

<特集「アスペクト」>

## Aspects in Setswana (S31) ツァナ語 (S31) 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ツァナ語(バントゥ系; 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 Setswana, a southern Bantu language spoken in 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 goal of this paper is to describe aspect constructions in Setswana, a Southern Bantu language spoken in the Northwest Province in South Africa. Close to 5 million people in South Africa speak Setswana as their first language (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Setswana examples in this paper are elicited from the contexts in Appendix A in order to avoid direct translation of English sentences. All examples are written in the Setswana orthography followed by a morphological analysis and interlinear glosses. All verbal prefixes including the subject marker is orthographically written separate from the verb root and suffixes, nonetheless the subject marker is morphosyntactically part of the verb. A companion paper that reports passive constructions in Setswana is available as Pretorius & Maleka (2024).

### 2. Data with the intransitive verb

This section reports how aspects are expressed with the intransitive verb *fitlha* ‘to arrive’. When expressing a completed event, Setswana verbs take the *-ile* suffix as in (1).



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(1) [Item 2-1]

- a. [Situation: Andy has arrived]

*Andy o fitlhile.*

Andy o fitlh-ile

Andy SM1 arrive-PRF

‘Andy already came.’

- b. [Situation: That person has arrived]

*Motho yoo o fitlhile.*

mo-tho yoo o fitlh-ile

1-person that SM1 arrive-PRF

‘That person arrived.’

(2) [Item 2-2]

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

*Andy o ne a setse a le mo tseleng.*

Andy o ne a setse a le mo tsele-ng

Andy SM1 was SM1 already SM1 VCOP LOC.PART road-LOC.SFX

‘Andy was already on his way.’

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

*Motho yoo o ne a setse a tla.*

mo-tho yoo o ne a setse a tla

1-person that SM1 was SM1 already SM1 come

‘That person was already on her way.’

Examples in (3) and (4) are negative sentences that have different emphasis. In (3), the focus is that Andy is not yet heading this way, but in (4) the focus is that Andy has not yet arrived, which means he may or may not be on his way. When the action is in focus, Setswana use the *SM ntse SM sa* construction; *ntse* is the progressive and *sa* is the negative morpheme. When the focus of the sentence is Andy’s non-arrival as in (4), the *ga* negative before the subject marker is used. In the examples in (3) and (4), the verb takes the negative final vowel *-e*.

(3) [Item 2-3]

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

*Andy o ntse a sa tle.*

Andy o ntse a sa tl-e

Andy SM1 PROG SM1 NEG come-NEG.FV

‘Andy hasn’t not been coming yet.’

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

*Motho yoo o ntse a sa tle.*

mo-tho yoo o ntse a sa tl-e

1-person that SM1 PROG SM1 NEG come-NEG.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 ga a ise a tle.*

Andy ga a ise a tl-e

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

'Andy hasn't come yet.'

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

*Motho yoo ga a ise a tle.*

mo-tho yoo ga a ise a tl-e

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

'That person hasn't come yet.'

The future morpheme in Setswana is *tla*, which appears between the subject marker and the verb root. This near future aspect is also accompanied by the idiomatic expression *e se kgale* 'soon before long' as in (5).

(5) [Item 2-5]

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

Andy o tla tla e se kgale

Andy SM1 FUT come REL NEG long

'Andy will come soon.'

- b. *Motho yoo o tla tla e se kgale.*

mo-tho yoo o tla tla e se kgale

1-person that SM1 FUT come REL NEG long

'That person will come soon.'

When someone announces the arrival of Andy as in (6), the vocative form is used, and the Setswana verb takes the perfect *-ile* suffix.

(6) [Item 2-6]

*Andy o tlile!*

Andy o tl-ile

Andy SM1 come-PRF

'Andy has come!'

In (7), a completed event in the past is described using the *-ile* suffix on the verb *tla* 'to come'. The negative past is formed with the *ga* negative as in (8). Note that the verb in (8) does not take the negative final vowel.

(7) [Item 2-7]

*Andy o tlile maabane.*

Andy o tl-ile maabane

Andy SM1 come-PRF yesterday

'Andy came yesterday.'

(8) [Item 2-8]

*Andy ga a a tla maabane.*

Andy ga a a tl-a maabane

Andy NEG SM1 NEG come-FV yesterday

‘Andy didn’t come yesterday.’

(In the negative of the perfect, the morpheme *a* following the SM is concomitant with the negative morpheme *ga*)

### 3. Data with the transitive verb

In this section, various events involving the eating of an apple are elicited. The Setswana verb for ‘to eat’ *ja*. In (9), the completion of eating an apple is expressed with the auxiliary verb *setse* ‘already’ with the *-ile* suffix. The main verb has the *-e* final vowel.

(9) [Item 2-9]

*Ke setse ke jele apole eo.*

ke setse ke j-el-e apole eo

1SG already 1SG eat-PRF-FV apple that

‘I already ate that (apple).’

The negation of (9) appears in (10a), which begins with the negative *ga*. The auxiliary verb *ise* ‘not yet’ is followed by the main verb *ja* with the negative final vowel *-e*. For the aspect that shows the non-occurrence of an event in the future as in (10b), the *ga* negative is followed by the future negative *nke* (with variants *kitla / ketla*), which is followed by the infinitive verb.

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(10) [Item 2-10]

a. *Ga ke ise ke je apole eo.*

ga ke ise ke j-e apole eo

NEG 1SG not.yet 1SG eat-NEG.FV apple that

‘I haven’t eaten that apple yet.’

b. *Ga ke nke ke ja apole eo.*

ga ke nke ke j-a apole eo

NEG 1SG FUT 1SG eat-FV apple that

‘I won’t eat that apple.’

When an event has just begun, and it is still continuing, Setswana utilizes adverbs in a present sentence. The two adverbs are *jaanong jaanong* (11a) or *jaanong jaana* (11b).

(11) [Item 2-11]

a. *O ja apole eo jaanong jaanong.*

o j-a apole eno jaanong.jaanong

SM1 eat-FV apple that just.now

‘He’s eating that apple just now.’

b. *O ja apole eo jaanong jaana.*

o j-a apole eno jaanong.jaana  
 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’ shows also different status of aspects. When someone finds a window open or says that a window was open, Setswana uses the *-ile* suffix (12). The past tense is expressed using the past form *ne* as in (12b).

(12) [Item 2-12]

a. *Lethabaphefo le bulegile.*

le-tlhabaphefo le buleg-ile  
 5-window SM5 open-PRF  
 ‘The window is open.’

b. *Lethabaphefo le ne le bulegile.*

le-tlhabaphefo le ne le buleg-ile  
 5-window SM5 PST SM5 open-PRF  
 ‘The window was open.’

When the situation implies an actor of an action, passive is used as in (13). Note that the Setswana verbs take the passive morpheme *-iw-* followed by the *-e* final vowel.

(13) [Item 2-12]

a. *Lethabaphefo le butswe.*

le-tlhabaphefo le bul-iw-e  
 5-window SM5 open-PASS-FV  
 ‘The window is opened.’

b. *Lethabaphefo le ne le butswe.*

le-tlhabaphefo le ne le bul-iw-e  
 5.window SM5 PST SM5 open-PASS-FV  
 ‘The window was opened.’

#### 5. Habitual aspect

The present form is elicited for the habitual aspect in Setswana. The ongoing habit of reading newspaper as in (14) is expressed using the present form *buisa* ‘to read (lit. to let speak).’

(14) [Item 2-13]

*Ke buisa kuranta moso mongwe le mongwe.*

ke buisa kuranta moso mongwe le mongwe  
 1SG read newspaper morning one and one  
 ‘I read the newspaper every morning.’

The resemblance with one's parents is also expressed with the present form. As shown in (15), the Setswana verb is *tshwana*.

(15) [Item 2-14]

*O tshwana le mmaago.*  
 o tshwan-a le mmaago  
 2SG resemble-FV with your.mother  
 'You look like your mother.'

When expressing a natural phenomenon in the astronomy in a science class, the present form *dikologa* 'to go around' is elicited as in (16).

(16) [Item 2-22]

*Lefatshe le dikologa letsatsi.*  
 le-fatshe le dikologa le-tsatsi  
 5-earth SM5 go.around 5-sun  
 'The earth goes around the sun.'

When a habitual event occurred in the past, Setswana uses the ending *-e* on the verb. as in (17).

(17) [Item 2-15]

*Ke ye sekolong letsatsi le letsatsi.*  
 ke y-e sekolo-ng le-tsatsi le le-tsatsi  
 1SG go-FV school-LOC 5-day and 5-day  
 'I used to go to school every day (back then).'

## 6. Other aspect expressions

This section introduced other types of aspect constructions. Setswana uses the auxiliary *kile* 'once' to show the experience of the visit to Limpopo as in (18).

(18) [Item 2-16]

*Ke kile ka ya kwa Limpopo.*  
 ke kile ka y-a kwa Limpopo  
 1SG once 1SG go-FV to Limpopo  
 'I have been to Limpopo.'

When an event begins after some time of waiting as in (19), Setswana introduces the event with the adverb *kwa bofelong* 'finally'. The main verb *tsamaya* 'walk / move' which follows *simolola* 'start' is in the infinitive form.

(19) [Item 2-17]

*Kwa bofelong, bese ya simolola go tsamaya.*  
 kwa bofelong, bese ya simolol-a go tsamaya  
 finally bus SM9 start-FV to move  
 ‘Finally, the bus began moving.’

A continuous event in the past as in (20) is expressed using the perfect suffix *-ile* on the verb.

(20) [Item 2-18]

*O robetse letsatsi lotlhe maabane.*  
 o robel-ile le-tsatsi lotlhe maabane  
 SM1 sleep-PRF 5-day all yesterday  
 ‘She slept all day yesterday.’

When a sentence describes a short moment of an event that has been completed, it uses the *-ile* suffix as in (21).

(21) [Item 2-19]

*Ke lekile go di ja go le gonnye.*  
 ke lek-ile go di ja go le go nnye  
 1SG try-PRF to OM10 eat INDEF VCOP 17 little  
 ‘I tried eating it a bit.’

When an action of distribution is completed, Setswana uses the verb in the *-ile* suffix in (22).

(22) [Item 2-20]

*O di file mongwe le mongwe.*  
 o di f-ile mongwe.le.mongwe  
 SM1 OM10 give-PRF everyone  
 ‘She gave them (=books) to everyone.’

As shown in (23), the hortative in Setswana takes the subjunctive suffix *-e*.

(23) [Item 2-21]

*A re tsamaye!*  
 a re tsamay-e  
 let 1PL go-FV  
 ‘Let’s go!’

When an event is about to occur as in (24a), the verb *ila* ‘come’ inflected with the reversive intransitive suffix *-og* to form *tloga* ‘make way / go’ is used as auxiliary verb rendering the meaning ‘about to / just now’. It is followed by the main verb. For a past event as in (24b), the verb *batla* ‘want’ is used as auxiliary verb *batla* to give

the meaning ‘almost’. It takes the perfect suffix *-ile* and is followed by the main verb in the verb with the *-a* final vowel.

(24) [Item 2-23, 24]

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

*Setlhare seo se tloga se wa.*

Se-tlhare seo se tlog-a se w-a  
7-tree that SM7 about.to-FV SM7 fall-FV

‘That tree is about to topple.’

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

*Ke batlile ke kgopega.*

ke batl-ile ke kgopeg-a  
1SG almost-PRF 1SG trip-FV

‘I was almost about to trip.’

For an action that will occur in the future as in (25), the clauses take the future prefix *tla* in both clauses.

(25) [Item 2-25]

*Re tla nna le baeng kamoso ka jalo ke tla reka borotho.*

re tla nna le baeng kamoso, ka.jalo ke tla reka borotho  
1PL FUT be with guests tomorrow therefore 1SG FUT buy bread

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

In (26), an event took place while being away in the past, Setswana uses the *ne* past tense and the *-ile* suffix on the main verb. Note that the subordinate clause has the *-ile* past as a main verb (cf. Sesotho). In (27), the buying of the bag happened before an event occurred. The matrix clause shows the same pattern as in (26), but the subordinate clause as the *ga* morpheme.

(26) [Item 2-26]

[Situation: I was in Giyani]

*Ke ne ke rekile kgetse e fa ke yile Giyani.*

ke ne ke rek-ile kgetse e fa ke y-ile Giyani  
1SG PST 1SG buy-PRF bag this when 1SG go-PRF Giyani

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

(27) [Item 2-27]

[Situation: before going to Giyani]

*Ke ne ke rekile kgetse e pele ga ke ya Giyani.*

ke ne ke rek-ile kgetse e pele ga ke ya Giyani  
1SG PST 1SG buy-PRF bag this before part 1SG go Giyani

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

The past tense of the factive verb *itse* ‘to know’ is used in (28). When an event occurred before the event *knowing*, the verb takes the *-ile* suffix.

(28) [Item 2-28]

*Ke itsitse gore o rekile kgetse e mo mmarakeng o.*

ke its-ile gore o rek-ile kgetse e mo mmarake-ng o  
1SG know-PRF that SM1 buy-PRF bag this PART.LOC market-LOC this  
‘I knew he (had) bought this bag in this market.’

## 7. Conclusion

Aspect constructions in Setswana use several auxiliary verbs to indicate the internal temporal structure of a situation. The future morpheme *tla* is used for future and the infinitive verb for habitual. The perfect aspect is expressed using the *-ile* suffix on the verb. The past tense is expressed using the *ne* auxiliary verb. Details of the aspect constructions require future work, which also includes cross-linguistic comparisons across the Sotho-Tswana group.

## 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, Mpumalanga and Pretoria. Between Durban and Mpumalanga, 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 Mpumalanga.**

**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
COP:	Copular	PASS:	Passive
FUT:	Future	PRF:	Perfect
FV:	Final Vowel (default inflectional suffix of the finite verb)	PROG:	Progressive
INDEF:	Indefinite	PST:	Past
LOC:	Locative	SFX:	Suffix
LOC.PART:	Locative particle	SM:	Subject Marker
		VCOP:	Verbal copulative

### References

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