

<特集「アスペクト」>

## Aspects in Sesotho (S33) 南ソト語 (S33) のアスペクト表現

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**要旨:** 本稿は、語研論集 14 号 (2009) 所収の調査票にもとづいて収集した南ソト語(バントゥ系; レソト及び南アフリカ共和国)のアスペクト表現に関する記述的資料を提供するものである。

**Abstract:** This article presents descriptive data on aspect constructions in Sesotho, a southern Bantu language spoken in Lesotho and South Africa. The data was collected through the questionnaire “Aspects” designed in *Journal of the Institute of Language Research* 14, 2009.

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### 1. Introduction

This paper provides a short overview of the aspect constructions in Sesotho (S33), which is spoken in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Namibia, as well as the Republic of South Africa. As in the investigation of other constructions, contexts play an important role in eliciting the sentences. As such, we utilized contexts in Appendix A to elicit the Sesotho examples. All examples are written in the Sesotho orthography followed by a morphological analysis and interlinear glosses. The subject marker is orthographically written separate from the verb, nonetheless the subject marker is morpho-syntactically part of the verb. A companion article describes the passive constructions in Sesotho (Matjotjo & Lee 2024).

### 2. Data with the intransitive verb

This section reports elicitation of sentences using the intransitive verb *fihla* ‘to arrive’. Sesotho shows two strategies to express the arrival event of the subject. In (1a), the subject marker *o* ‘is’, is followed by *se* ‘already’; the verb takes the perfective suffix *-ile*. In (1b), the subject marker *o* ‘is’, is followed by the past tense morpheme *-ile*; and the verb takes the infinitive final vowel *-a*, which is sometimes considered a clitic in Sesotho language. For present continuous or progressive tense, the progressive morpheme *ntse* follows the subject marker clitic *a*, while another subject marker clitic follows this progressive morpheme. Consider (2a) and (2b) below.



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(1) [Item 2-1]

- a. [Situation: Andy has arrived]

*Andy o se a fihlile.*

Andy o se a fihl-ile  
 1-Andy SM1 PRF SM1 arrive-PRF  
 ‘Andy already came.’

- b. [Situation: That person has arrived]

*Motho eno o ile a fihla.*

mo-tho eno o ile a fihl-a  
 1-person that SM1 PRF SM1 arrive-FV  
 ‘That person already came.’

(2) [Item 2-2]

- a. [Situation: Andy has not yet arrived]

*Andy o se a ntse a e-tla.*

Andy o se a ntse a e-tla  
 1.Andy SM1 PRF SM1 PROG SM1 come  
 ‘Andy has already been heading (this way).’

- b. [Situation: ‘That person has not yet arrived’]

*Motho eno o ne a se ntse a e-tla.*

mo-tho eno o ne a se ntse a e-tla  
 1-person that SM1 PST SM1 PRF PROG SM1 come  
 ‘That person has already been coming.’

In (3a) and (3b), the focus of the sentence is that Andy is not yet heading this way. The first author elicited these sentences with the verb *tloha* ‘to intend’, suggesting that Sesotho can express these sentences with a non-intention. When the focus of the sentence is Andy’s non-arrival as in (4), the negative *ha* is used and the verb takes the negative final vowel *-e*, while the negation is further indicated with the insertion of the negation morpheme *e-só* ‘not yet’.

(3) [Item 2-3]

- a. [Situation: Andy’s action is the focus of the sentence’ ]

*Andy ha a e-só tlohe a etla.*

Andy ha a e-só tloh-e a e-tl-a  
 1-Andy NEG SM1 not-yet intend-NEG.FV SM1 PROG-come-FV  
 ‘Andy hasn’t not been coming yet.’

- b. [Situation: ‘That person’s action is the focus of the sentence.’]

*Motho eno ha a e-só tlohe a e-tla.*

mo-tho eno ha a e-só tloh-e a e-tl-a  
 1-person that NEG SM1 not-yet intend-NEG.FV SM1 PROG-come-FV  
 ‘That person hasn’t been coming yet.’

(4) [Item 2-4]

- a. [Situation: Andy's non-arrival is the focus of the sentence]

*Andy ha a e-só tle.*

Andy ha a e-só tl-e

1-Andy NEG SM1 not-yet come-NEG.FV

'Andy hasn't come yet.'

- b. [Situation: 'That person's non-arrival is the focus of the sentence']

*Motho eno ha a e-só tle.*

mo-tho eno ha a e-só tl-e

1-Person that NEG SM1 not-yet come-NEG.FV

'That person hasn't come yet.'

The future morpheme in Sesotho is *tle*. We elicited the near future aspect with the future marker and the adverb *haufi* 'soon' as in (5).

(5) [Item 2-5]

- a. *Andy o tla tla haufi.*

Andy o tla tla haufi

1-Andy SM1 FUT come soon

'Andy will come soon.'

- b. *Motho eno o tlatla haufi.*

mo-tho eno o tla tla haufi

1-person that SM1 FUT come soon

'That person will come soon.'

The vocative form that announces the arrival of Andy in (6) is expressed with the perfect *-ile* suffix.

(6) [Item 2-6]

*Andy o se a tlile!*

Andy o se a tl-ile

Andy SM1 PRF SM1 come-PRF

'Andy has come!'

The past is even described using the *ile* auxiliary verb, which is followed by the infinitive verb in (7). The negative form of the past event is *ha*, followed by a SM1 and the *ka* construction as in (8). As such, the negative sentence does not require a negative final vowel on the verb.

(7) [Item 2-7]

*Andy o ile a tla maobane.*

Andy o ile a tl-a maobane

Andy SM1 PST SM1 arrive-FV yesterday

'Andy came yesterday.'

(8) [Item 2-8]

*Andy ha a ka a tla maobane.*

Andy ha a ka a tl-a maobane  
 Andy NEG SM1 NEG SM1 come-FV yetersday  
 ‘Andy didn’t come yesterday.’

### 3. Data with the transitive verb

When the event of eating an apple is considered, various situations can arise. This section explores those events using the transitive verb *-ja* ‘eat’. For the completed action in (9), the perfect auxiliary *se* is used, with the perfective verbal ending *-ele* ‘PRF’.

(9) [Item 2-9]

*Ke se ke e jele.*

ke se ke e j-ele  
 1SG already SM1 OM9 eat-PRF  
 ‘I already ate that (apple).’ [*that* is deictic in this sentence]

When (9) is negated as in (10), the sentence begins with the negative *ha*. In (10a), the verb takes the negative final vowel. In (10b), the future sentence show that the verb is in its infinitive form.

(10) [Item 2-10]

a. *Ha ke e-s’o je apole eno.*

ha ke e-s’o j-e apole eno  
 NEG 1SG not-yet eat-NEG.FV apple that  
 ‘I haven’t eaten that apple yet.’

b. *Ha ke na ho ja apole eno.*

ha ke na ho j-a apole eno  
 NEG 1SG NEG.FUT INF eat-FV apple that  
 ‘I will not eat that apple.’

When the subject has just begun an action that continues an event, the progressive *ntse* appears, which is followed by the adverbial phrase *hona joale* ‘just now’ as in (11).

(11) [Item 2-11]

*O ntse a ja apole eno hona joale.*

o ntse a j-a apole eno hona joale  
 SM1 PROG SM1 eat-FV apple that just now  
 ‘He’s eating that apple just now.’

### 4. Data with the stative verb

The stative verb *-bula* ‘open’ is used to elicit different aspect constructions. In the present tense, the verb is affixed with the *-hile* suffix (check 12a). In the past tense, the past marker *ne* appears between the subject markers

(as in 12b).

(12) [Item 2-12]

a. *Fensetere e bulehile.*

fensetere e bule-hile

5.window SM5 open-PRF

‘The window is open.’

b. *Fensetere e ne ebulehile.*

fensetere e ne e bule-hile

5.window SM5 PST SM5 open-PRF

‘The window was open.’

The passive construction in (13) shows that the verb now takes the final vowel *-e*, and not the perfective morpheme *-ile* as a suffix.

(13) [Item 2-12]

a. *Fensetere e butsoe.*

fensetere e bul-w-e

9.window SM9 open-PASS-FV

‘The window is opened.’

b. *Fensetere e ne e butsoe.*

fensetere e ne e bul-w-e

9.window SM9 PST SM9 open-PASS-FV

‘The window was opened.’

## 5. Habitual aspect

The habitual aspect in Sesotho is expressed using the present tense. In (14), the ongoing habit is elicited with the verb *-bala* ‘read’.

(14) [Item 2-13]

*Ke bala koranta hoseng ho hong le ho hong.*

ke bal-a koranta ho-seng ho hong le ho hong

1SG read-FV newspaper 15-morning 15 15.another and 15 15.another

‘I read the newspaper every morning.’

The resemblance with one’s parents is also expressed with a habitual aspect as shown in (15).

(15) [Item 2-14]

*U tšoana le ’m’e oa hau.*

u tšoan-a le ’m’e oa hau

2SG resemble-FV with mother of you

‘You look like your mother.’

A natural phenomenon in the astronomy is elicited with the verb with the final *-a* as in (16).

(16) [Item 2-22]

*Lefatše le potapota letsatsi.*

le-fatše le potapot-a le-tsatsi

5-earth SM5 go.around-FV 5-sun

‘The earth goes around the sun.’

For a habitual aspect in the past, Sesotho uses the past tense auxiliary *-ne* and the perfective morpheme *-ile*, as shown in (17).

(17) [Item 2-15]

*Ke ne ke tloael-ile ho ea sekolong letsatsi le leng le leng.*

ke ne ke tloael-ile ho ea sekolo-ng le-tsatsi le le-ng le le le-ng

1SG PST 1SG use-PRF to go school-LOC 5-day ASSC5 5-one and ASSC5 5-one

‘I used to go to school every day (back then).’

## 6. Other aspect expressions

In (18), the experience of having visited Limpopo is expressed with the adverb *nkile* ‘once’ followed by a copular construction.

(18) [Item 2-16]

*Nkile ka ba Limpopo.*

nkile ka ba Limpopo

once 1SG be Limpopo

‘I have been to Limpopo.’

The event in (19) describes when a movement suddenly begin. The verb *-qala* ‘start’ takes the perfective morpheme *-ile* as a verbal suffix.

(19) [Item 2-17]

*Qetellong, bese e qalile ho sisinyeha.*

qetellong, bese e qal-ile ho sisinyeha

finally bus SM9 start-PRF to move

‘Finally, the bus began moving.’

In (20), the sleeping action was continuous during a duration in the past, Sesotho uses the *ile* auxiliary and the infinitive verb to express this sentence.

(20) Item 2-18]

*O ile a robala letšare lohle maobane.*

o ile a robal-a le-tšare lohle maobane  
SM1 PST SM1 sleep-FV 5-day all yesterday  
'She slept all day yesterday.'

In (21), the aspect is about what has just occurred beforehand. Sesotho also uses the *-ile* auxiliary and the infinitive verb form.

(21) Item 2-19]

*Ke ile ka leka ho e ja hanyane.*

ke ile ka lek-a ho e ja hanyane  
1SG PST 1SG try-FV INF OM9 eat a.bit  
'I tried eating it a bit.'

Completing an action of giving gifts is expressed with the verb taking the *-ile* suffix in (22). Note that the *-ile* auxiliary is not used.

(22) [Item 2-20]

*O li file e mong le e mong.*

o li f-ile e.mong.le.e.mong  
SM1 OM10 give-PRF everyone  
'She gave them (=books) to everyone.'

The hortative in Sesotho takes the subjunctive suffix *-e* as in (23).

(23) [Item 2-21]

*Ha re tsamaee!*

ha re tsamae-e  
let 1PL go-SBJV  
'Let us go!'

In (24a), an event of yet-to-happen near future is described. Sesotho expresses (24a) with the infinitive form. When similar event of past is concerned, the auxiliary verb *-batla* 'almost' takes the perfect *-ile* suffix as demonstrated in (24b).

(24) [Item 2-23, 24]

a. [Situation: almost falling down due to a storm]

*Sefate seno se tl'o oela.*

se-fate seno se tl'o oela  
7-tree that SM7 about.to topple  
'That tree is about to topple.'

- b. [Situation: almost falling down due to a curb]

*Ke batlile ke oela.*

ke batl-ile ke oela

1SG almost-PRF 1SG fall

‘I was almost about to trip.’

The example in (25) describes a future action, and both clauses use the future morpheme *tla-* in the matrix clause and the consecutive clause.

- (25) [Item 2-25]

*Re tl’o ba le baeti hosane, kahoo ke tla reka bohobe.*

re tl(a).o ba le baeti hosane, kahoo ke tla reka bohobe

1PL FUT have with guests tomorrow, so 1SG FUT buy bread

‘We will have guests tomorrow, so I will buy some bread.’

When an action took place in the past during another action as in (26), both the *-ne* past and the *-ile* past are used. When an action took place prior to another action as in (27), the verb directly takes the *-ile* suffix.

- (26) [Item 2-26]

[Situation: I was in Giyani]

*Ke ne ke ile ka reka mokotla ona ha ke ne ke ea Giyani.*

ke ne ke ile ka reka mokotla ona ha ke ne ke ea Giyani

1SG PST 1SG PST 1SG buy bag this when 1SG PST 1SG go Giyani

‘I (had) bought this bag when I went to Giyani.’

- (27) [Item 2-27]

[Situation: before going to Giyani]

*Ke rekile mokotla ona pele ke e-ea Giyani.*

ke rek-ile mokotla ona pele ke e-ea Giyani

1SG buy-PRF bag this before 1SG SM9-go Giyani

‘I (had) bought this bag before going to Giyani.’

In (28), the factive verb *-tseba* ‘know’ in the matrix clause is in the past tense with the *-ile* suffix. The subordinate clause, on the other hand, expresses the past event with a combination of the *-ne* auxiliary and the *-ile* auxiliary.

- (28) [Item 2-28]

*Ke tsebile hore o ne a ile a reka mokotla ona mmarakeng ona.*

ke tseb-ile hore o ne a ile a reka mokotla ona mmarake-ng ona

1SG know-PRF that SM1 PST SM1 PRF SM1 buy bag this market-LOC this

‘I knew he (had) bought this bag in this market.’

## 7. Conclusion

Aspect constructions in Sesotho use *ila-* for future and the infinitive verb for habitual. The perfect aspect is expressed using the *-ile* suffix on the verb or with the *-ile* auxiliary before the subject marker. Depending on the constructions, the negative forms may or may not have the negative final vowel.

## Appendix A. Contexts used during the elicitation sessions.

Each situation in this appendix was used to elicit items that appear in the main text.

### Contexts *for situations 2-1 to 2-8*

*Tom and Mark are organizing a meeting preparing for a conference. Mark has been in communication with everyone who is involved, including Andy.*

#### Situation 2-1

(Mark saw that Andy arrived but went to the bathroom)

Tom: I need to check some data with Andy. Did he arrive?

Mark: Yes, **Andy already came**.

Tom: I forgot the name of the RA. Did the person arrive?

Mark: Oh, I forgot his name too. Yes, **that person already came**.

#### Situation 2-2

(Mark was texting with everyone, and Mark knew that everyone was on their way to the meeting)

Tom: I need to check some data with Andy. Is he on his way?

Mark: No, **Andy has already been coming**.

Tom: I forgot the name of the RA. Is the person on his way?

Mark: Oh, I forgot his name too. Yes, **that person has already been coming**.

#### Situation 2-3

(Mark was texting with everyone, and Mark knew that everyone was still at home)

Tom: I need to check some data with Andy. Did he arrive?

Mark: No, **Andy has not been coming yet**.

Tom: I forgot the name of the RA. Did the person arrive?

Mark: Oh, I forgot his name too. Yes, **that person has not been coming yet**.

#### Situation 2-4

(Mark has just arrived at a meeting place. He saw that only Tom was there)

Tom: I need to check some data with Andy. Did he arrive?

Mark: No, **Andy has not come yet**.

Tom: I forgot the name of the RA. Did the person arrive?

Mark: Oh, I forgot his name too. Yes, **that person has not come yet**.

**Situation 2-5**

(Mark was texting with everyone, and Mark knew that everyone will arrive within 5 minutes)

Tom: I need to check some data with Andy. Did he arrive?

Mark: No, but **Andy will come soon.**

Tom: I forgot the name of the RA. Did the person arrive?

Mark: Oh, I forgot his name too. Yes, **that person will come soon.**

**Situation 2-6**

(Mark and Tom just saw Andy entering the meeting room)

Tom and Mark: (Oh!) **Andy has come!**

**Situation 2-7**

(Mark and Andy were at the meeting venue to discuss various issues the day before, but Tom was not there)

Tom: Is the preparation over? I asked Andy to finalize everything yesterday. Did he come?

Mark: Yes, **Andy came yesterday.**

**Situation 2-8**

(Mark was at the meeting venue to check the preparation the day before, but Tom and Andy was not there)

Tom: Is the preparation over? I asked Andy to help you yesterday. Did he come?

Mark: No, **Andy didn't come yesterday.**

**Situation 2-9**

You bought one delicious looking apple. Your brother was together when you bought it. When your brother was at work, you ate it. Your brother after work asks about the apple.

Brother: Where is the apple you bought?

You: **I already ate that apple.**

**Situation 2-10**

You bought one delicious looking apple. Your brother was together when you bought it. Your brother went to the shop, and you joined him later. Your brother after work asks about the apple.

Brother: Did you eat the apple?

You: No, **I haven't eaten that apple yet.**

Brother: Will you eat the apple later today?

You: No, **I won't eat that apple.**

**Situation 2-11**

You bought one delicious looking apple. You brought it home and put it on the dining table. Then you went for work. Your mother saw that your brother took the apple and started eating it. When you returned from work, you did not see the apple. You ask your mother.

You: Where is the apple I bought earlier? Did my brother take it?

Mother: Yes, **he's eating that apple just now.**

**Situation for 2-12**

On a cold day, you and Mark arrived in the office, which was cold. Then you saw a window open. You tell Mark:

You: **The window is open.**

Then, Tom arrives, and he wonders why it is so cold in the office. You tell Tom:

You: **The window was open.**

After closing the window, all of you go out to get some breakfast. When you return to the office, the office was again cold. You again saw the window is open. You tell Mark and Tom:

You: **The window is opened.**

(passive form because the window cannot be opened by itself)

After that Mpho comes in and asks, why the office is so cold. You tell Mpho:

You: **The window was opened.**

**Situation for 2-13**

Your friend asks where you get most recent news (not knowing that you read newspaper). You reply:

You: **I read the newspaper every morning.**

**Situation for 2-14**

You met your niece after 3 years, and you see that she looks like your sister, so you say:

You: **You look like your mother.**

**Situation for 2-15**

You are a senior student at a college, and you go to school 3 days a week. Your younger brother asks what your schedule was during the freshman year.

Brother: How was your class schedule during your first year at the college?

You: **I used to go to school every day.**

**Situation for 2-16**

People are talking about their vacation in Mpumalanga, and asks you whether you have been there. So you respond:

You: Yes, **I have been to Mpumalanga.**

**Situation for 2-17**

From your building, you and your mother saw that there was a long traffic jam on the highway, including a bus with your brother. Your mother had to go inside, and after a while you see the traffic started moving. You tell your mother:

You: **Finally, the bus began moving.**

**Situation for 2-18**

Your sister went to a week-long overseas trip, and she is not good at sleeping on an airplane. She returned on a Friday. When you met a friend on the Sunday, she asks how your sister was doing after the trip. You respond:

You: **She slept all day yesterday.**

**Situation for 2-19**

You are visiting some distant relatives for the first time, and they serve you local delicacies (for example, a grasshopper). However, you have never eaten it. Later that night, your sister who knew about this custom asked:

Sister: I know they serve local delicacies. How was it?

You: **I tried eating it a bit.**

**Situation for 2-20**

Tom received a gift of a box of pens (20 of them). When you heard about it from Susan, you wonder whether Tom still has some pens. You ask Susan:

You: Does Tom still have some pens to spare?

Susan: No. **He gave them to everyone.**

**Situation for 2-21**

In lunchtime, and your friend asks whether you want to eat yet. You tell your friend:

You: **Let's go!**

**Situation for 2-22**

In a science class, the teacher is explaining about the relationship between the earth and the sun, and he says:

Teacher: **The earth goes around the sun.**

**Situation for 2-23**

A severe storm is passing through, and you see from your window that a tree on the street is bent so much that it may fall down soon. You tell your mother:

You: Mom, mom. **That tree is about to topple.**

**Situation for 2-24**

You were reading Instagram post while walking on the street, but then a curb suddenly appeared, and you almost fell. That evening, you tell your brother.

You: I should stop looking at my phone while walking. **I was almost about to trip.**

(note: 'to trip' means 'to fall')

**Situation for 2-25**

You meet your neighbor at the local supermarket. She asks what you are here for:

You: **We will have guests tomorrow, so I will buy some bread.**

**Situation for 2-26**

You went to Mpumalanga and found a nice bag, which you bought. A couple of days later, your friend asks where you got the bag from. You respond:

You: **I (had) bought this bag when I went to Mpumalanga.**

**Situation for 2-27**

Your friend knows that you go to many business trips. Just recently, you went to Durban, Giyani and Pretoria. Between Durban and Giyani, you bought a new bag, which your friend did not know about. When you meet your friend after your Pretoria trip, the friend asks:

Friend: You are always on the go. When did you buy a bag?

You: **I (had) bought this bag before going to Giyani.**

**Situation for 2-28**

Tom bought a bag at a famous market in town. When you met Tom, you noticed the bag, but you did not ask where Tom bought the bag. A couple of days later, you were browsing items at that market with Susan, and you noticed the same kind of bag there. So, you tell Susan:

You: **I knew he (had) bought this bag in this market.**

### Abbreviations

1, 2, 3, ...:	Noun class numbers	NEG:	Negative marker
1SG, 2PL, ...:	Person and Number	OM:	Object Marker
ASSC:	Associative marker	PASS:	Passive
DEM:	Demonstrative	PRF:	Perfect
FUT:	Future	PROG:	Progressive
FV:	Final Vowel (default inflectional suffix of the finite verb)	PST:	Past
INF:	Infinitive	SBJV	Subjunctive
LOC:	Locative	SM:	Subject Marker

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