

# A Preliminary Investigation into Some Aspects of Time Reference in Tshivenda

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**Abstract**—When one wakes up in the early morning of the day, one is struck by all activities performed which, are controlled by time. Every task that one performs, one takes time into cognizance. When one stands on the pavement of the road, one is struck by jostling people going up and down the streets in a haste. Some are running while others are walking leisurely. When one enquires why some are running like that while others are walking slowly, the response that one gets is: "time is running out". Sometimes employees observe time while other employees do not observe it. Both parties (the employees and employers) are not satisfied with how each manages time. This practice of not observing time compelled the researcher to attempt to explore the various ways in which time is expressed in Tshivenda. Having explored different ways of expressing time would assist people to consider the importance of time in their everyday activities. The paper investigates the extents of analysing various word categories with properties of expressing time in Tshivenda.

**Index Terms**—preliminary, investigation, some aspects, time, reference, Tshivenda

## I. INTRODUCTION

Many scholars of linguistics have defined 'time' differently. The Americans define time in terms of money; time utilisation as an organising and control system. In addition, time is seen in terms of urgency. The Collins Pocket Reference Thesaurus in A-Z Form Dictionary (1998) defines 'time' as:

Age, chronology, date, duration, epoch, era, generation, hour, interval, period, season, space, span, spell, stretch, term and while.

From the preceding definition, 'time' is not a specific indicator. The explanation goes further to show that Kirkpatrick (1998) refers 'time' to mean instance, function, occasion, point, stage or allocated space, day, duration, life, lifespan, life time and seasons. Kirkpatrick (1998) argues that:

'Time' may also be considered in reference to day, hour, and peak. Sometimes 'time' may be considered in specialized context, for example, music beat, measure, metre, rhythm and tempo. 'time' may be used in several ways to mean all the time, 'always', 'at all times', 'constantly', 'continually', 'continuously', 'ever', for the duration and 'perpetually throughout'.

Klein (1994) on the other hand asserts that there is no apparent uniform concept of time. In modern cultures metrical calendar times plays an important role, so important that we are inclined to take it as self-evident our life is largely organized around this time. The basic time concept is most often expressed by grammatical categories and by simple adverbs. Greenberg (1978) indicates that, in order to refer to time or perhaps more properly a sequence of events or state in natural language, one or more points or reference are required, that is, the moment of speech (that is point or span of time in which the speaker produces an utterance, the relative time that is any point or span of time occurs before, after or contemporaneously with the moment of speech) and function as a surrogate moment of speech which serves as the basis for predications involving time relative itself. According to Posthumus (1990)'s assertion:

Time does not provide any landmarks in terms of which situation can be located. It is necessary to establish some arbitrary reference point, which reference to which situation in time can be located or to express time in terms of conventionalized time units. The basic units of time reckoning and measuring are the prominent cycle or day and night lunar, months, seasons and years. Such units can be used as measure relative to some fixed point or reference or they can be used calendrically to locate events in relation to some origin or some part of that natural cycle.

Time is also referred to as a clock control, measure, for regulate, schedule or set. Sometimes 'timeless' is used to mean, 'abiding, ageless, ceaseless, changeless, deathless, endless, enduring, external, everlasting, immoral immutable, imperishable, indestructible, lasting, permanent, persistent, undying. 'Time' on the other hand refers to appropriate, at the right time, convenient, judicious, opportune, prompt, propitious, punctual, reasonable, suitable, and well timed. Posthumus (1990) concluded by saying that 'time can be anchored to some important events such as our year measure which is calculated in relation to the birth of Christ'. From the above explanation of what time is, one realises that there are different ways and different word categories of expressing time in a language. It is the aim of this research article to explore different ways of expressing time when using different word categories such as verbs, nouns, adjective, and prepositions, etc.

## II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The research will be accomplished by analysing word categories from published and unpublished works to find out those word categories which refer to time. This will be verified by consulting speakers of the language to ascertain whether the word categories really refer to different times in Tshivenda.

### III. TIME REFERENCE IN TSHIVENDA

In this section, an investigation of different categories with properties of expressing time in Tshivenda will be carried out to find out how different times are expressed in Tshivenda.

#### a. Time of the watch

Watch is an instrument or small clock to be worn or carried, at which, one keeps on looking to find out how time is recorded. The time shown on the watch is related to the position of the sun. The time shown in the watch is divided as follows; a second is a length of time equal to 1 out of 60 parts of a minute: Therefore one may state in Tshivenda a time in seconds.

##### i. Second time

(*Ho sala mithethe miḽ anu uri mbekanyamushushumo kha TVI swike magumoni*).

There are five seconds left for the TV programme to come to an end

In the preceding example *mithethe* 'seconds' are used to express the length of time equal to one out of sixty parts of a minute.

##### ii. Minute time

A minute is one of the 60<sup>th</sup> parts into which an hour is divided into small particles.

(*Ndi ḽo vhuya nga minethe dza fumi u bva kha awara /iri ya malo*)

I will come back at 10 minutes past 8 o'clock (08h10)

The preceding example expresses the exact time that the speaker would come back. He/She says this after he/she had looked at his/her watch. The time referred to is the exact time on the dot.

##### iii. Hour time

There are twenty-four (24) hours in a day.

(*Ro swika nga awara /iri ya rathi*)

We arrived at 6 o'clock (18h00)

In the preceding example, the exact time of arrival is shown by *awara / Iri ya rathi*. This shows specific time of the watch at which the person had arrived

#### b. Periods of the day

Sometimes time is expressed by using periods of the day. There are 24 hours in a day.

*matsheloni*: (*Ndo swika nga matsheloni*)

I arrived in the morning

*Masiari*: (*Ndo ḽa nga masiari*)

I came during the day/I came in the afternoon

*Tshiswiḽ ulo*: (*Ndo swika nga tshiswiḽ ulo*)

I arrive at lunch time

*Mathabama /tshitheu*: (*Ndo swika nga mathabama /tshitheu*)

I arrived in the afternoon

*ḽamusi*: (*Ndo mu vhona ḽamusi*)

I saw him/her today

In the preceding examples, the words *tshitheu* and *ḽuvha* are used to express time in Tshivenda. The same is true with the day, weeks, months, seasons and years. In Tshivenda a time may be expressed in terms of days, weeks, months, seasons, years and events such as follows:

*ḽuvha*: (*Mushumo wo fhedza ḽuvha ḽ oḽ he u fhela*)

The work took one day to finish

*Vhege*: (*Ndo fhedza vhege mbili ha hawe*)

I spent two weeks at his/her place

*ḽwedzi*: (*O fhedza ḽwedzi woḽ he ha hashu*)

He/she spent the whole month at my place

(*O ḽa ha hashu nga Nyendavhusiku*)

He/she came to our place in December

*Khalatḽ waha*: (*Tshikolo tshi vha tsho vala Vhuria*)

The school is closed during winter season

*Maholḽ a*: (*ḽwana o ḽa maholḽ a*)

The child came last year

*ḽwaha*: (*Ndo swika ḽwaha wo fhelaho*)

I arrived last year

*ḽatḽ waha*: (*Ndo pfuluthela fhano ḽatḽ waha*)

I relocated here this year

*c. Incidents used in expressing time*

Incidents that occurred in Tshivendǀa history or culture may be used in the expression of time.

(*O bebwa nga n̄waha wa nzie tshikume*)

He/she born in the year 1923

(*O bebwa nga n̄waha wa nndwa ya u thoma ya / ifhasi*)

He/She was born during the First World War (1914-1918)

*d. Prepositions denoting exact time*

Prepositions may be used preceding words denoting time. When used in this context, the preposition would denote exact time.

(*Mashudu o swika nga iri ya rathi*)

Mashudu arrived at exactly 6'o clock

Sometimes when the preposition *nga* is used preceding words, they sometimes denote time. It will have the property of denoting unspecified time.

(*O swika nga vhuya*)

He/She has arrived later

In the preceding example the preposition *nag* precedes *hula* which, means that they arrived at a later time, somewhere in the region unspecified. In the example for instance, it is clear that the time is not specified. It is taken as the time later than the exact time. It means that the time could be some minutes later or hours later. When used in this context time in question is not specific.

(*Watshi i tshi swika kha iri ya vhuraru ni mmbudze*)

When the watch strike 3'o clock, you should tell me.

In the preceding sentences, the preposition *nga* and *kha* precede words that denote time respectively. The time referred to above such as 6'o clock and 3'o clock are exact. There is no doubt that the prepositions *nga n̄waha kha* denote time in Tshivendǀa when preceding words that denote time.

*e. Unspecific time reference*

This is a manner in which time is not referred to, exactly. We are not speaking of an exact time. There are categories of words in Tshivendǀa that may be used to express time that is not specific. Some of the categories with these properties in Tshivendǀa are as follows:

*i. Nouns with properties of expressing time*

Crystal (1991) defines a noun as:

A term used in the grammatical classification of words, traditional; defined as the name of a person, place or thing.

Richards, et al (1991) on the other hand defines a noun as a word which can occur as the subject or object of a verb or the object and complement of a preposition. It can be modified by an adjective. It can be used with determiners (*in English*). Nouns typically refers to people, animals, places, things or abstractions. The second definition concentrates on the position in which a noun can be used syntactically in a sentence. Nouns can be used to express time in Tshivendǀa.

(*Vhana vho swika Venǀa madekwe /vhusiku / tshithew/ mathabama nga bisi*)

The children arrived in Venǀa a last night/in the night/afternoon/by bus

(*Mudededzi u ǀo ǀa matshelo /nga maǀ avhelo/ Maǀ ambanǀou / lufhimavhaeni / tshiswiǀ ulo / tshilalelo*)

The teacher will come tomorrow/in the morning/--/in the evening/ at midday, at supper

*U / a zwiǀ iwa n̄amusi*

He/She eats food today

(*Ndo mu vhona mulovha / mbamulovha / mbamatshelo*)

I saw him/her yesterday/day before yesterday/day after tomorrow

In the preceding examples, the words *madekwe* 'last night', *matshelo* 'tomorrow', *n̄amusi* 'today' and *mulovha* 'yesterday' are nouns of class 5/6. When used in the context they refer to times of the day. One can say that nouns can be used to indicate or show different periods in the day.

*ii. Demonstrative pronouns denoting time*

Poulos (1990) defines demonstrative pronouns in terms of functions. The demonstrative has two basic functions. In the first instance, it may be used in the discourse to indicate the actual position in which some or the referent occupies.....The function is commonly referred to as the 'deictic' function of the demonstrative. The second function of the demonstrative pronoun, according to Poulos (1990) is that "it may be used to refer back to the antecedent". The demonstrator pronoun refers to the distance away from the speaker. In Tshivendǀa, there are other function of a demonstrative. It may refer to time and not referring to positions away from the speaker as it is traditionally known.

{*Vhana vho vhuya zwino tshikoloni (zwino < zwenezwino)*}

Children came back now

(*Ndi ǀo vha dalela zwino /zwenezwino /zwenezwiǀ a*)

I will visit you now/immediately/then

The word *zwenezwino* 'soon' is a demonstrative pronoun. The word *zwenezwino* is a demonstrative pronoun. In the preceding example *zwi-* is identified with the concordial agreement of Class 8 and prefix *zwi-*. The concordial element is

followed by the second syllable in each case consisting of the suffix-no. Instead of the demonstrative pronoun referring to position, it is demonstrative pronoun expressing time i.e. *wino* 'now' and *zwenezwino* 'soon'.

*f. Conjunction expressing time*

Conjunction is a word that links words, phrases and sentences to one another. According to Crystal (1991), a conjunction is a term used in grammatical classification of words to refer to an item or a process whose primary function is to connect words or other constructions. The conventional sub-classification of these 'connective' items distinguishes coordinating conjunction and subordinating conjunctions. In addition, the function of the connecting words or other construction is that of expressing time.

(*Munna o swika musu vho eḑela*)

The man had arrived when /while they were asleep

(*Nwana u ḑo swika zwenezwino vho eḑela*)

The child will arrive while/at that time they were asleep

In sentences above the words *musu* 'when' and *zwenezwino* 'that time' has been used as conjunctions connecting two sentences *Munna o swika*. 'The man had arrived' and *Vho eḑela* 'They were asleep', *Nwana u ḑo swika* 'The child will arrive' and *Vho eḑela* 'they slept' respectively. In addition of these words connecting parts of a sentence, and a phrase in a language, they also express time.

*g. Auxiliary verbs expressing time*

Ziervogel, *et al* (1972) defines an auxiliary verb as a predicate which is seldom used by itself. It must be followed by the main verb or in a number of cases by a noun as its complement. On the other hand, Crystal (1991) asserts that an auxiliary verb is a term used in the grammatical classification of words to refer to the set of verbs, subordinate to the main lexical verb, which helps to make distinctions in mood, aspect, voice, etc. In the preceding definition nothing specific has been said about an auxiliary's function of denoting time. In Tshivenḑa, an auxiliary verb may have the properties of denoting time as here below:

(*U ḑ wa o dzula fhasi*)

He/She spends his/her time sitting down/He/She is always seated

(*Ndi ḑo ḑ uwa ndi tshi ni rwa*)

I will beat you soon

(*Ndo dzula ndi tshi zwi ḑivha*)

I always knew about it

In the preceding examples, the words *ḑ wa* 'spend/always', *ḑ uwa* 'go' and *dzula* 'sit, stay' are auxiliary verbs. They help the main verbs such as *dzula* 'sit/stay', *rwa* 'beat' and *ḑivha* 'know' in the above sentences respectively. When used in the preceding contexts, the meaning expressed by the auxiliary verbs would refer to the time although auxiliary verbs are traditionally known as helping verbs. The time expressed at this instance means 'always' referring to a thing that will take place respectively.

*h. Adverbs expressing time*

An adverb (ial) is one of the word categories in Tshivenḑa. Crystal (1991) defines an adverb as a term used in the grammatical classification of words to refer to heterogeneous group of items whose most frequent function is to specify the mode of action of a verb. The preceding definition refers to the function of an adverb in a sentence excluding the properties of expressing time. In Tshivenḑa, an adverb maybe used to express time as here below:

(*Mufumakadzo o ḑa kavhili tshikoloni*)

The woman came twice at school

(*Munna uyu o ḑa kanzhi hayani*)

This man came several times/many times to our home

In the above examples, the adverb *kavhili* 'twice' and *kanzhi* 'several times/many times' indicate that the action of 'coming' took place twice whereas the action of 'eating' took place several times or many times. The actions refer to time because the activity is controlled by the time and hence the adverb could be used to express time in Tshivenḑa.

*i. Infinitival locative of time*

Some locatives are formed by suffixing *-ni* to a noun to form a locative. There are locatives derived by affixing the Tshivenḑa suffix *-ni* to an infinitive clause to indicate to locative noun. According to Crystal (1991, p176), an infinitive or infinitival is defined as a traditional term for the non-finite form of the verb usually cited as its unmarked or base form. In Tshivenḑa, the infinitive is derived from Class 15 prefix-followed by any verb, e.g.

(*U tshimbila*)

Walking/to walk

When the above infinitive is used to derive a locative by affixing suffix *-ni* at the verb stem, it becomes:

(*U swika +-ni >U swikani*)

During arrival/On arrival

(*U vhuya +-in >U vyhuyani*)

During coming back/On coming back

In the preceding two sentences above, the infinitival locatives could be used as:

(*Ndo mu vhone u swikani hawe*)

I saw him /her on/during his/her arrival  
 (Ndo / a zwi/ iwa u vhuyani havho tshikoloni)  
 I ate food during/on their coming back from school

In Tshivenḑ a, the above infinitival locatives may be used to express time like in the above sentences. The clause *U swikani* refers to ‘during /on the time of arrival whereas the clause *U vhuyani* means ‘during /on the time of his/her coming back’. In both instances, the infinitival locatives show that the action took place during specified times and have been indicated.

*j. Idiophone expressing time*

The Idiophone is one of the word categories in Tshivenḑ a. According to Crystal (1991) an idiophone is a term used by some linguists to refer to a speech sound identifiable with reference to a single idiolect. The preceding definition does not refer to time but it says much about speech sounds. In Tshivenḑ a, the idiophone has the property of expressing time as in the following examples:

(*O rema muri e ri khe! /Ni ri ḥo zwino!*)  
 He/She chopped a tree with a bang/Be quite now!  
 (*O wa fhasi e bi!*)  
 He/She fell down with a thud  
 (*O ri taku, a ḑ uwa*)  
 He/She immediately stood up and goes

In the preceding examples, the idiophones *khe!* ‘chopping noise’ *bi!* ‘fall with a thud’ and *taku!* ‘Stand up immediately’ has the properties of expressing time in Tshivenḑ a respectively. The idiophone imply that the action *bi! khe!* and *taku!* Meaning that something is happened immediately.

*k. Interjections denoting time*

An interjection is defined by Crystal (1991) as a term used in the traditional classification of parts of speech referring to a class of words which are unproductive, do not enter into syntactic relationships with other classes and whose function is purely emotive. This implies that the term may refer to emotion .This term has the function similar to an idiophone as shown above. When used in Tshivenḑ a, the interjections may indirectly reflect the length of the time that the action is taking place .The length of time employed in saying an interjection brings about different shades of meaning.

(*E! Ni khou rwa ḥwana?*)  
 Surprise interjection! Are you beating the child?  
 (*Ee, ndi khou zwi pfa*)  
 Slowly Yes, I understand/hear it  
 (*A! No rwa ḥwana?*)  
 Surprise interjection! Have you beaten the child?  
 (*Aa! Hu ita hani?*)  
 Greeting interjection! How are you?

In the preceding instances, the interjections in the above sentences are uttered very fast, not drawn out. In the second and fourth sentences, the interjection take a long length of time to pronounce expressing time of confirmation and that of greeting showing friendly responses.

*l. Copulative expressing time*

Sometimes the copulative verb may be found expressing time in Tshivenḑ a, whereas Crystal (1991) defines a copulative as a term in grammatical description to refer to a linking verb, i.e. a verb which has little independent meaning, and whose main function is to relate other elements of clause, especially subject and complement. In Tshivenḑ a, the preceding term may refer to time, e.g.

(*Mbudzi i tshee tshitumbani*)  
 The goat is still in the goat pen

When used in this context, the copulative verb *tshee* refers that the goat is still in the goat pen. The copulative verb *tshee* ‘is still’ has the properties of relating to the time.

#### IV. MOODS EXPRESSING TIME

Crystal (1991) defines mood as a term used in the theoretical and descriptive study of sentence clause type and especially of verbs they contain. The preceding definition does not relate moods with time. Although there is no relation between moods and time, there are instances in Tshivenḑ a where moods denote or express time .The following moods will be investigated.

*a. Participial (Participle) mood denoting time*

Crystal (1991) defines participial/participle mood as a traditional grammatical term referring to a word derived from a verb and used as adjective. The preceding definition does not refer to time but in Tshivenḑ a, the participial/participle mood may express time although it can also express three tenses, i.e. present tense, past tense and future tenses. This mood is visible with the participle formative *tshi* which comes between the subject or object concord/agreement and the

verb in Tshivenda. This *tshi* should not be confused with the class 7 prefix *tshi-*, subject concord and objective concord/agreement *tshi* in Tshivenda:

(*Ndo wana n̄wana a tshi / a zwi / iwa*)

I found the child (when) eating food

The preceding instance shows that the two activities occur simultaneously. It means that the activity of finding is occurring at the same time or together with the activity of eating. The above sentence therefore could be interpreted as 'during' which relate to or denotes time in Tshivenda.

*b. Consecutive mood expressing time*

The consecutive mood is known as the narrative tense/mood. It consists of consecutive formative *-a* which is affixed to the subject concord/agreement. The formative *-a* supersedes the vowel *-I* of the subject concord/agreement and becomes a narrative tense as in the following sentences:

(*Ndi / a zwi / iwa*) -Indicative mood

I eat food

(*Nda < Ndi-+a > Nda / a zwi / iwa*) -Consecutive Mood

I then ate food

In the preceding instances, the subject agreement *ndi* in the indicative mood in sentence 18 (a) has been affixed with a consecutive formative *-a* to form a consecutive subject concord/agreement *nda* i.e. [*Ndi- +a > Nda*]. One interprets to mean that the consecutive formative *-a* shows that the activity under explanation had taken place at a time somewhere in the past. When used in this context, there is no doubt that the interpretation means that the action took place in the past.

*c. Imperative mood expressing time*

Imperative verb expresses a command. Crystal (1991) defines it as a term used in the grammatical classification of the sentence type, and usually seen in contrast to indicate, interrogative, etc. It refers to the verb forms or sentence/clause type in the expression of commands. The preceding definition talks about the imperative relationships to sentences forms. Although there is no reference to time it is realized that the imperative has the property of expressing time. When utters a sentence in the imperative mood one implies that the activity expressed by the verb should be carried out with immediate effect. If one understands the command, one would act immediately without wasting the time. When a command given it means that the receiver of the command should act immediately.

(*Ɔuwa!*)

Go away immediately!

(*Tshimbila!*)

Walk away immediately!

In the preceding example, the utterance of the imperative mood implies time. When a command is uttered, it implies that the action of *Ɔuwa!* 'go away immediately' and *tshimbila!* 'walk away immediately' expressed by the verb should be carried out with no wasting of time.

## V. TENSES DENOTING TIME

Crystal (1991) defines tense as:

Tense is a category used in the grammatical description of verbs along with aspect and mood referring primarily to the way the grammar marks the time at which the action denoted by the verb took place. Traditionally a distinction is made between present, past and future tense. As far as tenses are concerned we have to look at how tenses express time in present, past and future tenses.

*a. Present tense*

Present tense is a tense that indicates that the action is taking place now or in the present time. It is found in different moods. The present tense consists of the following tenses.

*i. Simple present tense*

There are two tenses under this section, i.e. the short form and the long form of the simple present tense.

(a) *Short form*

(*Ndi / a vhuswa*)

I eat food

The short form of the present tense is identified by the fact that there is no formative between the subject concords/agreements of the sentences and the verbs. When used as such, one knows exactly that the action is taking place at a time in the present tense. In the preceding example, the subject concord/agreement of the first person, singular is *Ndi* followed by the verb *-la* 'eat'. There is nothing found between the subject concord/agreement and the verb *-la* 'eat'. In that sense the action seem to take place during the time in the present.

(b) *Long form (formative-a)*

The present tense with long form is identified by the long tense formative-a which, is found between the subject concord /agreement and the verb stem.

(*Ndi a / a zwi / iwa*)

I eat food

The preceding example is in the present tense. It is an extension of previous short for b of the present tense. It shows that the action is taking place in the present tense but at a time that is later than the present tense shown previously. It is identified by the long form tense formative-a which is inserted between the subject concord /agreement *Ndi-*(Indicative Mood) and the verb stem *-/ a 'eat'*.

*ii. Present continuous tense*

Present continuous tense shows that the action is continuing to take place. It is expressed by *khou*. Some scholars call it a continuous tense formative which immediately follows the subject concord/agreement in the present tense:

(*Vhana vha khou vhala dzibugu*)

The children are studying books

In the preceding instance, the action of studying books is continuing in the present tense. The action is continually taking place in the present tense. The tense is expressed by the formative '*khou*' that is found between the subject concord /agreement *vha* 'they' and the verb *-vhala* 'read/study'.

*iii. Progressive tense expressing time*

The progressive form is in the present tense. It is shown by the progressive tense formative *kha /tsha /i* found between the subject concord U 'He/She' and the verb stem *-/ a 'eat'* in the example given below. This form indicates that the action is still progressing or persisting as the process of talking goes on.

(*Nwana u kha /i /tsha /i / a zwi/ iwa*)

The child is still eating the food

In the preceding example, the progressive tense formative *kha /i /tsha /i* 'still' expressing the time because one knows that the action is still in progress in the present tense or as we are busy talking.

*b. Past tense as expression of time*

The past tense may be divided into simple past tense and relative in the past tense

*i. Simple past tense denoting time*

Ziervogel, et al (1972) defines past tense or perfect tense as a tense form expressing a complete action. The perfect tense of the predicate consists of the subject concord to which the perfect formative *-o* is added followed by the verb:

(*Nwana o / a zwi/ iwa*)

The child ate the food

In the above example, the past tense is indicated by subject concord /agreement which was formed as follows:

(*Nwana u / a zwi/ iwa*) -Present tense

The child eats the food

(*Nwana o (<u+-o) / a zwi/ iwa*) -Past/Perfect tens

The child ate the food

The preceding examples show that the past or perfect tense *-o* expresses time because the action expressed by the verb had already been completed. By that it is meant that the action of eating had already taken place during the time in the past as we are talking now.

*i. Relative past tense-e expressing time*

This is a past tense that is found in Tshivenḑa, it is formed by the past tense formative-e attached to the relative pronouns, which is followed by a relative concord/agreement and a verb

(*Muthu ane a vhala bugu*) -Present Relative

The person who reads/studies books

(*Muthu we a vhala bugu*) -Past Relative

The person who had read/studied books

In the above instances, the first sentence is a relative sentence with relative pronoun *ane* 'which' and a relative concord *a* 'he/she', followed by a verb *-vhala* 'read/study'. The sentence is in the present tense. The second sentence is a relative with the relative pronoun *we* followed by relative concord/agreement-a and verb *-vhala* 'read, study' is also a relative. The sentence is in the past tense.

When used in this content the relative pronoun *ane* in the present tense has been changed by the past tense formative-e of the relative. The formative *-e* just like the perfect tense formative *-o* has the properties of denoting time in Tshivenḑa. This means that the action or function expressed by the verb of the sentence that took place in the past in the relative past tense. When used in this context the relative past tense expresses time in Tshivenḑa.

*c. Future time as expression of time*

Future tense refers to the fact that an action will take place in the time later than the present time. The future tense is constructed by the future tense formative-*o* which, is always found between the subject of the sentence and the verb. This means that the future is characterized by the future tense formative which, is placed between the subject concord /agreement and the verb of the sentence:

(*Ndi / a zwi/ iwa*) -Present tense-today

I eat food

(*Ndi /o / a zwi/ iwa*) -Future tense (any time after the

Present time

I will eat food

The preceding instance indicates that the future tense formative *do* expresses ternerities found between the subject of the sentence *ndi*-‘I’ and the verb *-/ a’eat’*. It indicates that the action expressed by the verb takes place in the past tense of the time we are speaking. The future tense therefore indicates that the action will take place in the future time.

## VI. ASPECTS DENOTING TIME

Crystal (1991) defines an aspect as a term used in the grammatical description of verbs (along with tense and mood)referring to the way the grammar marks the duration of temporal denoted by the verb---there is a perfective /imperfective contrast---the former often referring to the completion of an action, the latter expressing duration without specifying completion. In short, the explanation refers to the duration of time. Some verbs do not have an aspect. The following sentences will be investigated to find out whether they have properties of denoting time.

### a. Aspect *-/i* denotes time

The aspect */i* may be placed between the subject concord *a* and a verb

(*Muthu u /i /a*)

A person always comes

When the aspect */i* is used in the preceding context, it may express ‘always’; that is, any time that is not specified. In other words, the action expressed by the verb takes place at any time. The aspect */i* therefore has the property of expressing time in Tshivenḑa.

### b. Aspect ‘*mbo*’denoting time

The aspect *mbo* can be used between the subject concord/agreement and the verb. When used in this manner it may have the property of denoting time in Tshivenḑa.

(*Maemu a mbo swika tshikoloni*)

Maemu, unexpectedly arrived at school

The aspect *mbo* ‘unexpectedly’ has the property of denoting unspecified time. When used in this manner it may mean that unexpectedly or contrary to expected time. This aspect *mbo* is also followed by */i* to form aspect another aspect *mbo /i*.

### c. Aspect ‘*mbo /i*’ denoting time of immediacy

Sometimes the aspect */i* may be preceded by ‘*mbo*’ and becomes an extended aspect ‘*mbo /i*’ in Tshivenḑa. The aspect is found between the subject concord / agreement of the sentence followed by the verb.

(*Munna a mbo /i /a*)

The man immediately came

In the preceding example, the aspect *mbo /i* is found between the subject concord /agreement and the verb-*/a*. When used in this context it expresses how an action took place .In the above instance the aspect *mbo /i* has the potential of expressing time of immediacy and how an action took place in an unexpected time or in a fast manner.

### d. Negative aspect expressing time

The negative is a word that means the opposite of affirmation. According to Crystal (1991), negative/negation is defined as a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis, which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence’s meaning. The negative formatives are found between the subject concord and the verb. The negatives in question here are *athu* and *tsha* .These negatives formatives have the properties of expressing time.

(*A thi athu u mu vhona*)

I have not yet seen him

(*Nwana ha tsha lwala*)

The child is no longer sick

## VII. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that, time in Tshivenḑa is expressed by using different word categories. When one expresses time one can use seconds, minutes, day, week, month, season, year measure, cyclic units, calendrical units. Apart from that time may be expressed by using word categories i.e. nouns, preposition, infinitival locatives , auxiliary verbs, etc. We find that tenses play the most important role in expressing time in Tshivenḑa. There are three tenses i.e. simple present tense, past orb perfect tense and future tense. In addition. Moods also have the properties of denoting time and such moods are the indicative, participial, consecutive and imperative mood. Different words falling under aspect e.g., *no*, *mbo*, *mbo/i* as well as negatives *athu* ‘not yet’ and *tsha* ‘no longer’ have the properties of denoting time in Tshivenḑa. By looking at these words, one could conclude that an action is taking place at certain times.

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