pertaining to the theory of tense cross-linguistically. It is furthermore necessary to take proper cognisance of Bantu grammarians' treatment of tense in general, and that of Zulu grammarians in particular. In order to offer a satisfactory description of tense, and to propose appropriate terminology for the individual tense forms of Zulu, a synthesis of the general theories on tense needs to be made, taking the nature of Zulu language data into account.

In this study the focus will be on aspects of the general theory of tense, time reckoning and aspect. A synthesis will be made of the different approaches to the analysis of tense. An overview of the treatment of tense in the Bantu languages, focusing on Zulu in particular, has been offered in chapter 2. This overview highlights the need for standardising terminology depicting the two tense systems of Zulu (and the other Bantu languages), namely absolute and relative tense and the individual tense forms distinguished within each of them. The misconceptions and erroneous treatment of, especially, relative tense have been highlighted. Proposals are now put forward for a proper analysis of tense. Finally, appropriate terminology will be proposed in chapter 6 for the relative tense system and the individual tense forms distinguished within it.

Before a proper analysis of the relative tenses can be made, it is essential to distinguish between the three closely related categories of tense, time and aspect, which all pertain to the semantic interpretation of the predicate. All these categories pertain to the verb, but they are not all verbal categories, neither do they reflect the same aspects of meaning.



This discussion is necessitated by the wide-scale confusion that still exists among Bantu scholars concerning the true nature of these categories. The relative tenses can only be properly differentiated from absolute tense after a clear distinction has been drawn between the categories of tense, time and aspect.

### 3.3 Marking the location of events in time

Languages indicate the location of events in time relative to a particular point (which is generally the deictic centre) primarily by means of two types of strategies, namely by using temporal adverbial descriptions (in the form of lexical items) or by varying the morphological form of the verb. The first mechanism of time reckoning is generally referred to as time reference while the second mechanism is generally referred to as tense. Both these time-establishing mechanisms are operative in the Bantu languages (and thus in Zulu).

Generally, tense and time reference have the same relational value, as is evident in example 1 below where *kuthangi* has an anterior relational value and the verb form *sithenge* also marks the event as being prior to coding time. In this example, tense as well as time reference therefore have an anterior temporal reference.

1. *Sithenge* amaswidi *kuthangi*.  
'We bought sweets the day before yesterday.'

It is, however, not a foregone fact that all scholars distinguish between tense and time. While grammarians, such as, Gabbay and Moravcsik (1980:59), distinguish between tense and time, others, for example, De Klerk (1978), do not make this distinction. The only Bantu scholars who have distinguished systematically between tense and time are Posthumus (1988; 1990) and Posthumus and Mabule (2002).

It is accepted in this research that a distinction has to be drawn between time and tense. The researcher thus concurs with the researchers mentioned above in their assumption that a clear distinction indeed exists between tense and time reference as strategies of time reckoning.

The prerequisites for and effect of the combination of tense forms and time establishing strategies that are dissimilar will, however, not be discussed in this mini-dissertation.

### 3.4 The distinction between tense and time reference

Tense is a verbal category while time reference is a sentence category. There are a number of mechanisms that contribute to time reference, the most common being the use of temporal

adverbials. Comrie (1985:8) distinguishes three types of expressions (or mechanisms) for locating events in time, namely (1) lexically composite expressions (such as amahora amahlanu emva kokusuka kwesitimela : 'five hours after the departure of the train' (which are virtually infinite); (2) lexical items such as namhlanje, izolo and kuthangi : 'today, yesterday' and 'the day before yesterday' and (3) grammaticalized categories such as present and past (which are generally referred to as tenses). Posthumus (1990:22) identifies the following major mechanisms for time reckoning:

- tense;
- the semantic traits of the verb;
- the interlocutors' knowledge of the world;
- the influence of aspectual morphemes;
- the influence of auxiliary verbs;
- the text and context;
- the interrelation between tense forms and temporal adverbials.

Comrie (1985) describes tense as the grammaticalized expression of location in time. The major distinction between time and tense is thus that tense is marked in the verbal morphology while time is not.

Palmer (1991:7; 21) maintains that the distinction between mood and modality exactly parallels the distinction between tense and time. He (1991:21) furthermore, points out that, like mood, the category of tense is traditionally restricted to the verbal morphology. He states that tense is a morpho-syntactic category of the verb, even though its semantic function relates to the sentence as a whole.

### **3.5 What is tense?**

Since time itself does not provide any landmarks in terms of which one can locate situations, events are typically grammaticalized in the verb by locating them in relation to the moment of speech (the deictic centre). Lyons' (1977:677) comment on the lack of sophistication in the traditional descriptions of tense is true for the Bantu languages :

Traditional discussions of the grammatical category of tense do not give sufficient emphasis to the fact that it is a deictic category; and they tend to be misleading in other respects also.

In terms of the semantic nature of tense, Comrie (1985:14) remarks:

What one rather finds most typically is the choice of the speech situation as the reference point, i.e. the present moment (for time) ... As far as tense is concerned, then, the reference point is typically the present moment, and tenses locate situations either at the same time as the present moment ... or prior to the present moment, or subsequent to the present moment, with further potential categories if degrees of remoteness from the present moment are distinguished grammatically.

Zulu is an example of a language that distinguishes between degrees of remoteness in both the past and the future, hence the distinction between a near and remote past, and a near and remote future tense. Despite some controversy over the status of the future tenses, the verbal forms containing the morphemes *-za-* and *-ya-* that denote futurity are discussed as tense forms in this study.

Tedeschi and Zaenen attribute the major shortcoming of tense analyses to the fact that they focus on either general theoretical issues or on a particular language. They (1981: xv) remark as follows :

Treatments of tense and aspect have tended to fall into two categories: language-specific studies that did not attempt to address questions of general theoretical interest and more philosophical studies that frequently did not pay sufficient attention to natural language phenomena.

In order to supply an adequate description of the tense system of any language, it is essential to give equal attention to both the theoretical framework for tense analysis and language-specific data.

Johnson (1981) notes that many current theories on tense have been influenced by Reichenbach (1947). Nerbonne (1983:3) and Guenther (1977:83) are two of a host of scholars who concur with Reichenbach's analysis of tense. Followers of Reichenbach's tense analysis assert that the temporal interpretation of tense should be described in terms of the relation between speech time (called 'coding time' in this mini-dissertation), event time and reference time. Nerbonne (1983:3) explains these three concepts as follows:

Reichenbach distinguished speech time **s**, event time **e** and reference time **r**. ... Speech time is simply the time of utterance ... while the time of the various episodes described constitutes event time. ... reference time is the time "from which an event is seen".

According to Comrie (1985:11) clear instances of tense cross-linguistically can be represented as the location of events at, before, or after the deictic centre. He asserts:

The notions that are most commonly grammaticalised across the languages of the world are simple anteriority, simultaneity, and posteriority, i.e. with the present moment as deictic centre, past, present and future.

Comrie concurs with Lyons in describing tense as a deictic category. Lyons (1968:304) describes the deictic nature of tense as follows:

The essential characteristic of the category of tense is that it relates the time of the action, event or state of affairs referred to in the sentence to the time of utterance (the time of utterance being 'now'). Tense is therefore a *deictic* category ...

Tense has been discussed as a deictic phenomenon by, *inter alia*, Lyons (1968; 1977), Fillmore (1975), De Klerk (1978), Gabbay and Rohrer (1978), Bäuerle and Von Stechow (1980), Steedman (1982), Levinson (1983), Posthumus (1983; 1988; 1999) and Comrie (1985).

In his discussion of tense in Tumbuka, Botne also alludes to the deictic nature of tense. He (1993:7) states :

Tumbuka employs a variety of affixes to indicate differences in temporal relations between the discourse event and the speech locus.

As for the marking of tense, Comrie (1985:12) remarks:

In most languages that have tense, tense is indicated on the verb, either by the verbal morphology ... or by grammatical words adjacent to the verb, as with the auxiliaries ...

Bybee *et al.* (1994:3) also allude to the fact that tense is marked morphologically on the verb.

The two crucial characteristics of tense are thus that tense: (1) is grammatically marked within the verb, and (2) expresses event time in relation to a reference point (which is generally speech time (the deictic centre)).

Tense forms may be used to express pragmatic functions apart from their normal function of marking a particular tense. Comrie (1985:19-20) for instance, points out that the past tense of English can be used to express politeness apart from denoting past time. In this regard he comments as follows :

The existence of such counterexamples to the general characterisation of the English past as indicating past time reference does not invalidate this general characterisation, given the distinction adopted here between basic and secondary meanings ...

This observation is particularly relevant when the use of the relative tenses of Zulu is discussed.

It is essential for the development of Bantu philology to make a well-grounded selection of an appropriate approach to tense and to standardize terminology used for the labelling of the various tense forms distinguished in these languages.

### 3.6 The distinction between tense and aspect

Comrie distinguishes explicitly between tense and aspect. He (1985:14) declares :

A system which relates entities to a reference point is termed a deictic system, and we can therefore say that tense is deictic. (By contrast, aspect is non-deictic, since a discussion of the internal temporal constituency of a situation is quite independent of its relation to any other time point.)

He (1985:6) clarifies the semantic nature of aspect :

The internal temporal contour of a situation provides the conceptual basis for the notion of aspect, which refers to the grammaticalisation of expression of internal temporal constituency.

#### 3.6.1 The so-called 'imperfect' and 'perfect' tenses as aspectual distinctions

Bantuists have erroneously referred to the present and past tenses as the imperfect and perfect tenses respectively. In this regard, examine amongst others, Van Eeden (1956:257), Ziervogel, Louw and Taljaard (1985:87), Lombard *et al.* (1985:141) and Taljaard and Bosch (1988:55).

In the summary of his article on aspects in Northern Sotho, Louwrens (1994:116) concludes:

This analysis leads, *inter alia*, to the conclusions that (a) the terms **perfect** and **imperfect** 'tense' should be done away with by replacing them with **past tense** and **present tense** respectively ...

Unfortunately Louwrens did not maintain this distinction between tense and aspect in the Northern Sotho grammar which he co-authored with Poulos during the same year. Poulos and Louwrens (1994:213) refer to the past tense as the 'principal perfect tense'.

The term 'principal perfect tense' is used instead of 'past tense' in the Zulu version of the above-mentioned grammar as well. (Refer to Poulos and Msimang (1998:265)).

Although Van Wyk used the terms 'imperfective' and 'perfective tense' to refer to the present and past tense forms of the Northern Sotho verb, he later abandoned these terms in favour of the terms 'present' and 'past tense'. With reference to the 'perfect' and 'imperfect verb forms' Van Wyk (1987:283, footnote 12) says:

I have used the term TENSE for these categories in the past, but now I consider ASPECT to be more appropriate.

Comrie (1985) employs the terms 'present tense' and 'past tense' consistently when referring to the verb forms discussed here. In doing so, he draws a clear distinction between tense and aspect.

The only Bantuist who has consistently referred to the verb forms under discussion as tense forms is Posthumus. He has been using the terms 'present tense' and 'past tense' consistently since his 1983 publication. In his analysis and description of tense, he follows scholars such as Rohrer (1977) and Gabbay and Moravcsik (1980). He thus described the verb forms under discussion as present and past tenses even before the publication of the standard work of Comrie (first published in 1985).

The terms 'imperfect tense' and 'perfect tense' have been (and still are) inappropriately used in the Bantu languages as labels to refer to the present and past tenses respectively. This practice is probably due to language mapping in that these terms (which are fittingly used in the description of the Slavonic languages) have been applied to the Bantu languages. 'Imperfect' and 'perfect' are aspectual distinctions and should not be used to refer to tense forms.

### **3.7 The absolute tenses of Zulu**

The five absolute tenses distinguished for Zulu are the remote past, near past, present, near future and remote future tenses. These tense forms are marked in the basic morphological structure of the verb by a combination of the subject agreement morpheme, the categorial verb final morpheme, the future tense morpheme and the negative morpheme. However, there is no one-to-one relationship between these categories and the morphemes that mark them.

These tense forms, wherein the interpretation of event time is grammatically marked (within the verbal morphology) in relation to coding time (the deictic centre), are called 'absolute tenses'. An absolute tense can thus be defined as that verb form which locates the event time relative to a reference point which coincides with coding time (the deictic centre).

A verb such as *udla* in example 2 below, grammaticalizes the 'eat' event as coinciding with coding time (the deictic centre).

2. Umfana udla amaswidi manje.  
'The boy eats sweets now.'  
'The boy is now eating sweets.'

On the other hand a verb form such as *udle* in example 3 below grammaticalizes the 'eat' event as having taken place 'shortly' before coding time (the deictic centre).

3. Umfana udle amaswidi ekuseni.  
'The boy ate sweets in the morning.'

A verb form such as *wadla* in example 4 grammaticalizes the 'eat' event as having taken place 'long' before coding time (the deictic centre).

4. Umfana wadla amaswidi ngalelo langa.  
'The boy ate sweets on that day.'

A verb form such as *uzo(ku)dla* in example 5 grammaticalizes the 'eat' event as an event that will take place 'shortly' after coding time (the deictic centre).

5. Umfana uzo(ku)dla amaswidi kusasa.  
'The boy will eat sweets tomorrow.'

A verb form such as *uyo(ku)dla* in example 6 grammaticalizes the 'eat' event as an event that will take place 'long' after coding time (the deictic centre).

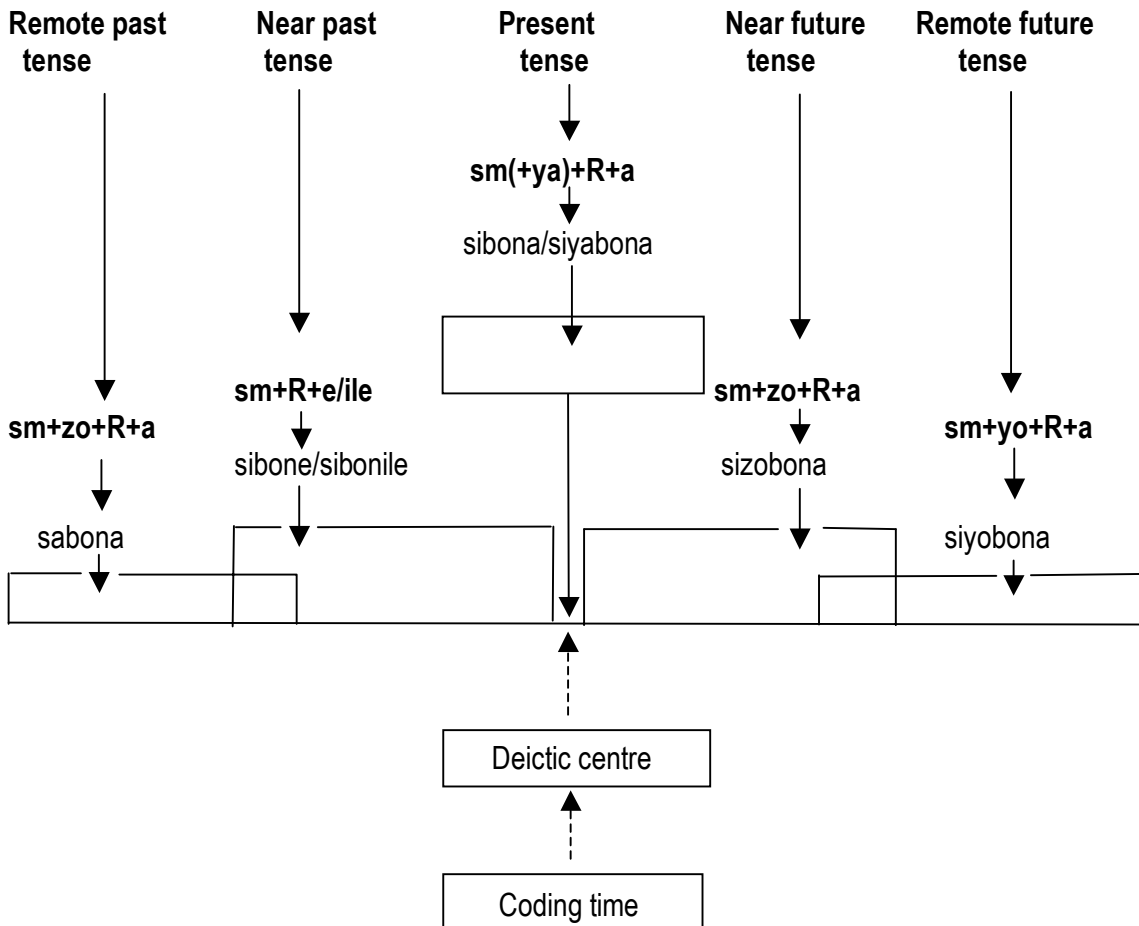
6. Umfana uyo(ku)dla amaswidi kusasa.  
'The boy will eat sweets tomorrow.'

The near past and remote past tenses and the near and remote future tenses of the Nguni languages are very often respectively interchangeable. This overlapping of the tense forms is shown in figure 1, which depicts the tense paradigm of the absolute tenses of Zulu.

Schematically the tense paradigm for the absolute tenses of Zulu can be represented as illustrated in figure 1 (after Posthumus).

**Figure 1 : The paradigm of the absolute tenses of Zulu**

In the schematic representation below, **R** is the abbreviation for 'root' while **sm** is the abbreviation for subject morpheme.



### 3.8 Two tense systems - absolute versus relative tenses

Now that an exposition of the absolute tenses of Zulu has been given, an adequate description of the relative tenses needs to be done in order to distinguish clearly between the absolute and relative tenses.

Since Reichenbach's (1947) publication, scholars have realized that event time may be indexed in relation to another reference point that is not the deictic centre.

Comrie maintains that the semantic interpretation of event time is not always done from coding time, but can also be made from another reference point. He (1985:56) says :



In chapter 2 we illustrated absolute tense, whereby the reference point for the location of a situation in time is the present moment. We now turn to relative tense, where the reference point for location of a situation is some point in time given by the context, not necessarily the present moment.

Tense interpretation is not always made in relation to coding time and may thus be made in terms of another established reference point. This established reference point that serves as primary anchoring point for the temporal interpretation of events may be marked as occurring prior to, or subsequent to coding time. The position of this newly established reference point may be indexed relative to the speech time by the use of adverbials and/or another event. The events can then be described as located prior to, simultaneous with or subsequent to this second anchoring point. Complex tense reference is thus possible by the representation of events in relation to other events, which are themselves, in turn, indexed in relation to coding time (the deictic centre). Tense paradigms of this nature are generally called relative tenses. For a basic discussion of the distinction between absolute and relative tenses see Gabbay and Rohrer (1978), Rohrer (1980), Posthumus (1983, 1988, 1999) and Comrie (1985).

Comrie distinguishes between pure relative and absolute-relative tenses. He (1985:65) describes pure relative tenses as tenses where a situation is located at, before, or after a reference point provided by the context. Absolute-relative tenses, on the other hand, are described by Comrie (*op cit.*) as those tenses where a situation is located at, before, or after a reference point which is, in turn, situated at, before or after the present moment (the deictic centre).<sup>5</sup>

### 3.9 The relative tense forms of the Bantu languages with particular reference to Zulu

Botne (1993:10) describes the function of the auxiliary *-ba* of Tumbuka and the eastern Bantu languages as follows :

Specifically, in its referential function *-ba* refers to some time,  $t_e$  in its capacity to function as a second tense locus,  $L_2$ . The event named by the complement verb in the complex *-ba* construction is directly interpreted temporally with respect to this secondary locus rather than to the primary tense locus established by the speech event.

Unlike Comrie and other scholars, Botne (1986:308; 1993:11) does not refer to these tense forms

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5. The distinction drawn by Comrie between pure and absolute-relative tenses is not adhered to in this mini-dissertation.

of which the event time is interpreted from a second locus as relative tenses. He refers to the auxiliaries *-ba* and *-li* as ‘shifters’. He (1986:303 *et. seq.*) remarks :

In this paper I want to propose that *-ba* and *-li*, in those languages that utilize them in such complex constructions, are not semantically empty but function to establish additional parameters to the temporal framework in which the narrated event is to be interpreted, thereby indicating more precisely the temporal location of the event. More specifically, I will argue that *-ba* and *-li* function as shifters, having both referential and indexical properties.

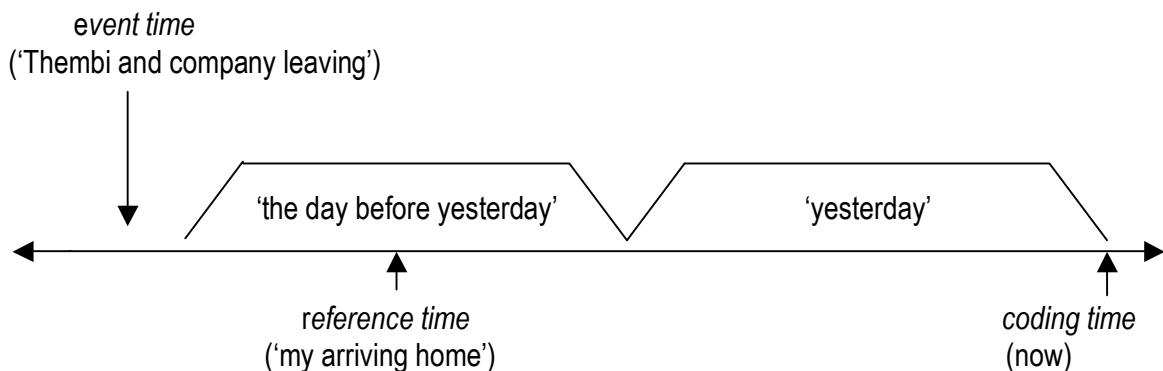
The verb *beziphumile* in example 7 below is not temporally directly anchored to coding time.

7. OThembi bebehambile ngokufika kwami ekhaya kuthangi.  
‘Thembi and company had left at the time of my arrival home the day before yesterday.’

What is of prime importance in the verb *bebehambile* in example 7, is that the ‘having left’ of Thembi and company had taken place before ‘my arriving home (the day before yesterday)’. These two events are described in relation to each other. At the stated reference point (which is not coding time) but the time of ‘my arrival home’, Thembi and company had left.

Language data from Zulu and the other Bantu languages thus necessitates the need to distinguish between absolute and relative tenses. It is clear that in an example such as 7 above, the event - ‘the having left’ of Thembi and company - should not be interpreted from speech time (the deictic centre), but rather from reference time ‘my arrival home’. The example above is a typical tense form in which an event has to be interpreted from reference time (‘my arrival home’) which is in turn located in a particular relation to coding time (the deictic centre). Schematically this relation can be illustrated, as in figure 2 below.

**Figure 2 : Schematic representation of a typical relative tense form**



Relative tenses are distinguished by the fact that the reference point from which the temporal semantic interpretations are made, is a point other than coding time. The exposition of relative tense offered here is contradictory to that of Comrie (1985:58) who differentiates between absolute and relative tenses in the following manner :

The difference between absolute and relative tense is not that between the present moment versus some other point in time as reference point, but rather between a form whose meaning specifies the present moment as reference point and a form whose meaning does not specify that the present moment must be its reference point.

Like Posthumus (1982; 1983; 1988; 1999), Botne also stresses the fact that this second reference point (which he calls the event-locus) is dependent on the speech event (the deictic centre). He (1986:304) declares:

In effect, the grammaticalization of this second event-locus establishes a second temporal continuum, dependent on the time of the speech event for its proper temporal interpretation.

However, it is accepted in this study that this second event-locus does not become a deictic centre as Botne (1993:26) maintains. For a detailed discussion of why this second reference point should be regarded as a reference point and not as another deictic centre, see Posthumus (1999:188-195).

Whenever the usage of tense departs from the deictic simultaneity assumption, we are dealing with relative tense which is obviously more complex. Tense forms that express a relation between event time, reference time and coding time are called relative tenses.

In any of the relative tense forms of Zulu (basically marked by *-be/-ba*) it is always possible to index the position of the second reference point, from which the event has to be interpreted, in relation to coding time. This second reference point becomes the primary reference point for the temporal interpretation of the event time whereas the deictic centre (as the default reference point) becomes the secondary reference point.

When using these relative tense forms the speaker/writer and hearer/reader always have to keep track of coding time even though the temporal interpretations are primarily done in relation to the established reference point (which is not coding time). The morphological structure of the (deficient) auxiliary verb with *-be* marks the position of this selected (second) reference point in relation to coding time. This selected reference point is located at a point relative to the position of

the default reference point (which is coding time). This reference point can be located at one of four possible positions, namely long before, shortly before, shortly after or long after coding time.

The verbs in examples 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d are in a relative tense with the second reference point situated long before, shortly before, shortly after and long after coding time respectively.

- 8a. Iqembu lethu **lalidlala** (< **labe lidlala**) ibhola eThekwini ngokuvakasha kwethu khona.  
'Our team was then (long ago) playing a game in Durban when we visited there.'
- 8b. Iqembu lethu **belidlala** (< **libe lidlala**) ibhola eThekwini ngokuvakasha kwethu khona.  
'Our team was playing a game in Durban when we visited there.'
- 8c. Iqembu lethu **lizobe lidlala** ibhola eThekwini ngokuvakasha kwethu khona.  
'Our team will be playing a game in Durban when we visit there.'
- 8d. Iqembu lethu **liyobe lidlala** ibhola eThekwini ngokuvakasha kwethu khona.  
'Our team will be playing a game in Durban when we visit there.'

The verbs in examples 8a to 8d denote an event which has coincided or will coincide with 'our visit to Durban' which in turn took place long before (8a) or shortly before (8b) coding time or which will take place shortly after coding time (8c) or long after coding time (8d)<sup>6</sup>. Although coding time (the deictic centre) does not serve as primary reference point for the interpretation of relative tense, the interlocutors may never lose track of coding time (the deictic centre). Relative tense is not an instance of event time being interpreted from a 'shifted deictic centre' neither is it an instance of event time being interpreted from 'another deictic centre'. (Consider Posthumus 1999.) Relative tense is an expression of the **relation between event time, reference time and coding time. In the so-called compound tenses of the Bantu languages in general, and those of Zulu in particular, the position of reference time in relation to coding time is marked by the morphological structure of the deficient auxiliary verb (which has diachronically been derived from a copulative verb stem). On the other hand, the relation between event time and reference time is marked by the morphological structure of the complementary verb.**

Posthumus (1988:142) points out that the use of a copulative verb stem as (deficient) auxiliary verb stem to mark the relative tenses is commonly found in the Bantu languages. While the Nguni languages and Northern Sotho use -ba, Southern Sotho uses -na and -ba, Ndonga -li and Herero -ri.

The relation between the reference point and coding time is marked by the morphological

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6. Note that the established reference point can never coincide with coding time. This rules out the possibility of a relative tense being interpreted as absolute tense as well.

structure of the auxiliary verb part of the relative tense form as already indicated above. If the reference point is located long before coding time the basic morphological structure of the auxiliary verb (in Zulu) is **subject morpheme + remote past tense morpheme -a- + auxiliary verb root -b- + categorial final morpheme -e**; if it is located shortly before coding time the morphological structure is **subject morpheme + auxiliary verb root -b- + categorial final morpheme -e**; if it is located shortly after coding time the structure is **subject morpheme + near future tense morpheme -zo- + auxiliary verb root -b- + categorial final morpheme -a/-e** and finally, if it is located long after coding time the structure is **subject morpheme + remote future tense morpheme -yo- + auxiliary verb root -b- + categorial final morpheme -a/-e**.

The form of the complementary verb in the relative tense form marks (as already indicated) the relation between event time and reference time. Consider the elucidating examples 9 to 12 below.

Example 9 below is an instance of a relative tense where reference time occurs shortly before coding time, while event time coincides with reference time.

9. Umntwana ubedla (< **ube edla**) ...  
'The child was eating ...'

Example 10 below is an instance of a relative tense where reference time occurs shortly before coding time, while event time occurs shortly before reference time.

10. Umntwana ubedlile (< **ube edlile**) ...  
'The child had eaten ...'

Example 11 below, is an instance of a relative tense where reference time occurs shortly before coding time, while event time occurs shortly after reference time.

11. Umntwana ubezokudla (< **ube ezokudla**) ...  
'The child was going to eat ...'

Example 12 below is an instance of a relative tense where reference time occurs shortly before coding time, while event time occurs long after reference time.

12. Umntwana ubeyokudla (< **ube eyokudla**) ...  
'The child was going to eat ...'

The possible occurrences of these tense forms have been discussed exhaustively in Posthumus (1982:94 *et. seq.*) and Posthumus (1988:139 *et. seq.*).

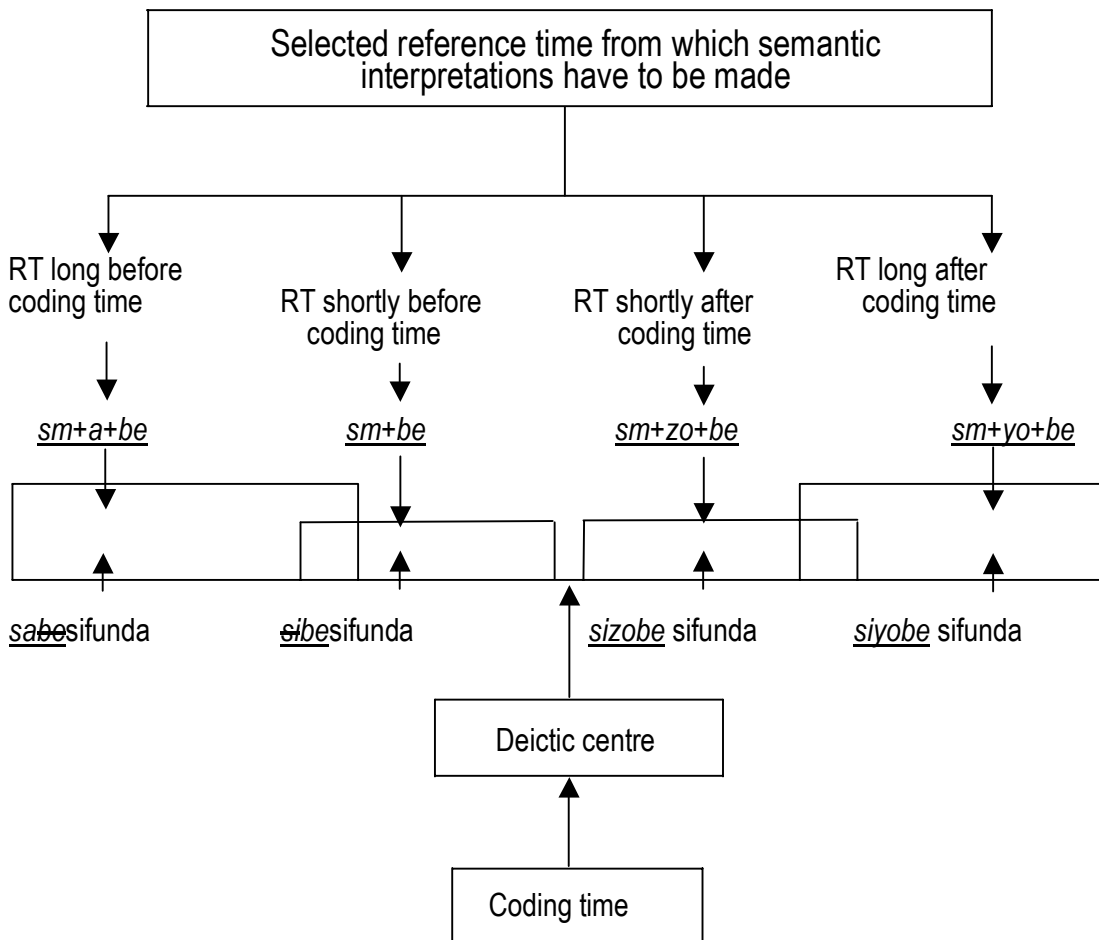
The complement of *-be* can be a main verb (as illustrated in the examples used hitherto) or an auxiliary verb group as in example 13 or a copulative word group as in example 14 below.

13. Abantwana babethanda ukudla (< **babe bethanda ukudla**) amasi ...  
'The children liked to eat curds ...'
14. Abantwana babenamaswidi (< **babe be n(a) (a)maswidi**) uma bephuma edolobheni.  
'The children were with sweets when they came from town.'  
'The children had sweets when they came from town.'

Figure 3 is a schematic representation of the four possible positions where reference time may be situated in relation to coding time. In the examples in the figure below, event time (which is marked by the form of the complementary verb) coincides with reference time (which is marked by the form of the auxiliary verb) in each instance.

**Figure 3: Tense paradigm for the relative tense forms with *-be* of Zulu**

In the scheme below, **RT** is the abbreviation for 'reference time' while **sm** is the abbreviation for 'subject morpheme'.



### 3.10 Defining absolute and relative tense

In terms of the foregoing discussion there are two options open for the definition of tense. Firstly, separate definitions can be provided for absolute and relative tense. An absolute tense can then be defined as the verb form that marks the relation between event time and coding time, while a relative tense can be defined as the verb form that marks the relation between event time, reference time and coding time.

The second option is to amend Lyons' definition of tense to be applicable to both absolute and relative tenses. This approach would result in tense being defined as follows:

***Tenses are semantic-syntactically distinct verb forms that are morphologically and phonologically marked in the tense paradigms of the verb to express the relation between event time, coding time and reference time. (In the case of absolute tense the reference time coincides with coding time.)***

### 3.11 Summary of the major findings in this chapter

The summary below indicates the major findings in this chapter.

From the preceding discussion in this chapter it is evident that:

- Tense has to be distinguished from time reference and from aspect;
- Tense is a deictic category marked within the verb;
- Tense is grammaticalized in the verbal morphology;
- Tense can be absolute or relative;
- Absolute tenses are generally distinguished as present, past and future (though some languages, such as Zulu, distinguish degrees of remoteness of past and future from the deictic centre);
- The five absolute tense forms distinguished for Zulu are the present, near past, remote past, near future and remote future tense;
- The terms 'imperfect tense' and 'perfect tense' should not be used to refer to the present and past tenses because these terms relate to aspect and not to tense;
- Relative tenses are generally distinguished from absolute tenses in that, in the former, event time is expressed in relation to reference time which is, in turn, indexed in relation to coding time;
- The individual relative tenses each constitute a single tense form (that should be labelled in terms of the relation between coding time and reference time, and reference time and event time).

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CHAPTER 4

THE SPECTRUM OF RELATIVE TENSES

4.1 Aim

The aim of this chapter is to establish the spectrum of relative tenses that occur in Zulu. Since the relative tense forms are generally used in a contracted form, the contractions that take place with each of the relative tense forms will also be discussed exhaustively.

4.2 The auxiliary verb part of the relative tense forms

The reference point in the case of the relative tenses may be a point **shortly before, long before, shortly after** or **long after** coding time. Relative tense forms never anchor directly to coding time. In other words, if a speaker says: Sibe sigijima (> Besigijima) ngenkathi liduma izulu. 'We were running while the thunder roared', he/she is not saying that they are running now, but he/she says that they were running in the past (while the thunder was roaring). However, the speech participants always have to keep track of coding time. The form of the auxiliary verb part will provide the clue as to whether event time should be interpreted from a point shortly before, long before, shortly after or long after coding time.

- If reference time occurs shortly before coding time, the auxiliary verb group has the basic morphological structure:

subject morpheme (sm) + auxiliary verb stem -be # complementary verb.

Consider the verb form: sibe sigijima (> ~~sib~~besigijima).

- If reference time occurs long before coding time, the auxiliary verb group has the basic morphological structure:

subject morpheme (sm) + remote past tense morpheme a + auxiliary verb stem -be # complementary verb.

Consider the verb form: sabe sigijima (si + a + be) > sabe sigijima (> ~~sab~~besigijima).

- If reference time occurs shortly after coding time, the auxiliary verb group has the basic morphological structure:

subject morpheme (sm) + near future tense morpheme -zo- + auxiliary verb stem -be # complementary verb.

Consider the verb form: sizobe sigijima (> sobesigijima)

- If reference time occurs long after coding time, the auxiliary verb group has the basic morphological structure:

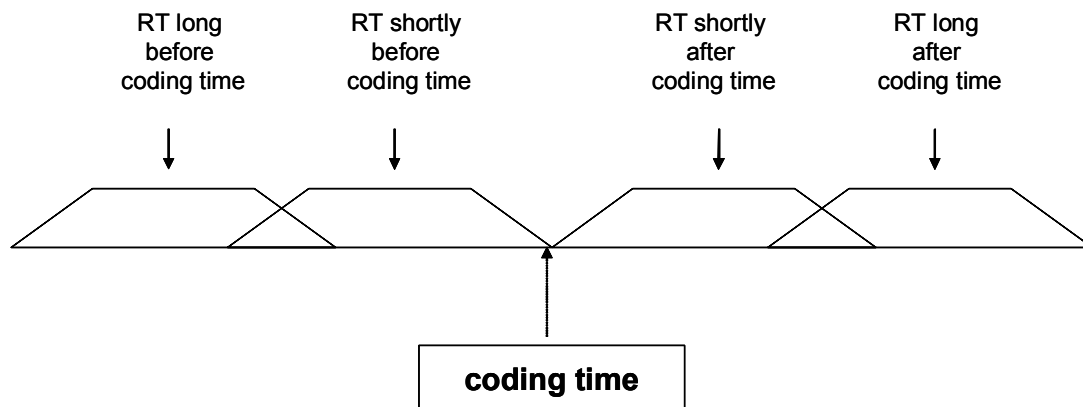
subject morpheme (sm) + remote future tense morpheme -yo- + auxiliary verb stem -be # complementary verb.

Consider the verb form: siyobe sigijima (> sobesigijima)

The scheme below (figure 1) indicates the four intervals where the reference point can be situated in relation to coding time (which constitutes the deictic centre).

Figure 1 : The four intervals where the reference point can be situated in relation to coding time

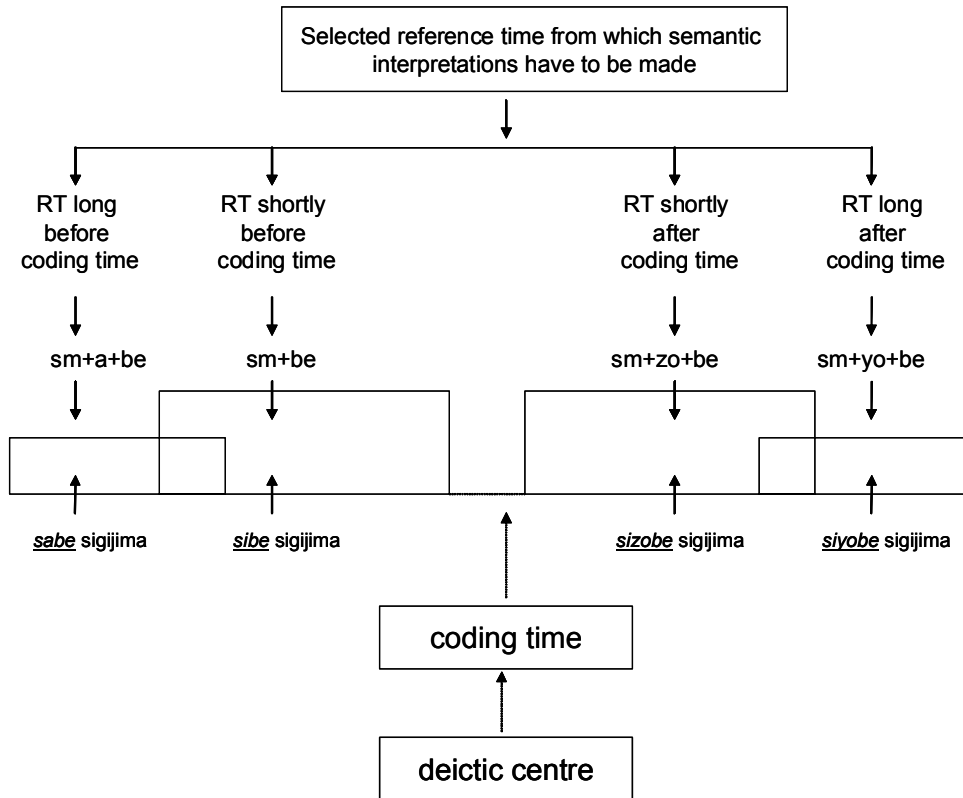
RT is the abbreviation used for reference time.



In the tense paradigm below (used earlier in chapter 3 and repeated here for ease of reference) the possible position of the selected reference point is indicated relative to coding time. An exposition of the morphological structure of the auxiliary verb part that marks the position of reference time in relation to coding time is also indicated. An example of a verb in the particular relative tense form is supplied in each case.

Figure 2 : The tense paradigm for the relative tenses of Zulu

RT is once again the abbreviation used for reference time while **sm** is the abbreviation used for subject morpheme.



The basic morphological structure of the auxiliary verb with the stem *-be* indicates the position of the selected reference point in relation to coding time as is evident from the scheme above. In cases where the reference time falls within the near future or remote future, the auxiliary verb stem *-ba* may be used as an alternative form (instead of the form *-be*, generally used). In addition to the forms *sizobe* and *siyobe* the auxiliary verb part may thus occur as *sizoba* or *siyoba* respectively. The forms with the categorial morpheme *-e* (*sizobe* and *siyobe*) have probably developed in analogy to forms such as *ube-* (< *ube ehamba*) and *waye-* (< *wabe ehamba*) which have a much higher occurrence than the forms *uzobe ...* and *uyobe ...*. Whatever their development, the fact is that the auxiliary verb forms *uzobe ...* and *uyobe ...* (with the categorial morpheme *-e*) are used as alternatives to the forms with the categorial morpheme *-a* (which are 'logically' the correct forms).

4.3 The complementary part of the relative tense forms

The verb in the complementary part of the relative tense form may denote that event time (1) coincides with reference time (and thus resembles the present tense verb form (as in 4a below)); (2) occurs before reference time (and thus resembles the near past tense form (as in 4b below));

(3) occurs shortly after reference time (and thus resembles the near future tense form (as in 4c below)) or (4) occurs long after reference time (and thus resembles the remote future tense form (as in 4d below)). These complementary verb forms can co-occur with any of the different variations of the auxiliary verb parts discussed earlier. Consider the examples below that are all relative tense forms with reference time **shortly before** coding time:

- 4a. UMandla ubelungisa (< ube elungisa) imoto yakhe uma ngifika.
'Mandla was fixing his car when I arrived.'
- 4b. UMandla ubelungise (< ube elungise) imoto yakhe uma ngifika.
'Mandla had fixed his car when I arrived.'
- 4c. UMandla ubezolungisa (< ube ezolungisa) imoto yakhe uma ngifika.
'Mandla was going to fix his car when I arrived.'
- 4d. UMandla ubeyolungisa (< ube eyolungisa) imoto yakhe uma ngifika.
'Mandla was going to fix his car (later) when I arrived.'

Examples 5a to 5d are instances of different relative tense forms with reference time **long after** coding time.

- 5a. Abantwana bazobe bebhala uma sibabona.
'The children will be writing when we see them.'
- 5b. Abantwana bazobe bebhalile uma sibabona.
'The children will have written when we see them.'
- 5c. Abantwana bazobe bezobhala uma sibabona.
'The children will still have to write when we see them.'
- 5d. Abantwana bazobe beyobhala uma sibabona.
'The children will still have to write (later) when we see them.'

Note that the complementary verb never occurs in the remote past tense form. Examples *6 and *7 are therefore ungrammatical.

- *6. Iphoyisa libe labamba isigebengu ...
'The policeman was busy, he caught the villain (long ago) ...'
- *7. Intombi izobe yaphuza uthswala ...
'The girl will be, she had drunk the beer (long ago) ...'

4.4 A discussion of the individual relative tense forms

4.4.1 Relative tenses with reference time shortly before coding time (With the auxiliary verb in the near past tense form)

4.4.1.1 Basic Form

The morphological structure of these relative tense forms is basically :

subject morpheme (sm) + auxiliary verb stem -be # (situative) subject morpheme + complementary verb stem.

Consider the elucidating example: besixoxa (< ~~s~~ibesixoxa).

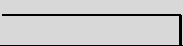

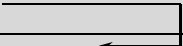




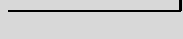
Elision of the first subject morpheme takes place in cases where the subject morpheme comprises the phonological structure /CV/. Consider the example besixoxa (< ~~s~~ibe sixoxa). In cases where the subject morpheme is a vowel only, the -e of the auxiliary verb stem -be, is elided, for instance umfana ubexoxa (< ub~~e~~ exoxa).

4.4.1.2 Elision in the case of the relative tense forms with reference time shortly before coding time

The elision that takes place in the case where the first or the second person or the noun classes are used as subjects in these verbal forms is indicated systematically in the table below. The basic auxiliary verb form (the full form which is not generally used) is indicated in the third last column with the subject morpheme of the complementary verb which follows the auxiliary verb part. The contracted forms are listed in the last column. These are the forms that are generally used.

Table 1 : Relative tense forms with reference time shortly before coding time

person	reference time shortly before coding time		
	full form	contracted form	
	Variant I	Elision Process	Variant II
1 st ps	ngibe ngi-..	ng ibe ngi-.. >	bengi-..
1 st pp	sibe si-..	s ibe si-.. >	besi-..
2 nd ps	ube u-..	u be u-.. / ub e u-.. >	bewu-.. / ubu-..
2 nd pp	nibe ni-..	n ibe ni-.. >	beni-..

		reference time shortly before coding time		
class number	noun	full form	contracted form	
		Variant I	Elision Process	Variant II
1	umuntu	ube e-..	<u>ube</u> e-.. >	ube-.. 
1a	ubaba	ube e- ..	<u>ube</u> e-.. >	ube-.. 
2	abantu	babe be-..	<u>babe</u> be-.. >	bebe-.. 
2a	obaba	babe be-	<u>babe</u> be- >	bebe-.. 
3	umuthi	ube u-..	<u>ube</u> u- .. / <u>ube</u> u- >	bewu-.. / ubu-.. 
3a	utamatisi	ube u-..	<u>ube</u> u- .. / <u>ube</u> u- >	bewu-.. / ubu-.. 
4	imithi	ibe i-..	<u>ibe</u> i- .. / <u>ibe</u> i- >	beyi-.. / ibi-..
5	ihhashi	libe li-..	<u>libe</u> li-.. >	beli-..
6	amahhashi	abe e-..	<u>abe</u> -e-.. >	abe-.. / aye-..
7	isitsha	sibe si-..	<u>sibe</u> si-.. >	besi-..
8	izitsha	zibe zi-..	<u>zibe</u> zi-.. >	bezi-..
9	inkomo	ibe i-..	<u>ibe</u> i-.. / <u>ibe</u> i-.. >	beyi-.. / ibi-..
10	izinkomo	zibe zi-..	<u>zibe</u> zi-.. >	bezi-..
11	u(lu)fudu	lube lu-..	<u>lube</u> lu-.. >	belu-..
14	ubuhle	bube bu-..	<u>bube</u> bu-.. >	bebu-..
15	ukudla	kube ku-..	<u>kube</u> ku-.. >	beku-..
16	phandle	kube ku-..	<u>kube</u> ku-.. >	beku-.. 
17	ukunxele	kube ku-..	<u>kube</u> ku-.. >	beku-.. 

In the examples below the verb in the relative tense form (with reference time shortly before coding time) is underlined.

- Izinkomo beziphumile (< zibe ziphumile) esibayeni ngenkathi lina izulu.
'The cattle had gone out of the kraal when it rained.'
- UVusi ubezoya (< ube ezoya) esitolo kodwa ugcine engayanga.
'Vusi would have been going to the shop, but in the end he did not go.'

4.4.2 Relative tenses with reference time long before coding time (With the auxiliary verb in the remote past tense form)

4.4.2.1 Basic form

The morphological structure of these relative tense forms is basically:

subject morpheme (sm) + remote past tense morpheme a + auxiliary verb stem -be # (situative) subject morpheme + complementary verb stem.

Consider the elucidating example: zazilwa (zi + a + be > zabe zilwa) (< ~~zabe~~zilwa).



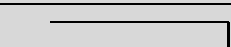
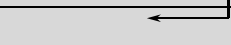
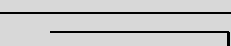
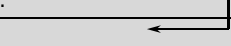

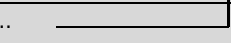
4.4.2.2 Elision and semi-vowel insertion in the case of relative tense forms with reference time long before coding time

Elision of the auxiliary verb stem -be takes place with all persons and all classes. In those cases where the subject morpheme consists of a vowel only, semi-vowel insertion takes place. The semi-vowel /w/ is inserted before the vowel /u/ (consider 2nd person singular and classes 3 and 3a) while the semi-vowel /y/ is inserted before the vowel /e/ and /i/. Consider classes 1 & 1a and 6 in terms of the vowel /e/ and classes 4 and 9 in terms of the vowel /i/.

The tables below reflect those relative tense forms where reference time occurs long before coding time.

Table 2 : Relative tense forms with reference time long before coding time

person	reference time long before coding time		
	full form	contracted form	
	Variant I	Elision Process	Variant II
1 st ps	ngabe ngi-..	ngabe ngi-.. >	ngangi-..
1 st pp	sabe si-..	sabe si-.. >	sasi-..
2 nd ps	wabe u-..	wabe u-.. >	wawu-..
2 nd pp	nabe ni-..	nabe ni-.. >	nani-..

class number	noun	reference time long before coding time		
		full form	contracted form	
		Variant I	Elision Process	Variant II
1	umuntu	wabe e-..	wabe e-.. >	waye-.. 
1a	ubaba	wabe e-..	wabe e-.. >	waye-.. 
2	abantu	babe be-..	babe be-.. >	babe 
2a	obaba	babe be-	babe be- >	babe-.. 
3	umuthi	wabe u-..	wabe u-.. >	wawu-.. 
3a	utamatisi	wabe u-..	wabe u-.. >	wawu-.. 
4	imithi	yabe i-..	yabe i-.. >	yayi-..
5	ihhashi	labe li-..	labe li-.. >	lali-..
6	amahhashi	abe e-..	abe e-.. >	aye-..
7	isitsha	sabe si-..	sabe si-.. >	sasi-..
8	izitsha	zabe zi-..	zabe zi-.. >	zazi-..
9	inkomo	yabe i-..	yabe i-.. >	yayi-..
10	izinkomo	zabe zi-..	zabe zi-.. >	zazi-..
11	u(lu)fudu	lwabe lu-..	lwabe lu-.. >	lwalu-..
14	ubuhle	babe bu-..	babe bu-.. >	babu-..
15	ukudla	kwabe ku-..	kwabe ku-.. >	kwaku-..
16	phandle	kwabe ku-..	kwabe ku-.. >	kwaku-.. 
17	ukunxele	kwabe ku-..	kwabe ku-.. >	kwaku-.. 

In the examples below the verb in the relative tense form (with reference time long before coding time) is underlined.

10. Umntwana wayegula (< wabe egula) kakhulu esesibhedlela.
'The child was very ill while he/she was still in hospital.'
11. Lesi sikole sasidumile (< sabe sidumile) ngenxa yokuthi abafundi bayaphasa.
'This school was well known because the pupils were passing.'

4.4.3 Relative tenses with reference time shortly after coding time (With the auxiliary verb in the near future tense form)

4.4.3.1 Basic form

If reference time occurs shortly after coding time, the auxiliary verb group has the basic morphological structure:

subject morpheme (sm) + near future tense morpheme -zo- + auxiliary verb stem -be # (situative) subject morpheme + complementary verb stem.

Consider the elucidating example: lizobe liphuza (< li-zo-be li-phuza).

4.4.3.2 Elision in the case of relative tense forms with reference time shortly after coding time

The shortened forms of these relative tenses are not used as frequently as the forms discussed earlier. However, it is worthwhile taking note thereof.

Those instances where the subject morpheme has the phonological structure /CV/ the vowel of the first subject morpheme and the consonant /z/ of the future tense morpheme -zo- are elided. The form ngizobe ngidlile will thus contract to ngobe ngidlile (< ng~~iz~~obe ngidlile) and buzobe bumila will contract to bobe bumila (< bu~~z~~obe bumila).

If, however, the basic subject morpheme consists of a vowel only, this vowel is replaced by the appropriate semi-vowel after elision of the /z/ of the future tense morpheme -zo-. The semi-vowel /w/ replaces the vowel /u/, while /y/ replaces the vowel /i/. Furthermore, elision of the -e of the auxiliary verb stem -be also takes place in this instance, since this -e is then followed by a vowel. A form such as (Wena) uzobe ufundile will contract to (Wena) wobe ufundile and finally to (wena) wobufundile while (inkukhu) izobe ifukama will contract to (inkukhu) yobe ifukama and finally to (inkukhu) yobifukama.

Note that in the case of class 6, the subject morpheme a- of the auxiliary verb is omitted together with the /z/ of the future tense morpheme, resulting in the /o/ of the future tense morpheme being retained before the auxiliary verb stem -be. The vowel /e/ of the auxiliary verb stem -be is then also omitted since it appears in juxtaposition to the second subject morpheme, which is e-.

Examine the tables below that explain the contraction of the relative tense forms with reference time shortly after coding time.

Table 3 : Relative tense forms with reference time shortly after coding time

Person	reference time shortly after coding time			
	full form	contracted form		
	Variant I	Variant II	Elision process	Variant III
1 st ps	ngizobe ngi-..		> ngizobe ngi-.. >	ngobe ngi-..
1 st pp	sizobe si-..		> sizobe si-.. >	sobe si-..
2 nd ps	uzobe u-..	uzobe u-..	> uzobu-.. >	wobu-..
2 nd pp	nizobe ni-..		>	nobe ni-

class no.	sample noun	reference time shortly after coding time			
		full form	contracted form		
		Variant I	Variant II	Elision process	Variant III
1	umuntu	uzobe e-..	uzobe e-..	> uzobe-.. >	wobe-..
1a	ubaba	uzobe e- ..	uzobe e- ..	> uzobe- .. >	wobe-..
2	abantu	bazobe be-..		> bazobe be-.. >	bobe be-..
2a	obaba	bazobe be-..		> bazobe be- .. >	bobe be-..
3	umuthi	uzobe u-..	uzobe u-..	> uzobu-.. >	wobu-..
3a	utamatsi	uzobe u-..	uzobe u-..	> uzobu-.. >	wobu-..
4	imithi	izobe i-..	izobe i-..	> izobi-.. >	yobi-..
5	ihhashi	lizobe li-..		> lizobe li-.. >	lobe li-..
6	amahhashi	azobe e-..	azobe e-..	> obe e-.. >	obe-..
7	isitsha	sizobe si-..		> sizobe si-.. >	sobe si-..
8	izitsha	zizobe zi-..		> zizobe zi-.. >	zobe zi-..
9	inkomo	izobe i-..	izobe i-..	> izobi-.. >	yobi-..
10	izinkomo	zizobe zi-..		> zizobe zi-.. >	zobe zi-..
11	u(lu)fudu	luzobe lu-..		> luzobe lu-.. >	lobe lu-..
14	ubuhle	buzobe bu-..		> buzobe bu-.. >	bobe bu-..
15	ukudla	kuzobe ku-..		> kuzobe ku-.. >	kobe ku-..
16	phandle	kuzobe ku-..		> kuzobe ku-.. >	kobe ku-..
17	ukunxele	kuzobe ku-..		> kuzobe ku-.. >	kobe ku-..

4.4.3.3 Examples of relative tenses with reference time shortly after coding time (with the auxiliary verb in the near future tense form)

In the examples below the verb in the relative tense form (with reference time shortly after coding time) is underlined.

12. Ubaba uzobebhema/wobebhema (< uzobe ebhema) ipipi lakhe uma sifika ekhaya.
'Father will be smoking his pipe when we arrive home.'
13. Izingane zobe ziqedile (< zizobe ziqedile) ukubhala kusasa.
'The children will have finished writing tomorrow.'

4.4.4 Relative tenses with reference time long after coding time (With the auxiliary verb in the remote future tense form)

4.4.4.1 Basic form

If reference time occurs long after coding time, the verb group has the basic morphological structure :

subject morpheme (sm) + remote future tense morpheme -yo- + auxiliary verb stem -be # (situative) subject morpheme + complementary verb stem.

Consider the elucidating example: liyobe liphuza (< li-yo-be li-phuza).

4.4.4.2 Elision and semi-vowel insertion in the case of relative tense forms with reference time long after coding time

The tables below reflect those relative tense forms where reference time is long after coding time. In these tense forms the vowel of the first subject morpheme and the consonant /y/ of the future tense morpheme -yo- are elided (if the subject morpheme has the phonological structure /CV/). The form ngiyobe ngidlile will thus contract to ngobe ngidlile and liyobe lihlezi will contract to lobe lihlezi.

If, however, the basic subject morpheme consists of a vowel only, this vowel is replaced by the appropriate semi-vowel after elision of the /y/ of the future tense morpheme -yo-. The semi-vowel /w/ replaces the vowel /u/, while /y/ replaces the vowel /i/. Furthermore, elision of the -e of the auxiliary verb stem -be also takes place in this instance, since this -e is followed by a vowel. Forms such as (wena) uyobe ufundile will contract to (wena) wobe ufundile and finally to (wena) wobufundile and (inkukhu) iyobe ifukama will contract to (inkukhu) yobe ifukama and finally to (inkukhu) yobifukama.

Examine the tables below:

Table 4 : Relative tense forms with reference time long after coding time

reference time long after coding time					
Person	full form	contracted forms			
	Variant I	Variant II		Elision process	Variant III
1 st ps	ngiyobe ngi-..		>	ngiyobe ngi-.. >	ngobe ngi-..
1 st pp	siyobe si-..		>	siyobe si-.. >	sobe si-..
2 nd ps	uyobe u-..	uyobe u-..	>	uyobu-.. >	wobu-..
2 nd pp	niyobe ni-..		>	niyobe ni-.. >	nobe ni-

reference time long after coding time						
class no.	sample noun	full form	contracted forms			
		Variant I	Variant II		Elision process	Variant III
1	umuntu	uyobe e-..	uyobe e-..	>	uyobe-.. >	wobe-..
1a	ubaba	uyobe e- ..	uyobe e- ..	>	uyobe- .. >	wobe-..
2	abantu	bayobe be-..		>	bayobe be-.. >	bobe be-..
2a	obaba	bayobe be-..		>	bayobe be- .. >	bobe be-..
3	umuthi	uyobe u-..	uyobe u-..	>	uyobu-.. >	wobu-..
3a	utamasisi	uyobe u-..	uyobe u-..	>	uyobu-.. >	wobu-..
4	imithi	iyobe i-..	iyobe i-..	>	iyobi-.. >	yobi-..
5	ihhashi	liyobe li-..		>	liyobe li-.. >	lobe li-..
6	amahhashi	ayobe e-..	ayobe e-..	>	obe e-.. >	obe-..
7	isitsha	siyobe si-..		>	siyobe si-.. >	sobe si-..
8	izitsha	ziyobe zi-..		>	ziyobe zi-.. >	zobe zi-..
9	inkomo	iyobe i-..	iyobe i-..	>	iyobi-.. >	yobi-..
10	izinkomo	ziyobe zi-..		>	ziyobe zi-.. >	zobe zi-..
11	u(lu)fudu	luyobe lu-..		>	luyobe lu-.. >	lobe lu-..
14	ubuhle	buyobe bu-..		>	buyobe bu-.. >	bobe bu-..
15	ukudla	kuyobe ku-..		>	kuyobe ku-.. >	kobe ku-..
16	phandle	kuyobe ku-..		>	kuyobe ku-.. >	kobe ku-..
17	ukunxele	kuyobe ku-..		>	kuyobe ku-.. >	kobe ku-..

Note that the final contracted forms of the remote future tense are identical to those of the near future tense. If the last columns of the two tables are compared, it is clear that the opposition between the two future tense forms has been abrogated. Hence, a form such as *abantu bobe besebenza kusasa* could be the shortened form of *abantu bazobe besebenza kusasa* **OR** *abantu bayobe besebenza kusasa* : ‘the people will be, they will be working tomorrow / *the people will be working tomorrow.*’

In the examples below the verb in the relative tense form (with reference time long after coding time) is underlined.

14. Bobe bedlile (< bayobe bedlile) uma sifika khona.
'They will have eaten (already) when we arrive there.'
15. UThembi wobelele (< uyobe elele) uma sigoduka.
'Thembi will (already) be asleep when we go home.'

4.5 Copulatives as complements in the relative tense forms

Like main verbs, copulatives may also be used as complements of the auxiliary verb stem -be. This auxiliary verb group also denotes relative tense in the same way that main verbs do (as discussed above). Principally, the marking of the relative tenses remains the same.

The elision and semi-vowel insertion rules that apply to the relative tenses where a copulative word group occurs as complement are identical to those where a main verb occurs as complement. Consider the examples below of relative tenses where a copulative is used as complement of the auxiliary verb stem -be.

16. UThembi ubenguthisha (< ube eng(i) uthisha) esikoleni sakithi.
'Thembi had been a teacher at our school. / Thembi was a teacher at our school'
17. UThekwane ukhala athi: 'Ngangimuhle (< ngabe ngi muhle) ngasuke ngoniwa yilokhu nalokhu nalokhu.'
'The shadow bird calls and says: 'I had been beautiful, but I was spoiled by this and that and that.'
18. Izinkomo bezinemikhaza (< zibe zi na imikhaza) sazidipha.
'The cattle (then) had ticks and then we dipped them.'

The relative tense forms with a **copulative word group** as complement do not have the same spectrum of complements as the relative tense forms with a **main verb** as complement. This is due to that fact that the complementary part of the relative tense forms cannot occur in the past tense and furthermore, no stative/non-inchoative complement occurs in the near or remote future tense forms.

The spectrum of relative tense forms with a copulative word group as a complement is summarized in the tables below. These relative tenses have identificative, associative and descriptive copulatives as complements.

Table 5 : Relative tense forms with identificative copulatives as complements

Auxiliary verb	Complement: Identificative copulative word group			
ngabe	Present	inchoative	Example	
			English equivalent	
ngabe	Present	inchoative	ngabe ngiba nguthisha	
		non-inchoative	ngabe nginguthisha	
	N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)	
	N. future	inchoative	ngabe ngizoba nguthisha	
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	R. future	inchoative	ngabe ngiyoba nguthisha	
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	ngibe	Present	inchoative	ngibe ngiba nguthisha
			non-inchoative	ngibe nginguthisha
		N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)
		N. future	inchoative	ngibe ngizoba nguthisha
			non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)
R. future		inchoative	ngibe ngiyoba nguthisha	
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
ngizobe/ ngizoba		Present	inchoative	ngizobe ngiba nguthisha
			non-inchoative	ngizobe nginguthisha
		N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)
		N. future	inchoative	ngizobe ngizoba nguthisha
			non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)
	R. future	inchoative	ngizobe ngiyoba nguthisha	
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	ngiyobe/ ngiyoba	Present	inchoative	ngiyobe ngiba nguthisha
			non-inchoative	ngiyobe nginguthisha
		N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)
		N. future	inchoative	ngiyobe ngizoba nguthisha
			non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)
R. future		inchoative	ngiyobe ngiyoba nguthisha	
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	

Table 6 : Relative tense forms with associative copulatives as complements

Auxiliary verb	Complement: Associative copulative word group			
		Example	English equivalent	
sabe	Present	inchoative	sabe siba nezincwadi	long ago ... 'we were getting books (then)'
		non-inchoative	sabe sinezincwadi	'we had books (then)'
	N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)	
	N. future	inchoative	sabe sizoba nezincwadi	'we were going to get books (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	R. future	inchoative	sabe siyoba nezincwadi	'we were going to get books (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	sibe	Present	inchoative	sibe siba nezincwadi
non-inchoative			sibe sinezincwadi	'we had books (then)'
N. past		-	(no forms occur in the language)	
N. future		inchoative	sibe sizoba nezincwadi	'we were going to get books (then) (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
R. future		inchoative	sibe siyoba nezincwadi	'we were going to get books (then) (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
sizobe/ sizoba		Present	inchoative	sizobe siba nezincwadi
	non-inchoative		sizobe sinezincwadi	'we will have books (then)'
	N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)	
	N. future	inchoative	sizobe sizoba nezincwadi	'we will be getting books (then) (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	R. future	inchoative	sizobe siyoba nezincwadi	'we will be getting books (then) (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	siyobe/ siyoba	Present	inchoative	siyobe siba nezincwadi
non-inchoative			siyobe sinezincwadi	'we will get books (then)'
N. past		-	(no forms occur in the language)	
N. future		inchoative	siyobe sizoba nezincwadi	'we will be getting books (then) (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
R. future		inchoative	siyobe siyoba nezincwadi	'we will be getting books (then) (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	

Table 7 : Relative tense forms with descriptive copulatives as complements

Auxiliary verb	Complement: Descriptive copulative word group			
		Example	English equivalent	
wabe	Present	inchoative	wabe eba mkhulu > wayeba mkhulu	long ago ... 'he/she was becoming tall (then)'
		non-inchoative	wabe emkhulu > wayemkhulu	'he/she was tall (then)'
	N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)	
	N. future	inchoative	wabe ezoba mkhulu > wayezoba mkhulu	'he/she was going to become tall (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	R. future	inchoative	wabe eyoba mkhulu > wayeyoba mkhulu	'he/she was going to become tall (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	ube	Present	inchoative	ube eba mkhulu > ubeba mkhulu
non-inchoative			ube emkhulu > ubemkhulu	'he/she was tall (then)'
N. past		-	(no forms occur in the language)	
N. future		inchoative	ube ezoba mkhulu > ubezoba mkhulu	'he/she was going to become tall (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
R. future		inchoative	ube eyoba mkhulu > ubeyoba mkhulu	'he/she was going to become tall (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
uzobe/ uzoba		Present	inchoative	uzobe eba mkhulu > uzobeba mkhulu
	non-inchoative		uzobe emkhulu > uzobemkhulu	'he/she will be tall (then)'
	N. past	-	(no forms occur in the language)	
	N. future	inchoative	uzobe ezoba mkhulu > uzobezoba mkhulu	'he/she will be becoming tall (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	R. future	inchoative	uzobe eyoba mkhulu > uzobeyoba mkhulu	'he/she will be becoming tall (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
	uyobe/ uyoba	Present	inchoative	uyobe eba mkhulu > uyobeba mkhulu
non-inchoative			uyobe emkhulu > uyobemkhulu	'he/she will be tall (then)'
N. past		-	(no forms occur in the language)	
N. future		inchoative	uyobe ezoba mkhulu > uyobezoba mkhulu	'he/she will be becoming tall (in the near future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	
R. future		inchoative	uyobe eyoba mkhulu > uyobeyoba mkhulu	'he/she will be becoming tall (in the remote future)'
		non-inchoative	(no forms occur in the language)	

4.6 Negation of the relative tenses

To negate a relative tense form, the complementary verb is negated. Since the complementary verb is in the situative mood, this verb is negated by using the negative morpheme *-nga-*, which occurs after the subject morpheme, while the positive categorial morpheme of the verb is replaced by the appropriate negative categorial morpheme depending on the tense form of that verb.

Examine the illustrative (b) examples below.

- 19a. Iphoyisa belibamba isela ...
'The policeman was busy, he catches the thief ...'
'*The policeman was catching the thief ...*'
- 19b. Iphoyisa belingabambi (< ~~libe~~ lingabambi) isela ...
'The policeman was busy, he did not catch the thief ...'
'*The policeman was not busy catching the thief ...*'
- 20a. Amadoda ayephuze utshwala ...
'The men were busy (long ago), they had drunk beer ...'
'*The men had drunk beer (long ago) ...*'
- 20b. Amadoda ayengaphuzanga (< ~~abe~~ engaphuzanga) utshwala ...
'The men were busy (long ago), they had not drunk beer ...'
'*The men had not drunk beer (long ago) ...*'
- 21a. UThembi uyobe elambile uma ufika.
'Thembi will be (long after now), she will be hungry when you arrive.'
'*Thembi will be hungry when you arrive.*'
- 21b. UThembi uyobe engalambile (< uyobe engalambile) uma ufika.
'Thembi will be (long after now), she will not be hungry when you arrive.'
'*Thembi will not be hungry when you arrive.*'

(Note that in the last example above, the categorial morpheme *-ile* does not change in the negative, since the verb denotes a state).

If the complementary verb is in one of the future tense forms, the future tense morpheme *-zo-* or *-yo-* is replaced by the negative future tense morpheme *-zuku-* or *-yuku-* respectively. The negative morpheme *-nga-* is infixes before the negative future tense morphemes. Consider the (b) examples below:

- 22a. Umfana ubezophuma (< ube ezophuma) emanzini ...
'The boy was busy (shortly before), he will get out of the water ...'
'*The boy was going to get out of the water ...*'
- 22b. Umfana ubengazukuphuma (< ube engazukuphuma) emanzini ...
'The boy was busy (shortly before), he will not get out of the water ...'
'*The boy was not going to get out of the water ...*'

23a. UZama ubeyodlala (ube eyodlala) phandle ...
'Zama was busy (shortly before), he will (later) play outside ...'
'Zama was going to play outside ...'

23b. UZama ubengayukudlala (< ube engayukudlala) phandle ...
'Zama was busy (shortly before), he will not (later) play outside ...'
'Zama was not going to play outside ...'

4.6.1 The negative of the relative tenses with a copulative as complement

If the complement of the relative tense form is a copulative verb group and it is in the inchoative form, the negative morpheme -nga- is infixed before the **inchoative copulative verb stem** -ba, while this verb stem takes the appropriate negative categorial morpheme. The copulative verb stem in the negative form will thus occur as -bi (in the present tense) or -banga (in the near past tense). Consider example 24b below.

24a. Indoda ibiba nempandla.
'The man was busy, he was becoming with a bald.'
'The man was becoming bald.'

24b. Indoda ibingabi nemphandla (< ibe ingabi nempandla).
'The man was busy, he was not becoming with a bald.'
'The man was not becoming bald.'

In the negative of the relative tense forms with a **non-inchoative copulative as complement** (containing the underlying copulative verb stem -si), the negative morpheme occurs as -nge- instead of -nga-. The vowel /i/ of the omitted negative copulative verb stem *-si has coalesced with the vowel /a/ of the negative morpheme -nga- resulting in -nge-. Consider the elucidating examples below:

- **Identificative copulative in the negative of the relative tense :**

25. Izivakashi ezifike ngenyanga edlule bezingengabafundi (< zibe zingengabafundi).
'The visitors who arrived last month, they had not been students.'
'The visitors who arrived last month were not students.'

26. UNzimande ubengeyinkosi (< ube engeyinkosi) ubeyinduna.
'Nzimande had not been a king, he had been a chief.'
'Nzimande was not a king, he was a chief.'

- **Associative copulative in the negative of the relative tense :**

27. Le mifula ibingenanhlanzi (< ibe ingenanhlanzi).
'These rivers had not been with fish.'
'These rivers had no fish.'



28. Imoto yakusasa iyobe **ingenasitelingi**.
'The car of tomorrow will be, it has no steering wheel.'
'*The car of the future will have no steering wheel.*'

• **Descriptive copulative in the negative of the relative tense :**

29. Izinja zibe **zingezinkulu**.
'The dogs they were, they are not big.'
'*The dogs were not big.*'
30. Ulufudu bel**ungeluhle** (< lube lungeluhle).
'The tortoise it was, it is not beautiful.'
'*The tortoise was not beautiful.*'

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## CHAPTER 5

### THE SEMANTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELATIVE TENSES OF ZULU

#### 5.1 Aims

The aims of this chapter are to determine the semantic significance of the relative tenses as explained by the traditional grammarians and to offer an account of the true semantic significance of these verb forms within a proper theory of tense. A scientific explanation of the semantic significance of these tense forms is offered taking into account that they may also be used to express politeness or respect.

#### 5.2 The traditional view of the semantic significance of the so-called compound tenses

The literary review of the compound tenses done in chapter 2 reveals that different and even opposing semantic interpretations prevail amongst Bantu grammarians on the semantic value of these tenses. While a large number of Bantu scholars regard the relative tenses as necessarily indicative of a past, others maintain that these tense forms express some kind of continuity either in the present or in the past. The most widely used collective term for the relative tenses is 'continuous past tenses'. This term is supposed to be a disclosure of the semantic value of these tense forms.

Certain scholars express the view that these tense forms express a 'perfect tense' while others believe that these tense forms express 'perfect aspect'. One grammarian even asserts that the relative tenses express 'imperfect aspect'. Another fairly widespread view is that these tense forms (or at least those forms with a future tense morpheme contained in them) constitute a 'contingent form/mood/tense'. Some scholars also view the relative tense forms with *-be* as participial tense forms. All these views are obviously fallacious as is evident from the description of the relative tense forms in chapters 3 and 4.

#### 5.3 The true semantic significance of the relative tenses

The relative tense forms with *-be* express relative tense. This means that these tense forms mark a tense form in which the event time is interpreted in relation to a reference point which, in turn, is located in a particular position relative to coding time (the deictic centre).

It needs to be stressed that a relative tense form expresses a single tense. Although a relative tense verb expresses a single tense, the auxiliary part and the complementary part each mark a particular semantic value of such relative tense form.

The auxiliary verb part containing the auxiliary verb stem *-be*, marks the relation between coding time and the selected reference point. The complementary verb part on the other hand marks the relation between reference time and event time.

In an example such as *sibe sigijima (> besigijima)*, the auxiliary verb part (*si*)*be* indicates that reference time is indexed as being shortly before coding time, while the complementary part *sigijima* marks the relation between reference time and event time as coinciding. In other words, in this case the speaker is drawing attention to the fact that the addressee should not interpret 'our running' from 'now' (coding time), but rather from another reference point which is a point before 'now'. 'Our running' was thus taking place at the established reference point (which is shortly before coding time) and which will be established by either an adverbial description or another event which is specified as the reference point in the context.

In an example such as *zazizokhonkotha (< zabe zizokhonkotha) lezo zinja* 'they would (long ago) bark those dogs' the auxiliary part *zabe* indicates that the reference point is long before coding time, while the complementary part indicates that the event 'the barking of the dogs' was still going to take place at that established reference point. In other words, the speaker is drawing attention to the fact that the addressee should interpret 'the barking of the dogs' from a reference point which is a point long before 'now'. 'The barking' was thus about to occur some time after the established reference point (which is long before coding time).

In an example such as *ngizobe ngifundile uma ufika* 'I will have learned when you arrive' the part containing the auxiliary verb stem *-be*, namely *ngizobe* indicates that the reference time is shortly after coding time. The complementary part *ngifundile* marks the event time has having taken place before reference time. In this case the speaker is drawing attention to the fact that the addressee should not interpret *ngifundile* 'I have learned' as relevant seen from now (coding time), but rather from another reference point which is a point (shortly) after now. The 'learning' will have taken place before the reference point, which is shortly after coding time.

The examples above illustrate that each type of relative tense which is made up of an auxiliary verb part and a complementary part has a unique temporal meaning. For a methodical explanation of the meaning of each of the sixteen possible tense forms, study the table below. For the sake of simplicity, the complementary part is a main verb and not a copulative or an auxiliary word group. Bear in mind that the auxiliary part expresses the relation between reference time and coding time, while the complementary part expresses the relation between reference time and event time.

The semantic denotation of the relation between coding time and reference time is the same for all four possible forms grouped together as the first group with the initial part *ngabe*. These tense forms will all express a **relative tense with reference time long before coding time**, regardless of the form of the complementary verb. The complementary verb on the other hand will express the relation between reference time and event time. If the complementary verb is *ngibona* the **event time coincides with reference time**. The relative tense form *ngabe ngibona* is therefore indicated in the table as a relative tense with **reference time long before coding time and event time coinciding with reference time**.

**Table 8 : Semantic significance of the relative tenses**

| Auxiliary verb          | Complement: Main verb      | Appropriate explanation of the semantic denotation of the particular relative tense |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ngabe</b>            |                            | <b>Relative tense with reference time long before coding time and ...</b>           |
|                         | <i>ngibona</i>             | event time coinciding with reference time                                           |
|                         | <i>ngibone / ngibonile</i> | event time shortly before reference time                                            |
|                         | <i>ngizobona</i>           | event time shortly after reference time                                             |
|                         | <i>ngiyobona</i>           | event time long after reference time                                                |
| <b>ngibe</b>            |                            | <b>Relative tense with reference time shortly before coding time and ...</b>        |
|                         | <i>ngibona</i>             | event time coinciding with reference time                                           |
|                         | <i>ngibone / ngibonile</i> | event time shortly before reference time                                            |
|                         | <i>ngizobona</i>           | event time shortly after reference time                                             |
|                         | <i>ngiyobona</i>           | event time long after reference time                                                |
| <b>ngizobe/ ngizoba</b> |                            | <b>Relative tense with reference time shortly after coding time and ...</b>         |
|                         | <i>ngibona</i>             | event time coinciding with reference time                                           |
|                         | <i>ngibone / ngibonile</i> | event time shortly before reference time                                            |
|                         | <i>ngizobona</i>           | event time shortly after reference time                                             |
|                         | <i>ngiyobona</i>           | event time long after reference time                                                |
| <b>ngiyobe/ ngiyoba</b> |                            | <b>Relative tense with reference time long after coding time and ...</b>            |
|                         | <i>ngibona</i>             | event time coinciding with reference time                                           |
|                         | <i>ngibone / ngibonile</i> | event time shortly before reference time                                            |
|                         | <i>ngizobona</i>           | event time shortly after reference time                                             |
|                         | <i>ngiyobona</i>           | event time long after reference time                                                |

#### 5.4 The use of relative tense to express politeness or respect

Relative tense forms (with reference time shortly after coding time and event time coinciding with reference time) are frequently used to express a polite request. In such a case the relative tense does not express relative tense at all, but merely serves to mark the speaker's disposition, namely to mark respect. These forms are more or less similar to an English form such as: 'Would you be able to help me?' instead of: 'Will you help me?'. Examine the Zulu examples below:

1. Bengicela imali.  
'I was requesting money, please.'  
'*I am requesting money, please.*'
2. Bengithi ubaba uyangibiza?  
'I then thought that father is calling me?'  
'*Did you call me, father?*'
3. Ubungangisiza? / Bewungangisiza?  
'Would you have been able to help me?'  
'*Will you please help me?*'
4. Besicela ukwedlula.  
'We were then requesting to pass.'  
'*May we please pass?*'

A relative tense form (such as those above) may also be used instead of an absolute tense form to express respect when a child directs a question to an adult. A boy who is not sure whether his father had actually been speaking to him, will say: Ubaba ubekhuluma (< ube ekhuluma) nami na? 'Was father talking to me?', instead of Baba, ukhuluma nami na? 'Father, are you talking to me?'. Note that apart from the use of the relative tense in this example, the father is addressed in the **third** person instead of the second person, hence the verb form is ubekhuluma (< ube-ekhuluma) and not ubukhuluma (ube-ukhuluma).

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CHAPTER 6

NAMING OF THE RELATIVE TENSE FORMS

6.1 Aims

The aims of this chapter are to:

- propose an appropriate term to refer to the so-called continuous past tenses collectively,
- propose an appropriate naming technique and appropriate terms as labels for the sixteen individual relative tenses of Zulu, and
- motivate the selection of the terms proposed.

6.2 Naming strategies used by traditional Bantu scholars for the so-called continuous past tenses

Generally, Bantuists (or at least scholars of the South-Eastern Bantu language zone) have not treated tense as a deictic category, consequently they have used different (and inappropriate) terms to refer to the relative tenses collectively and individually.

Doke (1981:169 *et. seq.*) refers to a verbal form such as *bengithanda* as a continuous immediate past tense form, while he (1981:172) refers to a form such as *ngangithanda* as a continuous remote past tense. He (1981:195 *et. seq.*) refers to the relative tense forms containing a future auxiliary in the complementary part, such as *bengothanda* (< *bengiza ukuthanda*) as a form of the 'contingent mood'.

Van Eeden (1956:379 *et. seq.*) uses terms such as 'voortdurende nabye verlede tyd' (continuous near past tense) and 'voortdurende verre verlede tyd' (continuous remote past tense) to denote these verbal forms.

Like Van Eeden, Ziervogel *et al.* also refer to the relative past tense forms with *-be* as the 'continuous past tense'.

The tense forms under discussion do not denote continuity and the term 'continuous past tense' (used by the majority of Bantuists) is thus unfitting.

Taljaard and Bosch (1988:149) describe the function of the 'auxiliary verb stem *-be*' as follows:

The auxiliary verb stem *-be* is the stative perfect form of the copula auxiliary *-ba*. It denotes a continuing action or state that takes place at a certain point in time, and can be used in the past, present or future tense.

Needless to say, these verb forms do not denote continuity, neither do they denote a present tense. The present is expressed by the present tense (which is one of the absolute tenses) while the progressive aspectual morpheme *-sa-* (and certain auxiliary verbs such as *lokhu*) denotes continuity. Although Taljaard and Bosch do not label the individual relative tense forms, they (1988:150) single out a form such as example 1 below which they call a 'continuous past tense'.

1. Ngabe ngifuna izinto zami.
'I was at the time looking for my things.'

They explain the formation of this type of tense as follows:

Although the construction with the auxiliary *-be* often refers to some time in the past ... it has its own past tense form as well. This "continuous" past tense is formed by means of a past tense concord prefixed to *-be*.

The term 'continuous past' is unsuitable as has already been explained.

Chaphole (1992:55) describes the relative tense forms of Southern Sotho as 'past duratives'. This term is equally inappropriate as an umbrella term for the relative tenses, since these tenses may refer to an event which still has to occur. Even the word 'past' in this term is thus inappropriate. Furthermore these tenses do not denote a 'durative' event *per se*.

Van Wyk (1981:85 et seq.) refers to the relative tense forms as 'saamgestelde tye' (compound tenses).

Poulos and Msimang (1998:306) also use the term 'compound tenses'. This term implies that these verbal forms comprise a combination of two (or more) tenses. From the preceding discussion it has transpired that a relative tense is a single tense form which expresses event time in relation to reference time which is in turn indexed in relation to coding time. If the term 'compound tense' is used to indicate that these verb forms comprise two (or more) separate tenses, then this term is a misnomer. Unfortunately that is indeed the intended meaning of this term.

6.3 A proposed umbrella term for the so-called continuous past tenses

The terms used by Bantuists as an umbrella term to refer to the relative tenses are inappropriate and misleading. The relative tenses of Zulu (and the other Bantu languages) are those tense forms that should be interpreted from a reference point that is not coding time. In other words these are tense forms that mark the semantic relation between event time, reference time and coding time. The term 'relative tense' is a well-established one, used cross-linguistically to refer to

those types of tense where the temporal interpretation involves a relation between event time, reference time and coding time. There is thus no need to use any other term because this term is absolutely appropriate for denoting these tenses.

6.4 Naming individual tenses distinguished as so-called continuous past tenses

The majority of Bantuists have not attempted to coin characteristic terms to distinguish between the individual tenses occurring within the relative tense system.

Poulos and Msimang (1998:307), however, propose two possibilities in this regard. They propose the use of terms such as '*past future present tense*' and '*perfect future present tense*'. As a second option they suggest that the naming of the particular tense be done by naming the 'monoverbal tenses that combine to form this compound tense'. Again, the preceding discussion of the relative tenses above rules out both strategies proposed by these two scholars because these verbal forms denote a single tense and not a combination of two or more tenses.

The solution in terms of a strategy for the naming of the individual tense forms distinguished within the relative tenses lies in the very nature of these tense forms. Taking into account that the **(deficient) auxiliary part** of these tense forms **denotes the relation between coding time and reference time**, while the **complementary part denotes the relation between reference time and event time**, it is obvious that these tense forms should be labelled accordingly. The elucidating examples below will illustrate this principle.

The relative tense form wayebaleka (< u+a+b+e # e+balek+a) will, in terms of the proposed method of naming, be referred to as **a relative tense with reference time long before coding time and event time coinciding with reference time**.

A relative tense form, such as, uzobe edlile (< u+z0+b+e # e+dl+il+e) will, in terms of the proposed method of naming, be referred to as **a relative tense with reference time occurring shortly after coding time and event time occurring shortly before reference time**.

A relative tense form, such as, uzobe eyosebenza (< u+z0+b+e # e+yo+sebenz+a) will, in terms of the proposed method of naming, be referred to as **a relative tense with reference time occurring shortly after coding time and event time occurring long after reference time**.

The proposed method of referring to the individual relative tense forms may be cumbersome, but there is no other appropriate way of labelling the array of relative tense forms that realise in Bantu languages.

They use terms such as 'continuous past', 'continuous near past', 'past durative', 'past future', 'future past' or 'compound tense' to describe the various relative tenses. These terms are all unsatisfactory because they do not explain the true nature and meaning of these tenses. No simple terms are available to distinguish between the various relative tenses. The only way to distinguish adequately between the different relative tenses is to refer to both (1) **the position of reference time in relation to coding time** and (2) **the position of event time in relation to reference time**.

6.5 A comprehensive list of relative tenses and their appropriate names

The full spectrum of relative tenses and the appropriate naming of individual tense forms is indicated systematically in the table below. The forms listed in this table are the full (unabridged) forms. (Note that this table is basically the same as that used in chapter 5 to explain the semantic significance of relative tenses. These two tables are similar because the method of naming the relative tenses suggested here is based on the semantic significance of these tense forms.)

This table reveals (for instance) that the relative tense forms commencing in *ngabe ...* (which contracts to *nga...*) are all relative tense forms with **reference time long before coding time**. The complementary part can have one of four possible basic forms. Since the complementary part marks the relation between event time and reference time, this part will thus account for the second part of the appropriate name for this tense form. If the complementary part is for instance *ngibone* then the second part of the appropriate label for this tense form will indicate that **event time occurs shortly before reference time**.

The form *ngabe ngibone* (> *ngangibone*) will thus be labelled **a relative tense with reference time long before coding time and event time shortly before reference time**.

Similarly, the table below depicts that the verb form *ngizobe ngiyobona* should be labelled as **a relative tense with reference time shortly after coding time and event time long after reference time**.

Table 9 : Naming of the relative tenses according to its semantic significance

Auxiliary verb	Complement: Main verb	Appropriate name for the tense form
ngabe		Relative tense with reference time long before coding time and ...
	ngibona	event time coinciding with reference time
	ngibone / ngibonile	event time shortly before reference time
	ngizobona	event time shortly after reference time
	ngiyobona	event time long after reference time
ngibe		Relative tense with reference time shortly before coding time and ...
	ngibona	event time coinciding with reference time
	ngibone / ngibonile	event time shortly before reference time
	ngizobona	event time shortly after reference time
	ngiyobona	event time long after reference time
ngizobe/ ngizoba		Relative tense with reference time shortly after coding time and ...
	ngibona	event time coinciding with reference time
	ngibone / ngibonile	event time shortly before reference time
	ngizobona	event time shortly after reference time
	ngiyobona	event time long after reference time
ngiyobe/ ngiyoba		Relative tense with reference time long after coding time and ...
	ngibona	event time coinciding with reference time
	ngibone	event time shortly before reference time
	ngizobona / ngibonile	event time shortly after reference time
	ngiyobona	event time long after reference time

The auxiliary verb –be frequently co-occurs with the auxiliary verb –se in verbal forms. In such an instance the –se expresses that an action, event or state has taken place, or will take place, or will have taken place contrary to the expectation of the addressee, hence the appropriate English translation of ‘already’. When the –be and –se co-occur in a verb the –se occurs after the –be. Consider the underlined verb in the example below taken from *Igoda*, Ibanga 3, page 87 :

2. Wayeseyekile kodwa ngalesi sikhathi ukufundisa ngako njalo ngoba esekhulile.
‘She had already left teaching though at that time because, of course she was already old.’



The verb *wayeseyekile* contains both the *-be* and the *-se*. The original form is *wabe ese eyekile*. 'she had already left (teaching).

A discussion of the (deficient) auxiliary verb *-se* falls outside the scope of this research and will thus not be discussed any further.

The naming of the relative tenses with copulatives as complement is also not discussed in this mini-dissertation.

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