

Imperfective Constructions: Progressive and Prospective in Ewe and Dangme

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This paper investigates an important feature common to Ewe and Dangme, but not shared with such Kwa languages as Akan or Ga, namely a periphrastic construction commonly having “progressive” and/or “prospective” meaning, in which the finite verb is selected from a very small set and takes a complement consisting of the event-naming verb that is preceded by its Object and followed either by a construction-specific suffix (Dangme) or one of two characteristic morphemes (Ewe). The finite verb, the post-event-verb morpheme, or both, generally have spatial features. The paper begins with a basic comparative description of the simple verb in the two languages, before proceeding to a detailed description of the progressive and prospective constructions in Ewe, followed by a comparably detailed description of the imperfective construction in Dangme. It is concluded that in both languages we have to do with an elaboration of the construction type V + nominalized NP Complement, which exists throughout the lower Volta Basin in many forms, if not always this one. Despite surface similarities the two languages exhibit important differences in both the semantic range of the construction and its syntax, such that it is likely that in this respect each language has developed independently of the other.

1 Introduction

Dangme and southern Ewe are geographical neighbours along the Volta estuary, with a history of interaction that includes, besides wars and traditions of co-residence during migrations, ethnic assimilation and language shift of small communities, both Dangme to Ewe and Ewe to Dangme. Thus, both the Krobo and the Ada divisions of the Dangme are known to have assimilated groups of Ewe speakers (Huber 1963; Amate 1999). There are several small communities east of the Volta that trace their origins to Dangmeland; most of these have shifted to Ewe as the language of daily life, but others have not (Dakubu 1966; Sprigge 1969). Possibly (but not necessarily) in consequence of this, Ewe and Dangme maintain common features that are not shared with other languages of the lower Volta basin: specifically with Ga, Dangme's closest relative, or Akan and the other languages classified as Comoé e.g. Guang languages.

In this paper we investigate a major common feature, namely a periphrastic construction, commonly having “progressive” and/or “prospective” meaning, in which the finite verb is selected from a very small set and takes a complement consisting of the event-naming verb that is preceded by its Object and followed by a construction-specific suffix (Dangme) or one of two characteristic morphemes (Ewe). The finite verb, the post-event-verb morpheme, or both, generally have locative features. This construction is of course by no means peculiar to Dangme and Ewe. Apart from its Africa-wide distribution described by Heine and Claudi 2001 (see below), it occurs with minor variations in most of the Gbe varieties. Among the Comoé languages it occurs in only Nkonya, presumably as a result of the proximity of that Guang language to northern Ewe (Reinecke 1972; Dolphyne and Dakubu 1988).

In this paper we describe this construction in each language, and then characterize it typologically. The discussion in the typology and grammaticalization literature includes rather little detailed description of how the construction is manifested in different languages. It therefore seems worthwhile to define the extent to which the construction is “the same” in these two, which despite their proximity, the interconnected histories of their speakers, and their current classification as “Kwa” are not particularly closely related genetically. Our discussion is prefaced with an outline of the verb paradigm as it occurs in each language (section 2). Section 3 discusses the construction in Ewe by engaging with Heine’s typological characterization, which makes specific reference to Ewe. This is followed in section 4 by a description of the Dangme construction. The concluding section (5) compares them and tentatively relates the Dangme and Ewe constructions to comparable constructions in other languages of the region.

2 The Verb in Dangme and Ewe

The basic paradigms marking aspect and mood in these languages are very similar. Neither language marks the verb with an elaborate system of grammatical morphemes, and the grammatical affixes used are semantically quite similar between the two.

	Ewe	Dangme
a. Perfective/Aorist	Simple V	Simple V
b. Habitual	-(n)a	-a/-ɔ
c. Subjunctive ¹	(n)á-	á-

d. Negation: The negation strategies of these languages are very different. In Ewe clausal negation is expressed by a bipartite morpheme: *mé ...o*; *mé* is cliticised onto the first element in the verb cluster while *o* occurs at the end of the clause but before any utterance final particles. Dangme negation in the declara-

tive employs two different strategies, the choice being phonologically determined. One of them involves a post-verb particle *we* which in the Ada dialect (but not others) occurs clause finally, and therefore seems to resemble the Ewe clause-final negator particle *o*. However, Negation in Dangme always involves High tone on the verb stem, which is not true in Ewe.

e. Pre-Verbs: In both languages there are a number of pre-verbs, or pre-verb particles exhibiting varying degrees of verbness. They include negation elements, deictics ('come', 'go'), an item meaning "in vain", and a variety of others. For details see Ameka (elsewhere in this volume) and Dakubu (1987). The pre-verbs combine with the paradigmatic affixes in a variety of ways.

It is also the case in both languages, as in most others of the region, that a VP is nominalized by pre-posing the Object to its verb, and giving the verb an affix. In both Ewe and Dangme, and also in Ga but not in the Comoé (or Tano) languages nor the other prefixing languages of the Central Togo area, this affix is a suffix. These suffixes are of various kinds, including agentive, with the suffix *-lá* in Ewe, *-lɔ* in Dangme, and gerundive, with the suffix *-mi* in Dangme. Crucially, there is more than one kind of syntactic relationship between a nominalized verb and its preceding Object. In some constructions the relationship is associative, so that the Object NP is the possessor of the deverbal N, which may usually be pluralized like any ordinary noun. In others however this relationship does not obtain. "Nominalization" therefore does not necessarily entail "conversion to an NP", and the "nominalized" verb is not always morphologically a noun.

3 The Progressive and Prospective Aspect Constructions in Ewe

The focus of this part is on the progressive and prospective aspect constructions in Ewe. In Heine's (1976) word order typology of African languages, Ewe, along with several other languages, is categorized as a Type B language. Type B languages are claimed to have a split word order or two clause level orders of SVO and S Aux OV. The factors that determine the distribution of the two orders vary from language to language. For some, for instance the Kru languages, it may be polarity and aspect (see e.g. Marchese 1985), for others it may be selected lexical verbs, as in the Khoisan language !Xun (see Heine and Claudi 2001). It appears that the more widespread correlate of the so-called word order split is an aspectual distinction between what might *grosso modo* be characterized as "perfective" versus "imperfective" aspect. For Ewe, it is claimed that "the constituent order is VO in the aorist", as in (1a), "but OV in the progressive aspect" (Heine and Claudi 2001: 48), as in (1b) and also in the prospective aspect as in (1c).

- (1) a. *Áma dzrá te-a*
 NAME sell yam-DEF
 ‘Ama sold the yam.’
- b. *Áma le te-a dzrá-mí*
 NAME be.at:PRES yam-DEF sell-PROG
 ‘Ama is selling the yam.’
- c. *Áma le te-a dzrá gé²*
 NAME be.at:PRES yam-DEF sell PROSP
 ‘Ama is going to/about to sell the yam.’

The presence of these putative two orders in several Niger Congo languages has been at the heart of debates about word order in Proto-Niger Congo. Gensler (1994: 8) sums up the trend in the debate as follows:

Earlier work has tended to view syntagms that do not conform to straight-forward VO or OV patterns as a deviation from an ideal, both synchronically and diachronically, and thus to view the ‘quirky’ syntagm S-Aux-O-V-Other as a problem in need of explanation; the explanation would involve an appeal to some more canonical word order (SVO or SOV), recasting S-Aux-O-V-Other as actually being an instance of one or the other ‘basic’ configuration, or else deriving it historically from such a source.

He suggests that instead of trying to relate the S-Aux-O-V-Other order to SVO or SOV, the syntagm should be reconstructed to Proto Niger-Congo. We are not concerned with the historical syntax issue directly in this discussion but we are sympathetic to Gensler’s suggestion (see e.g. Givón 1979, Heine 1980, Williamson 1989, Claudi 1993, Gensler 1994, 1997 for different positions on the matter). Rather we will question some of the assumptions that have been made concerning the structure of the “quirky” syntagm, especially concerning Ewe in the course of some of this debate. In other words, we present in this part, the descriptive and empirical facts relating to the progressive and prospective in Ewe and address the analytic issues that they raise. We share the view that the purpose of language description is “to write a grammar that not only describes but also explains why language is structured the way it is” (Heine and Claudi 2001: 69), see Dryer (2006) for some views. We do not believe, however, that there is a split word order in Ewe or Dangme. Nor do we share an evolutionary explanation where the order of elements in one structure arises out of the other in the course of the history of the language, as Heine and his associates argue from a grammaticalization perspective. This is not to deny the explanatory value of grammaticalization. However, we will argue that the constituent order of progressive and prospective aspect constructions in Ewe and similar structures in Dangme did not arise from an original order.

This part is structured as follows: first, some issues in the analysis of the constructions are introduced. Then an overview of the two construction types is presented with their various uses (section 3.2). This is followed by an analysis and explanation of the structures. We first consider whether the predicator in the constructions is an auxiliary or not (section 3.3). We then examine the nature and structure of the aspectual phrase constituent. We present different pieces of evidence for the nominalization of the eventive VP (section 3.4). We draw attention to the dialectal variation in the instantiation of the constructions, especially in the possibility of including the Other element in the nominalized event structure (section 3.5). The Ewe facts are placed within a wider context by comparing them to the constructions in other Gbe dialects (section 3.6).

3.1 *Issues in the description of Ewe progressive and prospective*

A particularly clear presentation of the Ewe constructions which reveals the inadequacies in the description and at the same time makes the analytic problems evident is given in Heine (1994). Some passages are cited from this and other works to background the discussion. According to Heine (1994: 260-261) (see also Heine and Claudi 1986, 2001; Heine and Reh 1984 among others):

Ewe has a peculiar way of forming a progressive aspect ... Firstly, there are two markers to express the progressive aspect: *le* and *mí*. Secondly, intransitive verbs are reduplicated in the progressive aspect ... Thirdly, whereas the object noun phrase follows the verb in the aorist, it precedes the verb in the progressive aspect ...

There are several problems with such a description of the progressive: first, the construction is not as ‘peculiar’ as it may seem. More importantly, however, is the fact that in Ewe the progressive is expressed by a whole construction distinguished by the progressive marker *mí* (in the standard and southern dialects). To characterize the individual components of the construction as progressive is counter intuitive and misses important generalizations. Thus the verb *le* ‘be.at:PRES’ is not a progressive marker per se, although it participates in the construction. In addition, generalizations are missed if the nature of the constituent that is selected by the aspectual marker is presented as being dependent on transitivity. We argue below that this constituent is a nominalized VP or event. Thus it is not intransitive verbs as such that are reduplicated. Rather, any verb that does not have a complement in the progressive construction gets reduplicated for nominalization. As such the transitive verb *dzrú* ‘sell’ used in example (1) will occur reduplicated if its complement does not occur adjacent to it, as happens when it is focused, for example, as illustrated in (2a).

- (2) a. *te yé Áma le dzadzrá-m /gé*
 yam aFOC NAME be.at:PRES RED-sell-PROG /PROSP
 ‘YAMS Ama is selling/ is going to sell.’
- b. *te dzrá-m /gé yé Áma le*
 yam sell-PROG /PROSP aFOC NAME be.at:PRES
 ‘YAM SELLING Ama is / is about to.’

Notice that the whole aspectual phrase headed by the aspect markers can be focused as shown in (2b). In example (2b), the verb is not reduplicated because the nominalized VP involves a complement. Example (2b) also illustrates that the aspectual phrase as a whole is treated as a constituent and that the internal structure of this constituent is not relevant at the clause level. It is misleading to talk of an OV structure at the clause level. This point is further addressed in section 3.4.

Similarly, it is argued below that *le* ‘be.at:PRES’ and the other predicators that occur in these aspectual constructions are verbs and not auxiliaries as has been claimed in the literature. Within the grammaticalization framework, some sources have been attributed to the aspectual markers which are questionable. To quote Heine again:

... the progressive marker *le* is both diachronically and synchronically a locative auxiliary verb (‘be at’) and the progressive suffix *m* is historically derived from the relational noun **me* ‘inside, interior, in’, which also has the function of a postposition and still exists in both capacities in modern Ewe. (Heine 1994: 265)

Concerning the prospective, which he calls ingressive following the terminology of Westermann (1907, 1930) and others, he says the following:

Exactly the same kind of development can be reconstructed for the ingressive aspect in Ewe: the ingressive suffix *-gé* is historically derived from the relational nominal **gbé* ‘area, direction’ (Heine 1994: 283 footnote 18).

Even though the claim about the historical origins of these aspectual morphemes has been repeated over and over again in the literature (see e.g. Westermann 1907; Heine 1980: 106; Heine and Claudi 1986, 2001; Claudi 1993), the connection being drawn between *mí* and *me* is rather hard to substantiate given the difference in tone. Heine (1994) and Heine and Claudi (2001) suggest that the high tone comes from a floating high tone suffix that occurs on nominalized verbs. Heine and Claudi (2001: 49) assert that: “The nominalization of verbs requires the verb to be reduplicated and to take a floating high tone suffix”. While this may be the case, the behaviour of the floating HTS in contexts suggests that it may not be the source of the high tone on the progres-

sive marker. For one thing, the high tone suffix on such forms tends to spread to the left rather than to the right. Thus the example that Heine gives of *xɔ tu tu* 'house RED-build HTS' is realized in the southern dialects as LMM. And when such a nominal occurs as the dependent in a postpositional phrase, it is still realized as LMM and a low tone postposition is not affected by the HTS. Consider the following utterance. Note that the verb *tu* 'build' has a lexical low tone and it is the HTS that makes it have a mid tone in the nominalized structure.

- (3) H L L M M L L
 Wó-dze *xɔ-tu-tu* *gɔme*
 3PL-contact house-RED-build under
 'They started building.'

Thus it is hard to see how the high tone that occurs at the end of gerunds gets transported on to the postposition as suggested by Heine (1994: 268) during Stage II of the evolution.³ One could also ask about why the same high tone does not occur in the parallel structure in the prospective construction. We maintain that although the scenario proposed fits the received assumptions in grammaticalization theory and could work for some languages, there is the need for more convincing arguments for the claim to be sustained for Ewe.

Similarly, the claim that the prospective marker in the standard and southern dialects, *gé*, evolved out of the noun *gbé* 'area', even though plausible, still needs to be justified. There is a competing path of development, namely, from the noun *gé* 'place', which is used in Tɔŋu dialects in contexts where Anlo, for example uses *aŋi* 'place'. One argument in favour of this is the use in the inland dialects of a place formative *fě* in a sub-construction of the prospective interchangeably with the dialectal *gbé* form. Compare the following examples:

- (4) a. *me-yi tsi le gbé*
 1SG-go water bathe PROSP
 'I am going to bathe.'
 b. *me-yi tsi-le-fě*
 1SG-go water-bathe-PLACE
 'I am going to bathing place.'/'I am going to bathe.'

Such structures would provide a good bridging context for the development of the use of a noun meaning 'place' as a formative or marker for aspect.

It is evident from the foregoing that the claims about the grammaticalization of the progressive and prospective aspect markers are inconclusive and there is the need for more argumentation. Plausibility is not enough. All other competing paths must also be examined. In the next section we give a description of the progressive and the prospective constructions paying particular attention to

their structure, function and meaning. In the subsequent sections, the analytic issues of the constructions are taken up again. In particular, the category status of the individual constituents in the constructions is explored: is the predicator element in the construction a verb or an auxiliary? Is it the case that in Ewe the eventive V is “transparently a nominalized verb form” (Gensler 1994: 11)? What is the status of the complement constituent of the predicator element?

3.2 *Ewe progressive and prospective constructions*

The position defended in this part is that the progressive and prospective constructions in Ewe have the following constituent order:

Subject Verb Aspectual Phrase Other

The Verb slot is filled by a set of seven elements that model the deictic frame (temporal or directional) of the situation that is characterized in the clause (see Table 1).

One could expand on the structure by indicating that negative bipartite marking can occur in the structure where the first part, *mé*, occurs between the subject and the verb complex. The second part of the negative *o* occurs as the last element in the clause (if there is no utterance final particle). Furthermore the Verb itself could be the nucleus of the verb complex where it may be preceded by preverbal markers like the repetitive, directional and/or modal markers as illustrated in example (5) (see Ameka this volume).

- (5) *Avu-a* *mé-ga-vá* *nɔ-a* *tsi-a*
 dog-DEF NEG-REP-VENT be.at:NPRES-HAB water-DEF
no-mí *o*
 drink-PROG NEG
 ‘The dog was no longer coming to drink the water.’

Table 1: Ewe verbs in the progressive and prospective constructions

Verb form and Gloss	Construction Type	Interpretation of the construction
<i>le</i> ~ <i>nɔ</i> 'be.at:PRES' ~ 'be.at:NPRES'	progressive	State of affairs is on-going at reference time
	prospective	State of affairs will happen not long after reference time
<i>dze</i> 'contact'	progressive	Inception of durative state of affairs that happens habitually after reference time
<i>vá</i> 'come'	prospective: motion cum purpose	Motion towards the deictic centre because one wants to carry out an event
<i>tsó</i> 'come.from'		Motion from a place where the state of affairs was carried out
<i>yi</i> 'go'		Motion directed to a place to carry out an event there
<i>yi-na</i> go-HAB, i.e 'going'	prospective: inchoative	A state of affairs is taking place leading to another state of affairs
<i>gbɔ-na</i> come.back-HAB, i.e., 'coming.back'		
<i>de</i> 'reach, been.to'	prospective: at-temptive	Situation represented in the clause was nearly attained

As is evident from Table 1, the one verb that occurs in both the progressive and prospective constructions is the suppletive locative verb *le~nɔ* 'be.at'. Like in its other uses, the two variants are used for present vs. non-present situations respectively (see e.g. Ameka 1995, 1999a and Ameka and Essegbey 2006). Perhaps because it is the one verb common to the two constructions it has received more attention in the literature and the other verbs are either ignored or

mentioned in passing as replacing the locative verb, say in the prospective construction.⁴ These verbs take as their complement an aspectual phrase headed by the PROGRESSIVE or PROSPECTIVE aspect markers (cf. Fabb 1992). The aspectual markers select a nominalized VP or event whose evolution or distribution in time is being characterised by the clause (cf. Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002 on Fongbe). Rongier et al. (1988: 29) make a similar suggestion when they observe that

Le présent progressif se forme comme suit:

lè + Nominalisation+mí

... Le verbe est alors nominalisé. ... Lorsque le complément d'objet suit le verbe, c'est l'ensemble verbe-complément qui est nominalisé ...

What many analysts fail to recognise is that when they talk about the order of elements in the progressive or prospective as an OV structure, they are talking from the point of view of the input to the nominalized structure that is selected by the aspectual marker, together with which it forms an aspectual phrase. It must be stressed, as Rongier et al. put it, that where there is a complement to the verb that expresses the situation that is being characterised, it is the verb together with its complement that is nominalized. However the output need not be an independent word or phrase. In fact when it is a verb and its complement that is nominalized the output is a nominalized stem that requires the aspectual to form a constituent (see section 3.4 for further discussion). The characteristics of the progressive and prospective constructions are taken up in turn in the subsequent sections.

3.2.1 *The progressive construction*

The structure of the progressive construction can be represented as follows:

Subject(NEG) (Pre verb) Verb [Nominalized VP + PROG]_{AspP} Other
(NEG)

The prototypical function of the progressive construction is to signal that the state of affairs represented in the clause is on-going at the relevant reference time indicated by the verb. As can be deduced from Table 1, there are two verbs that can fill the Verb slot in this construction: the suppletive locative verb set *le~no* 'be.at' and a contact verb *dze* 'contact'. The latter verb has not been mentioned in relation to the progressive in the literature, except in Ameka (1991). One reason may be because it does not seem to be used in the southern dialects on which the standard is based. Hence it is discounted. However, utter-

ances like those in (6a) with its colloquial standard variety (6b) are regularly heard in everyday discourse in the inland dialect areas.

- (6) a. *dɛvi-á dze zɔ zɔ*
 child-DEF contact RED-move:PROG
 ‘The child has started walking.’
 b. *dɛvi-á dze zɔ zɔ-m*
 child-DEF contact RED-move-PROG
 ‘The child has started walking.’

When *dze* ‘contact’ is used as the Verb in the progressive construction, the construction is used to express the start or inception of a state of affairs that one expects to recur over a period of time. This could be seen as the use of the progressive construction to indicate the inception of durative or habitual occurrences. Thus the form in (7a) is interpreted as the start of the rainy season while the one in (7b) is interpreted as it is raining now.

- (7) a. *tsi dze dza-dzã*
 water contact RED-ooze:PROG
 ‘It has started raining (in the season).’
 b. *tsi le dza-dzã*
 water be.at:PRES RED-ooze:PROG
 ‘It is raining.’

The main contrast between the suppletive alternants *le* ‘be.at:PRES’ and *nɔ* ‘be.at:NPRES’ is that *le* is used with respect to situations that are on-going at the moment of speech while *nɔ* is used with respect to time periods removed from the moment of speech. Some of the contrasts are illustrated in (8).

- (8) a. *Áma le te dzrá-m le asi*
 NAME be.at:PRES yam sell-PROG LOC market
me
 containing.region
 ‘Ama is selling yams in the market.’
 b. *Áma nɔ te dzrá-m le asi*
 NAME be.at:NPRES yam sell-PROG LOC market
me
 containing.region
 ‘Ama was selling yams in the market.’

- c. *Áma a-nɔ te dzrá-m le asi*
 NAME POT-be.at:NPRES yam sell-PROG LOC market
me
 containing.region
 ‘Ama would be selling yams in the market.’

Sentence (8a) relates to the present time since *le* is used. Sentences (8b) and (8c), by contrast, relate to the past and potential respectively, hence the form *nɔ* is used. Similarly, the situation in example (5) above concerns a habitual situation hence *nɔ* is used and appropriately marked for the habitual.

The lexical semantics of the verb that occurs as the nucleus of the clause in the progressive construction thus bears on the overall interpretation of the progressive: the locative verb contributes on-going activity coterminous with the reference time and the contact verb, the start of a situation. The semantics of other elements in the construction also contribute to the overall interpretation of the structure. Thus the *Aktionsart* of the verb that is the input to the nominalized VP interacts with the semantics of the progressive construction to yield other interpretations. Because of this, some utterances can be vague. Telic verbs or verb phrases when nominalized and occurring in the progressive have an inchoative reading, that is, the process leading to the realisation of the terminal endpoint is in progress at the reference time. Thus in example (9) the garment is in the process of getting dry. The endpoint of the drying has not been reached yet.

- (9) *awu-a le fú-fú-m*
 garment-DEF be.at:PRES RED-dry-PROG
 ‘The garment is getting dry.’

Similarly, when the progressive aspectual phrase contains a semelfactive verb, the state of affairs can be interpreted as iterative as in (10).

- (10) *táya-a le wo-wó-m*
 tyre-DEF be.at:PRES RED-explode-PROG
 ‘The tyre is exploding repeatedly.’

In context, an utterance of the progressive construction can be used to express the imminence or immediate or intended future occurrence of a state of affairs. In this usage it overlaps with a sub-construction of the prospective as we shall see presently. Consider a context in which a parent goes to wake their children up and announces what they would be doing in the day with the utterances in (11).

- (11) *ɲu ke, mi-fɔ̃ Mie-le agbleyi-m̃*
 eye open 2PL-rise 1PL-be.at:PRES farm go-PROG
 ‘It is day break. Get up! We are going to the farm (today).’

Here the parent is not representing the fact that they are on their way to the farm. Rather, the progressive is used here to convey the fact that in the immediate future the parent and the children will go to the farm. The parent has an intention that they should go to the farm. In another context where the answer to the question ‘what are you going to do?’ is answered with a clause in the progressive such as (12), the reading of the utterance is that of imminence, ‘about to’.

- (12) *me-le asi me yi-m̃*
 1SG-be.at:PRES market containing.region go-PROG
 ‘I am going to the market.’

Here too, the speaker is not on the way to the market but this activity is planned and about to be executed. In both contexts, the prospective can be felicitously used instead of the progressive. We suggest that the progressive is used in order to stress the immediacy of the situation. In this sense it is comparable to the use of the historic present in English discourse.

In sum, the progressive construction expresses the on-going activity with respect to the time specified by the Verb. Depending on the fillers of the various slots in the construction, it can be interpreted as involving change in progress or repeated action within the specified time. The progressive construction can also be used in context to signal the imminence of a state of affairs. It overlaps in this function with the prospective construction to which we now turn.

3.2.2 *The prospective construction*

The structure of the prospective construction is the same as that of the progressive except that the aspect marker that heads the aspectual phrase is the prospective marker *gé* ‘PROSP’ or its dialect variant *gbé* ‘PROSP’. The general meaning of the prospective construction is that the state of affairs characterised in the rest of the clause will happen after the reference time specified in the verb.

Apart from *dze* ‘contact’, all the other verbs listed in Table 1 can fill the verb slot in the construction. On the basis of the verb that occurs in the construction, one can identify a number of sub-constructions and functions of the prospective. If the Verb slot is filled by the locative suppletive verb *le ~ nɔ* ‘be.at’ then the prospective construction expresses the imminence of the occurrence of a state of affairs, as in (13 a, b).

- (13) a. *fífiá, me-le ku-kú gé kpuie*
 now 1SG-be:PRES RED-die PROSP shortly
 ‘Now, I am about to die shortly.’ (Akpatsi 1980: 69)
- b. *é-nɔ nú ɖi gé háfi dzre-a dzɔ*
 3SG-be.at:NPRES thing eat PROSP before quarrel-DEF
 happen
 ‘He was about to eat when the quarrel broke out.’

This sub-construction is used to indicate planned, intentional, imminent future actions. The state of affairs is expected to take place after the moment of speech if *le* ‘be.at:PRES’ is used, and after the reference time if the non-present counterpart is used as in (13b).⁵ Note that in this example, the temporal clause fixes the time with respect to which the state of affairs occurred. In this usage also adverbials that express ideas of ‘a short time’ tend to be used as modifiers as in (13a) above.

When the verb slot is filled by the habitual verb forms of *yi* ‘go’ and *gbɔ* ‘come back’, the prospective construction signifies that an inchoative state of affairs is taking place as in (14a, b).

- (14) a. *zã yi-na do-dó gé*
 night go-HAB RED-fall PROSP
 ‘It is getting dark.’ (Gadzekpo 1982: 26)
- b. *me-gbɔ-na é-gbé gé*
 1SG-come.back-HAB 3SG-refuse PROSP
 ‘I will be getting divorced from him.’ (Akpatsi 1980:53)

The habitual of the two motion verbs expresses the meaning of ‘to be in the process of moving’. It is this that gives the inchoative idea. The structures can be interpreted as the situation is moving towards a certain goal, namely another state of affairs. The goal may be attained in the future. This is the interpretation of (14b). Its context is that a woman was discussing the behaviour of her husband with a friend and warns that if he did not change his ways, she will divorce him sooner or later. It can be inferred from the context that the speaker is indicating that a state of affairs is going to be changed. It has not changed yet, but it is intended to happen at some later stage.

The main point of this sub-construction then is that the verbs take the habitual form and the construction conveys the idea that something is happening at the reference time thought of as leading to a change in the state of affairs; it could be either some movement or some thought. The culmination of this current situation as expected is the state of affairs represented in the nominalized VP.

Similar to the inchoative sub-construction, the Verb slot in the motion-cum-purpose prospective construction is filled by a verb form that codes physical motion. The construction signals that the subject moved somewhere for the purpose of carrying out the state of affairs represented in the nominalized VP, as in (15 a, b).

- (15) a. *wó-ga-yi abólo fle gé ydí áqé*
 3PL-REP-go bread buy PROSP morning INDEF
 ‘They went again to buy bread one morning.’ (Gadzekpo 1982: 23)
- b. *Kofi tsó lã qe gé*
 NAME come.from fish take PROSP
 ‘Kofi has come back from fishing.’

One piece of evidence in support of the purposive sense of the prospective construction with verbs of motion is that there is a formal identity between a purposive nominalizing suffix *-gbé* ‘PURP’ and the inland dialect variant of the prospective marker *gbé*. The nominalizing suffix *-gbé* ‘PURP’ is used to form nominals from nouns. The derived nominals may be paraphrased as ‘for the purpose of N’ (Ofori 2002). For example, the form *-gbé* ‘PURP’ can be suffixed to nouns such as *náke* ‘firewood’, *ade* ‘game’ or *ahiã* ‘lover’ to yield the following nouns respectively: *náke-gbé* ‘for firewood’, i.e. look for firewood’, *ade-gbé* ‘for game i.e. hunting’ and *ahiã-gbé* ‘for lover, i.e. look for a lover’. These nominals occur typically as complements of verbs of motion, and in such a context the sentences mean something like ‘move somewhere to look for N’. For example:

- (16) a. *Áma yi náke-gbé*
 NAME go firewood-PURP
 ‘Ama has gone to look for firewood.’
- b. *Kofi tsó ade-gbé*
 NAME come.from game-PURP
 ‘Kofi has come from looking for game, i.e. hunting.’

These sentences can be paraphrased using a prospective construction in the manner shown in (17a, b). In these paraphrases the motion verb retains its function while the purposive nominal serves as the complement of a verb together with which it is nominalized. The nominalized VP is selected by the prospective aspect marker.

- (17) a. *Áma yi náke fɔ gbé/gé*
 NAME go firewood pick.up PROSP
 ‘Ama has gone to collect firewood.’

- b. *Kofi tsó ade da gbé / gé*
 NAME come.from game throw PROSP
 ‘Kofi has come from hunting for animals.’

The fact that these paraphrases are by and large synonymous supports the view that the prospective construction may be used to express purpose.⁶

Another piece of evidence for the purposive sense of the prospective sub-construction comes from the vagueness in interpretation of structures involving motion verbs with nominal complements derived using the nominalizing suffix *-fě* ‘place’ (see section 3.1 above). This suffix is attached to a nominalized verb or verb phrase stems to form nominals with the meaning ‘place to do X’ (Ofori 2002). Thus from the VP *q̄u ní* ‘eat’ one can form by permutation and suffixation the nominal *núq̄ufě* ‘dining place’. Similarly from the verb *dɔ́* ‘pass the night, i.e. sleep’ one can form the nominal *dɔ́fě* ‘sleeping place’. Ambiguity may arise when these derived place nominals are used as complements of verbs of motion. This is especially so in the inland dialects where the *-fě* suffix can have a prospective interpretation. For example,

- (18) *é-yi ga-dí-fě*
 3SG-go money-want-place
 a. ‘S/he has gone to a money-seeking place.’
 b. ‘S/he has gone to look for money.’

Interpretation (a) emphasises the place the person has gone to. The form *gadífě* in this case behaves in all respects as a nominal complement of the verb *yi* ‘go’. It can be modified by a determiner. Interpretation (b) however presumes the *fě* marker to be signaling the prospective and in that interpretation the form *gadífě* cannot be determined. It is only in interpretation (b) that the form can be paraphrased using an undisputed prospective marker *gbé* or *gé*. Utterances of the following kind which are commonplace in the inland dialects make explicit the motion-cum-purpose association with the *-fě* form where it occurs as a complement of a motion verb. Note that the motion verb is marked for the potential.

- (19) *mia-yi núq̄uq̄u dí-fě etsɔ*
 1PL:POT-go food want-place one.day.removed
 ‘We shall go to look for food tomorrow.’

The links between imminent action, inchoative situations and purposive are semantically transparent. Essentially, a purposive action is something that one has in mind to execute in future, i.e. something one wants to do. Similarly, an imminent action is something that is performed at a time after the moment of speech. An inchoative implies that the change of state will occur in the future.

The same thread runs through the attemptive use of the prospective to which we now turn.

Finally, prospective constructions in which the Verb is the telic or bidirectional verb *de* 'reach, been.to' signal situations that were nearly attained, as in (20 a, b).

- (20) a. *éye wò-de vo-vo gé dó kpo-e*
 and 3SG-reach RED-free PROSP put log-PRED
 'And she tried to be free but couldn't.' (Gadzekpo 1982: 14)
- b. *é-fě ɣúti-gbalě de ba-biã gé klóé*
 3SG-POSS skin-cover reach RED-orange PROSP almost
 'Her skin was almost copper-coloured.' (Dogoe 1964: 11).

As the translations suggest there are two possible interpretations of such a construction: an approximative as in (20b) and an attempted situation which failed as in (20a). As the examples above show, one can use adverbials to give prominence to or reinforce one interpretation over the other. Thus when the expression *dó kpoé* 'PUT log-i' i.e. failed is used then the attempted reading is highlighted. When an adverbial like *klóé* 'almost' is used, the approximative or the nearly reading is highlighted. The interaction between the semantics of the verb of 'reach' and that of the prospective together with pragmatic inferences generate the nearly attained situation, or non-consummated action reading. For the sentences below, it is true to say that the person did not leave in (21a), nor did the undergoer die after the beating in (21b).

- (21) a. *me-de dzo-dzó gé le é-gbɔ́ dó kpo-e*
 1SG-been-to RED-leave PROSP LOC 3SG-place put log-PRED
 'I tried to leave him, but I failed.' (Setsoafia 1982: 64)
- b. *wó-fò-e wò-de ku-kú gé klóé*
 3PL-beat-3SG 3SG-reach RED-die PROSP almost
 'He was beaten, he nearly died.' (Dogoe 1964: 9)

The implication of the use of the verb *de* 'reach' is that the situation would have occurred, or that someone wanted the situation to occur, but that something else prevented the whole of the situation from happening; consequently one could not say that the situation had occurred. For both senses, it appears if a little more of it happened then one could say the situation occurred.

In sum, the prospective in Ewe has four sub-constructions defined by the nature of the verb in the construction. The common thread that runs through all the constructions is that of imminence or future orientation. Thus for the imminent prospective, someone plans that something will happen after the moment of speech. For the inchoative prospective the idea conveyed is that something is happening at the time of reference whose result or outcome will occur at a time

after the reference point. For the motion-cum-purpose sub-construction, a movement takes place with the intention to carry out an action. For the attemptive prospective, the essential thing is that the culmination of something was imminent at a time but something else intervened to stop it from happening. It seems that the unifying feature of the prospective marker is the imminent or future orientation of the situation characterised in the clause. It must be stressed that for each of the sub-constructions the lexical semantics of the verb plays a crucial role. And even within constructions, subtle distinctions are evident based on the particular verb that instantiates the construction. For instance, in the motion cum purpose sub-construction, the use of *tsó* 'come.from' entails that the participant that is coded as the subject has physically moved from a place where s/he has carried out the state of affairs expressed in the nominalized VP. For this reason, Clements (1972), for instance, describes the motion-cum-purpose prospective construction involving this verb as an 'immediate past' expression. This should be borne in mind when we discuss in the next section the grammatical status of the verbal elements that occur in clause second position, so to speak, in the progressive and prospective constructions, i.e. the verb forms listed in Table 1.

3.3 *A Verb or an Aux?*

One of the controversies in the analysis of the progressive and prospective constructions in Ewe concerns the status of the elements in Table 1, when they occur in these constructions. We claim that they are verbs (see Fabb 1992) while most other analysts claim that they are auxiliaries (see the quotes from Heine 1994 above, see also Clements 1975, Duthie 1996, Manfredi 1997, Ansre 2000 among others). In this section some considerations leading to our conclusion are discussed while at the same time questioning the premises of the alternative analysis.

If one were to adopt Talmy's (2000: 25) characterisation of a basic motion event which subsumes static location and directional motion, we could argue that the verbs that are listed in Table 1 constitute a form class of Motion verbs. They thus satisfy one of the putative characteristics of auxiliaries, namely they form a closed class of linguistic units (Heine 1993: 22). But in fact this form class is a subclass of verbs. This is one of the properties also listed by Heine (1993: 25), but surely this is not a universal property. Ewe language internal facts indicate that these are not auxiliaries. The attribution of an auxiliary status to these verbs in second position in the progressive and prospective seems to be based on the intuitive idea that the central message of such clauses is expressed by the nominalized VP. Hence the verbal element in the nominalized structure is referred to as the main verb and the element that carries other information is the auxiliary. The claim is dependent on the idea that when a verb takes a com-

plement that is non-finite in form such as a participle, a gerund, an infinitive etc. the verbs tend to assume grammatical function and start on the road to auxiliary status (see Heine 1993: 15 and references therein, see also Schultze-Berndt 2006). This is however not applicable to the verbs that occur in the progressive and prospective constructions.

As we have demonstrated, all the verbs that occur in these constructions have their lexical semantics which contribute significantly to the overall semantics of the constructions. To the extent that the verbs in Table 1 are criterial for defining the grammatical constructions of the progressive and the prospective, they may be said to express a grammatical function, however they have full verbal morphosyntax. They do not have a ‘defective paradigm’. In fact all the verbs—including the locative suppletive set—occur in the verb slot in the clause, can be modified by bona fide preverbal auxiliaries, and more importantly, can be suffixed with the habitual marker—the single morphological defining property of verbs in Ewe (see e.g. Aboh et al. in press). Some would say none of these features disqualify them from being labeled auxiliaries, because as Payne (1997: 84), for example, suggests, the difference between verbs and auxiliaries lies not so much in the form but in the function:

Auxiliaries are verbs in that they satisfy the morphosyntactic definition of verbs, ... they occur in the position of the verb and they take some of the marking of verbs... However, they are auxiliary in that they do not embody the major conceptual relation, state, or activity expressed by the clause.

From a constructional point of view and from the point of view of the lexical semantics of the verbs involved, it is hard to see how one can claim that the verbs in Table 1 “do not embody the major conceptual relation, state, or activity” as a component of the meaning of the construction. From an Ewe language internal point of view, it does not make sense to say that these forms are auxiliaries.

Arguing that the elements in Table 1 are auxiliaries and their counterpart forms are verbs goes against the parsimony principle, Ockham's razor. A counter argument could be advanced to say that it is common crosslinguistically for forms that are identical to belong to the two classes of verb and auxiliary. The crucial point here is that in the cases where one can make such a postulation, e.g. English *have*, there is a difference in behaviour. For instance, the auxiliary form of *have* can be contracted: *I've eaten*. However it is odd to contract the verb form: ?? *I've a car*. There is no such difference that one can point to for the Ewe situation.

Curiously enough, the same people who advocate an auxiliary analysis for these verbs in the progressive and prospective constructions do not extend the same analysis to the forms when they occur in the phasal aspect constructions.

In these constructions too the verbs carry their lexical meaning and take a postpositional phrase as their complement. The semantics of the postposition and of the verb contribute to signaling the phase of the activity or event that is expressed in the event nominal or the gerund that is the dependent of the postposition. The schematic structure of these constructions is Subject –Verb - Postpositional Phrase. The specific constructions are differentiated by the Verb and the postposition. Those in which the verbs are the same as those in Table 1 are of three kinds, namely *dze* ‘contact’ for inceptive; *le ~ no* ‘be.at’ for durative and *yi* ‘go’ for continuative (see Ameka this volume):

- (22) a. Inceptive: Subject *dze* ‘contact’ [*NP gɔme* ‘under’] POSTP
É-dze avi-fá-fá gɔme
 3SG-contact cry-RED-emit under
 ‘S/he started crying’
- b. Durative: Subject *le ~ no* ‘be.at’ [*NP dzi* ‘surface’] POSTP
 [Many drank a lot and were intoxicated but]
wó-ga-le é-no-no dzi kokoko
 3PL-REP-be.at:PRES 3SG-RED-drink surface TRIP-only
 ‘they remained drinking persistently’ [Agbezeuge 232]
- c. Continuative: Subject *yi* go [*NP dzi* ‘surface’] POSTP
álé Papá Ge yi xó-tu-tu dzi
 thus TITLE NAME go tradition-RED-build surface
 ‘so Papa Ge continued to recount the traditions’ (Agbezeuge 1910)

The point is that nobody ever analyses these verbs in these phasal aspect constructions as auxiliaries. It is not clear to us why the same logic is not applied: the NP encodes the conceptual event that is being talked about and the verbs depending on their lexical semantics model the deictic and temporal frame of the situation characterised in the construction. It is inconsistent, in our view, to label the same verbs when they occur in similar aspectual constructions auxiliaries while in these phasal constructions they are verbs.

This is not to challenge the validity of the notion of “auxiliary” in general and in Ewe grammar. We are arguing that the forms that have been called auxiliaries in the progressive and prospective construction are not auxiliaries. They are verbs. There is a distinct class of Auxiliary elements in Ewe, called “augment” by Ansre (1966) and modals by Duthie (1996). The forms in Table 1 behave differently from this set of forms: The Auxs always take a VP complement, the elements in Table 1 never take a VP complement directly (see Ameka this volume and Essegbey 2004 for further details). The VP in a progressive and prospective construction headed by the forms in Table 1 can, in fact, be the complement of these auxiliaries as illustrated in (23).

- (23) *Kofi nyá le dzo-dzó gé*
 NAME MOD_{be.at}:PRES_{RED}-leave PROSP
 ‘Kofi is certainly going to leave.’

It has been claimed that auxiliaries may not themselves be governed by other auxiliaries (see Heine 1993: 23). If this is accepted then it follows that the Verb in the progressive and prospective construction like *le* ‘be.at:PRES’ cannot be an auxiliary since it can be governed by other auxiliaries.

The forms in Table 1 which form the nucleus of the prospective and progressive constructions are verbs and not auxiliaries. In this context they have not lost any semantic content, nor are they more abstract than when they are used in other contexts. They behave in all respects like bona fide verbs. They do not share any properties with the class of elements in Ewe that satisfy most of the properties identified by Heine (1993: 24-25) as the defining, even if contradictory, features of auxiliaries cross-linguistically. It is uneconomical to assign them to a class of auxiliaries. In the next section, we address the status of the complement of these verbs. We argue that they are aspectual phrases headed by aspect markers. The aspect markers select a nominalized VP.

3.4 *The nature of the complement*

Closely related to the problem of the status of the predicator element discussed in the previous section is the question of the structure and nature of the complement. As indicated earlier, it has generally been assumed that the progressive and prospective constructions have an S-Aux-O-V-Other constituent order. We have argued that it is better to consider the Aux a verb both on semantic and formal grounds. In this section, we defend the view that it is erroneous to talk at the clause level of an SOV order. It is the mixing of levels. We suggest that the complement of the verb in the progressive and prospective constructions is an Aspect Phrase (AspP) headed by the aspectual markers which select a nominalized VP. The complex nature of this constituent has resisted a straightforward analysis. Clements (1975), for example, argues that it is an Affix Verb Phrase (AVP). As he put it:

We may claim that the AVPs are generated as VPs by the base rules, and then at some subsequent point—perhaps at the beginning of the application of the transformational rules—they are reanalysed as NPs (Clements 1975: 38)

This view framed within an Aspects model of generative grammar is instructive and agrees in part with the position advanced here. In particular, it is consistent with the suggestion that the aspectual markers select a nominalized VP. It is important to stress that the AspP is not an NP and that the nominalized

VP is not a free constituent—it is a stem that requires a marker to be able to function as a constituent.

Clements (1975) has amply demonstrated that the AVP, the constituent we are calling an Aspect Phrase, is not a nominal because it cannot be modified by an adjective as illustrated in (24c), unlike other nominals including gerunds (e.g. 24b).

- (24) a. *dɔ sésě me-wɔ*
 work hard ISG-do
 ‘A hard work I did.’
- b. *dɔ-wɔ-wɔ sésě dzi me-le*
 work-RED-do hard surface 1SG-be.at PRES
 ‘Hard working I am doing.’
- c. **dɔ-wɔ-m sésě me-le*
 work-do-PROG hard 1SG-do
 ‘Hard working I am.’

This data set shows that the progressive aspectual phrase is not nominal. The gerund, by contrast, in (24b) is nominal hence it can be modified by an adjective. Furthermore, the aspectual phrase cannot be relativised, nor pseudoclefted nor coordinated like other NPs and gerunds with the linker *kplé* ‘and’:

- (25) a. **Kofi nɔ dɔ wɔ-m kplé ha dzi-m*
 NAME be.at:NPRES work do-PROG and song bear-PROG
 ‘Kofi was working and singing.’

Compare (26) in which gerunds formed from the VPs in (25a) are coordinated:

- b. *dɔ-wɔ-wɔ kplé ha-dzi-dzi yé zɔ-na*
 work-RED-do and song-RED-bear aFOC walk-HAB
 ‘Working and singing go together.’

Clements uses these arguments to show that the aspectual phrases are not NPs and that they are different from gerunds. Fabb (1992: 33-37), on the other hand, claims that there is no category status difference between the aspectual phrases or Clements’ AVPs and the gerunds. He asserts that “I remain with the traditional account that they are both NPs” (Fabb 1992: 37). Fabb even goes further to suggest that the progressive marker nominalizes the verb (Fabb 1992: 37). We do not think this is the case and we agree with Clements that the aspectual phrase is not an NP. One piece of evidence for this is that it cannot be pronominalized. Were it an NP, one would expect this. In fact, gerunds which are NPs can be pronominalized. In the rest of this section we present some of the arguments for the claim that the element the aspectual marker selects is a nominalized VP.

3.4.1 Evidence for nominalization of VP

We have argued in the preceding section that the Aspectual Phrase—the constituent headed by the progressive and prospective aspect markers—is not a nominal phrase. Consequently, the progressive and prospective markers cannot be said to nominalize the phrase, contra Fabb’s (1992) suggestion. We maintain, however, that the aspect markers select a nominalized VP. This nominalized VP is a stem that hosts a marker. It is not a free constituent. We first show that this component of the aspectual phrase is a nominalized VP and thereafter show that it is a bound constituent.

The first piece of evidence comes from the fact that where there is no complement adjacent to the verb, the verb is reduplicated. The pattern of reduplication is the same as that for the formation of action nominals from a verb, namely, the reduplicative copy bears a low tone irrespective of the tone of the verb stem (cf. Ameka 1999b, Ofori 2002). This pattern of reduplication is distinct from the reduplication of verbs for the formation of adjectives where the reduplicative copy is a complete copy of the segments and the tone of the verb stem. Compare the forms in example (26):

(26)	Verb		Nominal		Adjectival	
a.	sě	‘become.strong’	sè-sě	‘strength’	sé-sě	‘strong’
b.	lã	‘to love’	lã-lã	‘love’	lã-lã	‘beloved’

The point is that the form of the nominalized VP selected in the progressive and prospective constructions is the same as the nominal form, as is evident from comparing example (27) below with the corresponding form in (26a) above).

(27)	é-fě	lã.me	le	sè-sě	gé
	3SG-poss	body	be.at.PRES	RED-become.strong	PROSP
	‘His body is going to get strong.’				
	i.e. ‘His health is going to improve.’				

The second piece of evidence comes from the fact that if the complement is adjacent to the verb, the surface order is permuted. This is the same process that is used for the formation of nominal stems that host other formatives. Hence this can be called a nominal stem formation strategy. The output of the process is not a nominal word, rather it forms a stem that serves as input to further morphological processes such as affixation. For instance, the formation of agent nouns, place nouns, instrumental nouns from VPs etc. is fed by this process if the VP is made up of a verb and complement (see Duthie 1996, Ofori 2002). For example:

- | | | | | |
|------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| (28) | VP | Agent nominal | Place nominal | Instrument nominal |
| | <i>fíá nú</i> | <i>nú-fíá-lá</i> | <i>nú-fíá-fě</i> | <i>nú-fíá-nú</i> |
| | teach thing | thing-teach-er | thing-teach-place | thing-teach-thing |
| | ‘teach’ | ‘teacher’ | ‘teaching place’ | ‘teaching aid’ |

The claim is that it is the same process of forming a nominal stem that is deployed in the creation of the component of the aspectual phrase that is selected by the aspect marker if the VP is made up of a verb and a complement and they are adjacent. Compare the nominalized VP form in the progressive construction in (29) below with the forms in (28) above:

- | | | |
|------|---------------------|------------------|
| (29) | <i>é-le</i> | <i>nú fíá-mí</i> |
| | 3SG:be.at:PRES | thing teach-PROG |
| | ‘S/He is teaching.’ | |

This nominal stem formation process described above is distinct from the formation of adjectival stems from a VP made up of a verb and its complement. For the adjective formation the verb and the complement are just compounded without permutation (plus an adjectivalising high tone suffix) (see Ameka 1991 and 2002b). Compare the forms in (30).

- | | | | |
|------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| (30) | VP | Agent nominal | Adjectival |
| | <i>nyá nú</i> | <i>nú-nyá-lá</i> | <i>nyá-nú’</i> |
| | know thing | thing-know-er | know-thing:HTS |
| | ‘know’ | ‘savant’ | ‘knowledgeable’ |

A third piece of evidence for the nominalized nature of the component of the Aspectual phrase selected by the aspect markers is one which has been advanced in the traditional literature and exploited in the grammaticalization literature. It is based on a cross-linguistic feature of the nominalization of verbs plus complements. In such nominalizations, there is an associative relation between the verb and the complement (Noonan 1985). This relation is manifested in Ewe in the choice of the form of pronominals to represent the complement in such nominalizations. Thus the independent forms of pronouns are used in these nominalized VP structures. This is one piece of evidence also that at the clause level there is no OV structure. Indeed if the complement in the nominalized VP were thought of as an object it would not have such a pronominal form (cf. Heine 1994).

A second manifestation of the associative relation comes from the order of first and second person singular pronouns in the nominalized VP structure. These pronoun forms occur after the verb just as they occur after the possessed item in the inalienable construction. These pronouns can also occur before the verb. However unlike in possessive structures where the tone of the pronoun becomes rising signaling an alienable structure, the floating high tone posses-

sive marker does not occur on these pronouns in this context. Compare the tone on the first person singular pronoun *nye* in the following:

- (31) a. Aspectual Construction with 1SG before
ta le nyè vé-mí
 head be.at:PRES 1SG pain-PROG
 ‘Head is aching me.’
- b. Aspectual Construction with 1SG after
ta le vé-(n)yè-mí
 head be.at:PRES pain-1SG-PROG
 ‘Head is aching me.’
- c. 1SG in inalienable possessive structure
ta-nyè gba
 head-1SG break
 Lit: ‘My head is broken’ i.e. My head is blocked, I have a cold.
- d. 1SG in alienable possessive structure
nyě ta gba
 1SG:POSS head break
 Lit: ‘My head is broken’ i.e. My head is blocked, I have a cold.

The behaviour of the 1SG and 2SG pronouns in the aspectual constructions, especially when they occur before the non-finite verb in the aspectual phrase as in (31a), suggests that in Ewe the verb by itself in the aspectual phrase is not nominalized (cf. e.g. Gensler 1994). If it were, one would have expected that in this context a floating high tone should be present to indicate the association between the pronoun and the following element. Note that where a verb is truly nominalized the difference in tone with respect to the different structures is evident, as illustrated in (32).

- (32) a. *lǎlǎ-nye* (inalienable structure)
 love-1SG
 ‘my love’
- b. *nyě lǎlǎ* (alienable structure)
 1SG:POSS love
 ‘my love’

We conclude from all these pieces of evidence that it is the VP as a whole representing the state of affairs that is nominalized.

Thus there is enough evidence to argue that the specifier of the Aspectual phrase is a nominalized VP. In fact it is a mixed category as Clements (1975) already pointed out: the affix VP is base generated as a VP and then at some stage of derivation becomes an NP, in his parlance.

One of the enigmas of the progressive and prospective aspect constructions lies in the fact that the nominalized VP is not a free constituent and it is hard to assign it a category label. This is why it is considered to be a mixed category constituent. A further puzzle is that the NP part of this nominalized VP can be questioned and fronted for focus. However, the nominalized VP as such cannot, as shown in (33).

- (33) a. *Áma le mɔlu ɖa-mí*
 NAME be.at:PRES rice cook-PROG
 ‘Ama is cooking rice.’
- b. Aspectual Phrase in Focus
mɔlu ɖa-mí yé Áma le
 rice cook-PROG aFOC NAME be.at:PRES
 ‘RICE COOKING Ama is.’
- c. Internal argument of eventive verb in Focus
mɔlu yé Áma le ɖa-ɖa-mí
 rice aFOC NAME be.at:PRES RED-cook-PROG
 ‘RICE Ama is cooking.’
- d. Nominalized VP of the AspP cannot be focused
 **mɔlu ɖa yé Áma le*
 rice cook aFOC NAME be.at:PRES

The focusing facts indicate clearly that the internal argument of the eventive verb is not a clause level object. This is because if it were an object, its focusing as in (33c) should not have any effect in the rest of the clause. However when it is focussed the eventive verb has to be reduplicated, a kind of sign that its internal argument has been fronted for focus. It also shows that a verb as such cannot occur in that slot, rather, it has to be a nominalized constituent. Thus the focusing of the internal argument of the eventive verb also gives evidence for the claim that the specifier, as it were, of the Aspect Phrase is a nominalized VP.

These empirical facts notwithstanding, the OV analysis is predominant in the literature. Manfredi (1997: 88), for example, proposes that

in a durative (non-terminative) sentence, object preposing is motivated by a principle—call it SCOPOPHOBIA—that forces an object out of the verb’s c-command domain. The specific trigger of object shift varies: in [Ewe]Gbe, it is a progressive Aux ...

Leaving aside the question of whether the so-called OV structure is universally aspectually conditioned in the “Benue-Kwa” languages as Manfredi suggests, it should be evident from the discussion so far that for Ewe there is no so-called progressive Aux that is responsible for this. Furthermore, the struc-

ture is not restricted to the progressive. The prospective displays the same structure and there is no real sense in which one can talk about the prospective as a durative situation. It appears therefore that the account is inadequate for Ewe. As we shall see in section 3.6, in other varieties of Gbe such as Gengbe where one can talk of an auxiliary marker of the progressive, there is no “object shift”, to use Manfredi’s term. Before that we turn to issues of variation within Ewe and relate it to the claims about the grammaticalization of the aspectual constructions.

3.5 *Ewe dialect variation and grammaticalization*

There is some variation within Ewe with respect to the instantiation of the progressive and prospective constructions. Some of these have been hinted at in the course of the discussion. In this section we document this variation systematically and discuss its implications for the grammaticalization of the construction. We first look at the variation with respect to the progressive and then the prospective.

As indicated earlier, the progressive marker in the inland dialects is a high tone that gets anchored to the last syllable of the nominalized VP in the construction. Thus if the tone of the last syllable of the nominalized VP is low, it becomes rising as in examples (6a) and (7b) above. If the last syllable has a high tone, the effect of the progressive tone is to lengthen the final vowel of the nominalized VP, as shown in (34).

- (34) a. *me-le* *dzò-dzóó*
 1SG-be.at:PRES RED-leave:PROG
 ‘I am leaving.’
 b. *me-le* *tsi lèé*
 1SG-be.at:PRES water bathe:PROG
 ‘I am having a bath.’

In the southern, especially Anlo, dialects however, the progressive is realised as a high tone syllabic *m̩*. This is the form we get in the standard dialects too. Another distinctive feature of the Anlo dialects which has not been adopted in the standard literary form is that the present form of the locative verb *le* ‘be.at:PRES’ is elided in the progressive and prospective constructions. Thus utterances of the following kind are used in Anlo (see Clements 1972, 1975):

- (35) a. *é-dzo-dzó-m̩*
 3SG-RED-leave-PROG
 ‘S/he is leaving.’

- b. *é tsi le-m̃*
 3SG water bathe-PROG
 ‘S/he is having a bath.’

The non-present counterpart of the locative verb *nɔ* ‘be.at:NPRES’ cannot be omitted in similar fashion. Heine uses this kind of data to argue for the auxiliary status of *le* ‘be.at’. Note however that if the aspectual phrase were to be fronted for focus the *le* ‘be.at’ form can no longer be elided as the focused counterparts of (35a, b) in (36) below show.⁷

- (36) a. *dzo-dzó-m̃ wò-le*
 RED-leave-PROG 3SG-be.at:PRES
 ‘LEAVING s/he is.’
 b. *tsi le-m̃ wò-le*
 water bathe-PROG 3SG-be.at:PRES
 ‘BATHING s/he is.’

Another distinctive feature of the Anlo varieties with respect to these constructions is that the reduplicated form of the nominalized VP in the aspectual phrase may also be reduced to just the verb stem. Such reduction seems to occur only in the present progressive form. In such structures there is a reduction in the locative verb form as well but not a complete elision as in the cases illustrated above. Thus a variant of example (36a) above is (37) below.

- (37) *é-e dzó-m̃*
 3SG-be.at:PRES leave-PROG
 ‘S/he is leaving.’

We suggest that in such structures the locative verb is reduced to a vowel with its low tone which is perceptible if one listens to Anlo speakers. Heine and grammaticalization theorists claim that the *le* ‘be.at’ form is completely elided indicating that the progressive construction has undergone erosion, which is the evidence par excellence not only for the evolution of the construction from an SVO structure through various stages but also for the auxiliary status of *le* ‘be.at’. We hope we have demonstrated that the empirical facts are more complex. It is tempting to suggest that the variation between the locative verbless structure with the reduplicated structure and the reduced reduplicated structure seem to be following a prosodic structure of the Anlo dialect (see Stemberger and Lewis 1986).

When one pays attention to the presence or absence of phonological material, one might be tempted to think that the inland dialects have an eroded progressive, since it is only marked by a floating high tone while the form in Anlo has both segmental and supra-segmental material, namely, *m̃*. There is no evidence that the inland form developed as a result of the erosion of the Anlo

form. It is interesting to observe that in order for the formal contrasts to be maintained, the inland dialects do not have a reduction in any other part of the construction.

As far as the prospective is concerned, we have pointed out the difference between the Anlo dialects and the inland dialects in the following areas: First, as just discussed, the present locative verb form can be omitted in the Anlo dialects but not in the inland dialects. Second, the marker of the prospective in Anlo is *gé* while in the inland dialects it is *gbé*. Given the phonological shape of these markers, it has been suggested that the Anlo form could be a grammaticalized form of the inland forms. Plausible as this may sound, it is not easy to substantiate. Given that the inland form variant is in a heterosemic relation with a place and purposive formative *gbé*, one would have expected to see traces of similar erosion with respect to such nominal forms. But these have not been attested. It seems that the two dialects followed different routes for the development of the prospective. It is possible that the Anlo form is a direct extension of the noun *gé* that is used in some of the southern dialects for 'place' as a generic term, distinct from the one used for the 'place, area' term that is used in the inland dialects.

Another difference between the Anlo dialect and the inland dialects is in terms of the placement of the Other, i.e. adjuncts as well as second objects with respect to the prospective marker. The Anlo and southern dialects follow the order that we have described so far, namely the Other constituent occurs after the prospective marker which marks the end of the aspectual phrase. In some of the inland dialects, however, when the Other is a second object of the verb in the aspectual phrase, it can occur within the scope of the prospective marker. Compare the variants in (38):

- (38) a. *É-le akɔ̃nta fiá ɖevi-á-wó gbé* (Inland)
 3SG-be.at:PRES maths teach child-DEF-PL PROSP
 'S/he is going to teach the children mathematics.'
- b. *É akɔ̃nta fiá gé ɖevi-á-wó* (Anlo)
 3SG maths teach PROSP child-DEF-PL
 'S/he is going to teach the children mathematics.'

Similarly, if the Other is a prepositional phrase, it can also occur within the scope of the prospective marker in the inland dialects but outside it in Anlo. For instance,

- (39) a. *É-le dɔ dí ná-m gbé* (Inland)
 3SG-be.at:PRES work want DAT-1SG PROSP
 'S/he is going to look for a job for me.'

- b. *É dɔ dí gé ná-m* (Anlo)
 3SG work want PROSP DAT-1SG
 ‘S/he is going to look for a job for me.’

The inland dialect’s pattern here follows the nominal stem formation pattern for such structures. For example, one can form an agent nominal from a comparable structure to the input in (39) immediately above as follows:

- (40) *dí dɔ ná ame dɔ-dí-ná-ame-lá*
 want work DAT person work-want-DAT-person-er
 ‘look for job for someone’ ‘one who looks for job for person’

The behaviour of some of the fillers of the Other slot in the prospective construction is consistent with the view that the specifier of the aspectual phrase is a nominalized VP.

Another difference between the inland dialects and Anlo shows up with respect to serial verb constructions in which the first sub-event is in the prospective. In Anlo and generally in pan-Ewe dialects, the second sub-event is marked for the potential. In the inland dialects however, it is also possible to form a complex predicate, as it were, from the two subevents and the complex predicate then occurs within the scope of the single prospective marker. Consider the following examples:

- (41) a. *É-le nú ɔ́ gé á-ɔ́* (Anlo / Standard)
 3SG-be.at:PRES thing cook PROSP POT-eat
 ‘S/he is going to cook and eat.’
 b. *É-le nú ɔ́ ɔ́ gbé* (Inland)
 3SG-be.at:PRES thing cook eat PROSP
 ‘S/he is going to cook and eat.’

The pattern in example (41b) can be seen as an instance of the Other constituent coming within the scope of the prospective and which again follows the pattern of VP nominalization where the Other is appended after the verb. It appears that because the nominal output is a stem rather than a grammatical word, the first verb is not reduplicated. The pattern of nominalizing a sequence of VPs of this kind is to form a gerund of the first VP and adjoin the second VP to it (see e.g. Ofori 2002). Thus from *ɔ́ nú ɔ́* ‘cook thing eat’ what we would get is *nú-ɔ́-ɔ́-ɔ́* ‘thing-RED-cook-eat’, i.e. cooking to eat.

In sum, the Ewe dialects vary with respect to the instantiation of the progressive and prospective aspect constructions. The details of the variation conform in broad outline with the analysis proposed in this study. In particular, the variation sheds light on the fact that the predicators in second position in these constructions are verbs and that the aspectual phrase contains a nominalized VP (or in some cases sequence of VPs) headed by the aspect markers. The

inland dialects in which some fillers of the Other slot in the construction occur within the scope of the prospective are similar to languages like Dangme and also Gungbe where elements like second complements and adverbials occur within the scope of the aspectual phrase. We turn in the next section to a comparison of similar aspectual constructions in other Gbe varieties.

3.6 *Comparative Gbe grammar of progressive and prospective constructions*

There is some variation among the various Gbe dialects as well with respect to the progressive and prospective constructions (see Kluge 2000 appendix). Unlike the Ewe dialects however, many of the major dialect clusters have alternative constructions for expressing the same aspectual notions. These are briefly outlined for each cluster in an East to West direction starting from Gungbe, Fongbe, Ajangbe to Gengbe.

Aboh (1998) distinguishes three structures for Gungbe: a progressive, a prospective and a *gbé* –purpose structure. He adopts a traditional analysis where the progressive is expressed by a bipartite morpheme “one of which occurs in a preverbal position [i.e. *tò* ‘Imperf’ FKA&MEKD] while the other is realised in a postverbal position [as a floating low tone FKA&MEKD]” (Aboh 1998: 57). Furthermore, according to Aboh, the object immediately precedes the verb giving rise to the surface word order S *tò* OV, as in (42).

- (42) *dàwé lɔ̀ tò ní ɔ̀̀*
 man DEF Imperf thing eat:PROG
 ‘The man is eating.’

While the progressive morpheme is realised as a low tone in Gungbe it is realised as a high tone in the inland dialects of Ewe. Like in the inland Ewe dialects some elements that belong to the Other category such as some reduplicated items that translate as adverbs and which could be ideophonic may occur in the preverbal position in the progressive construction. For example:

- (43) *Asíbà tò dèdè zò̀̀*⁸
 NAME Imperf slowly walk
 ‘Asiba is walking slowly.’

Like other Gbe dialects, “a Gungbe verb must double when it is not immediately preceded by a preposed internal argument” (Aboh 1998: 186), as illustrated in (44).

- (44) *sin lɔ̀ tò si-sà̀̀*
 waterDEF Imperf RED-pour:PROG
 ‘The water is pouring.’

Interestingly enough, in Gungbe, different from Ewe, a clitic object pronoun always follows the eventive verb in these constructions and in such contexts the eventive verb must be reduplicated and the tonal morpheme gets anchored to the clitic.

- (45) *Asiba tò din-din wè`*
 NAME Imperf RED-search 2SG:PROG
 ‘Asiba is looking for you.’

Moreover some speakers extend this strategy to cases where an NP object occurs post-verbally, as illustrated in (46).

- (46) *Asiba tò din-din wémà ló*
 NAME Imperf RED-search book DEF:PROG
 ‘Asiba is looking for the book.’

Whichever way one would like to analyse the structures involving the reduplicated verbs it is clear that they do not conform to an OV structure; rather, they point to the nominalization of the event functioning as a complement of the predicate in second position.

The prospective in Gungbe is parasitic on the progressive structure in the sense that it involves the same markers plus a distinctive preverb marker *na* ‘PROSP’. This marker occurs immediately before the eventive verb and blocks verb doubling in the contexts outlined above for the progressive. Thus the prospective counterparts of the sentences in (43, 44) cannot contain reduplicated verbs as shown in (47a-c)

- (47) a. *sìn ló tò na (*si-)sà`*
 water DEF imperf PROSP RED-pour:LTS
 ‘The water is about to pour.’
 b. *Asiba tò na dín wè`*
 NAME imperf PROSP search 2SG:LTS
 ‘Asiba is about to look for you.’
 c. *Asiba tò na dín wémà ló*
 NAME imperf PROSP search book DEF:LTS
 ‘Asiba is about to look for the book.’

Significantly, the object can occur preverbally, however it must occur before the prospective marker, as in (48).

- (48) *Asiba tò wémà ló na dín*
 NAME imperf book DEF PROSP search:LTS
 ‘Asiba is about to look for the book.’

The position of the prospective *na* marker seems to be fixed with respect to the eventive verb and nothing can intervene between them.

Unlike the Ewe prospective, the Gungbe prospective is used to express imminence of a situation only. A motion-cum-purpose function that the Ewe prospective construction has is expressed by a different structure, which Aboh describes as a *gbé* purpose clause. The marker of this structure is cognate with the marker of the prospective in Ewe. Aboh (1998) describes the *gbé* clauses as a kind of serial verb construction, noting that they involve two different verbs “instead of an aspect marker [e.g. *tò* ‘imperf’; *nà* ‘PROSP’ FKA&MEKD] and a verb as seen in the imperfective [i.e. progressive and prospective FKA&MEKD] sentences. In *gbé* clauses, the complex including the second verb, ... behaves on a par with the complement of *tò* in imperfective/prospective sentences, while V1 is similar to the imperfective marker *tò* with which it appears to share the same position” (Aboh 1998: 189). Just like in the Ewe motion-cum-purpose sub-construction of the prospective, the predicates in second clause position in the Gungbe construction are a closed class of deictic motion verbs, namely, *yi* ‘go’, *wá* ‘come’, *já* ‘about to come’ and combinations of these: *wá-yi* ‘to pass’ and *jé-yi* ‘on the point of going’. In the *gbé* clauses also the eventive verb can be reduplicated when the object is a pronominal, as in (49), or when it does not occur preposed to the verb.

- (49) *Asibá yi dín-dín mi gbé*
 NAME go RED-search 1SG purpose
 ‘Asiba went to look for me.’

The prospective *na* can occur in the *gbé* clauses too and nothing can intervene between it and the eventive verb, as illustrated in (50).

- (50) *Asibá wá hwévinà xò gbé*
 NAME come fish PROSP buy purpose
 ‘Asiba came to buy fish.’

One difference between the *gbé* clauses and the imperfective/prospective is that an object cannot occur postverbally in the former after a reduplicated verb, as the ungrammatical sentence in (51) shows.

- (51) **Asibá wá nà xò-xò hwéví gbé*
 NAME come PROSP RED-buy fish purpose

The Gungbe phenomena are consistent with the analysis proposed for Ewe. Even though Aboh does not commit himself to analysing *tò* ‘imperf’, the predicate that occurs in second position in the progressive construction, as a verb, he admits that it fills the same paradigmatic slot as the verbs in the *gbé* purpose clauses. As such one could extend the verb analysis to the ‘imperfective’

marker too, in our opinion. In addition, the reduplication of the eventive verbs in some contexts resonates with the nominalized VP functioning as the complement of a verb. Moreover, the fact that the internal argument of the eventive verb can surface after it, speaks against an SOV order analysis of the progressive and prospective constructions.

The Fongbe facts are very similar to those of Gungbe (see Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002 Chapter 5 for a detailed description). Lefebvre et al. present an analysis which agrees in many respects with the position we have adopted. They argue that the predicate in the second position is a verb and that the aspectual marker selects a nominalized VP. As they put it, ‘the imperfective aspect is expressed by a periphrastic expression involving *dɔ̀* ‘to be at’ and the form *wɛ̀*. The lexical item *dɔ̀* selects a complement headed by *wɛ̀*, glossed as POST ... , *wɛ̀* selects a nominalized VP.’ (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 95)

Both Ajagbe and Gengbe have alternative structures for expressing the progressive and prospective meanings. For Ajagbe, Fiedler (1996) observes that a sentence in the progressive may have one of two orders.⁹ She represents one structure as: Subject – *le* (PROG)-Expansion-(Nominalized) Verb-*kɔ* (PROG).

This structure is illustrated in (52).

- (52) *me le sùklú-yi kɔ*
 1SG COP(LOC) school-go near
 PROG PROG
 ‘I am going to school.’

As is discernible from the glosses, Fiedler adopts a traditional analysis similar to Aboh’s where there are two forms that mark the progressive, the *le* form which she incidentally analyses as a locative copula and a form *kɔ* ‘near’, which looks suspiciously like a postposition. Notice that the Ajagbe *le* is cognate with the locative verb *le* ‘be.at’ in Ewe. An important point of convergence is that Fiedler also considers the eventive constituent as a nominalized verb, perhaps more accurately, a nominalized VP. In Ajagbe also this nominalized VP is selected by the progressive marker. Like in other Gbe varieties the whole aspectual phrase can be fronted for focus as in (53).

- (53) *sùklú-yi kɔ me le*
 school-go near 1SG COP(LOC)
 PROG PROG
 ‘SCHOOL GOING I am.’

The second structure for the progressive in Ajagbe has the following constituent order:

Subject-(Nominalized) Verb - *kɔ* (PROG) –Expansion.

In this structure, the final progressive marker seems to function as a post verbal marker on the verb. Fiedler suggests that the verb in this case is nominalized but there does not seem to be any formal indication of this. Even if it is nominalized, the constituent is the predicate in the clause. In that sense it is a regular SVO structure with a marker on the verb. An example of this second structure is (54a).

- (54) a. *me yi kɔ sùklú*
 1SG go PROG school
 ‘I am going to school.’

It seems that when the predicate in the above structure is focused it reveals that *yi* ‘go’ is the verb in the sentence. The predicate focus involves the formation of a nominal by the permutation of the verb plus complement and placing this in the focus position. The verb marked for the progressive is retained in the rest of the clause as in (54b).

- b. *sùklu- yi ní yi kɔ*
 school-go 1SG go PROG
 ‘SCHOOL I am going to.’

The Ajagbe facts can be straightforwardly analysed along the lines presented for Ewe. Moreover, the Ajagbe facts indicate that the progressive can be expressed by alternate structures with basic SVO order.

Gen also has two structures for the progressive. The more common structure has an S Aux V (O) Other constituent order. The Aux is filled by a form derived from the locative *be.at* verb plus a high tone progressive marker. The Aux is followed by the verb plus complement, if any as in (55a, b).

- (55) a. *Mu lèé ɔɔ nú*
 1SG Imperf eat thing
 ‘I am eating.’
 b. *Mu lèé dzó*
 1SG Imperf leave
 ‘I am leaving.’

In fact, the auxiliary slot is also filled by a potential marker followed by a verb and its complement, if any. This suggests that there is a clear auxiliary which takes a VP complement in the language, be it for the progressive or the potential:

- (56) a. *mu làá ɔɔ nú*
 1SG POT eat thing
 ‘Je mangerai.’ (Bole-Richard 1983: 313)

The second structure is that of the widespread Subject-Verb-AspP-Other. In this construction, the aspect phrase is headed by the aspectual particle \mathfrak{a} . The features of this are the same as those that we have seen for the Ewe constructions: the eventive verb and its internal argument are nominalized by permutation and is selected by the \mathfrak{a} particle as illustrated in example (56b).

- b. *mu le nú ði a*
 1SG be.at:PRES thing eat PRT
 'I am eating.'

In sum, evidence from Ewe and other Gbe languages shows that the progressive and prospective structures employ a structure which is consistent with an S Pre-verb (i.e. Aux) Verb Complement Other structure. This family of constructions does not call for the postulation of an alternative constituent order to the basic SVO order of the languages. Rather, from the perspective of a constructional approach to grammar, the progressive and prospective constructions form part of the arsenal of constructions that is stored in the mind, together with their specific properties including the operator morphemes and their order as well as their semantics. Speakers choose them to talk about situations just as they select simple lexical items to describe situations depending on the perspective they assume.

4 Dangme¹⁰

Our main concern in this section is to describe the imperfective construction in Dangme in a manner revealing of the syntactic and semantic relations between this construction and other verb constructions in the language, and of relations between the construction in Dangme and in other Kwa languages.¹¹ We shall of course compare it to the apparently similar Ewe construction, but it is also desirable that the analysis provide insight into the nature of divergence from related and neighbouring languages that do not have this construction, particularly Dangme's very close relative Ga.

In order to achieve the descriptive goals, however, a number of problems must be faced. We have claimed that the construction consists of a finite verb plus its complement, which in turn consists of the verb that actually denotes the event in a non-finite form. This non-finite verb has a special suffix and is preceded by its object. Object-Verb+Suffix is also the form of nominalization of a VP in this language. As for Ewe, we will need to investigate whether the complement construction in Dangme can be characterized as a nominalized VP, as claimed by Heine and Claudi (2001).

A related question is whether the construction is in any sense, semantic or syntactic, a locative construction. In Dangme, the Aspect marker following the

Complement verb is clearly a suffix, and this suffix occurs in no other context; what semantic feature is to be attributed to it, and what features should be attributed to the finite verb, or even to the construction itself?

Since the grammar and semantics of the construction must be determined in relation to the other finite verb forms of the language, we first give an overview of the verb system, before proceeding to the imperfective construction itself.

4.1 *The Dangme Finite Verb*¹²

Like Ga (see Dakubu elsewhere in this volume), Dangme has more positive verb forms than negative, and modality marking presents analytical problems. Despite numerous important differences between the two languages, it is useful in Dangme, as in Ga, to distinguish the grammatical paradigm that qualifies the verb from a grammaticized serial construction, headed by a free verb, in which elements that lie somewhere on a cline between free verb and particle contribute additional features and may themselves be marked by the grammatical paradigm. We discuss the paradigm first, and then the grammaticized serial construction.

4.1.1 *The Grammatical Paradigm*¹³

The Dangme verb paradigm is relatively simple, although more elaborate than what is found in Ewe. A verb can be marked for one (only) of five features, demonstrated in (58).

(57)	Perfective	<i>Nà lá</i>	‘Na sang’
	Habitual	<i>Nà lá-á</i>	‘Na sings’
	Negative	<i>Nà lá wē</i>	‘Na did not / does not sing/ is not singing’
	Subjunctive	<i>Nà á lá</i>	‘Na is to sing, would sing’
	Absolute	<i>lá</i>	‘sing!’

We now discuss each form in turn.

a. Perfective: This form out of context is usually translated as a simple past. There is no doubt that it is fundamentally not a tense, but an aspect in which the event is treated as an unexamined whole. A Perfective form is concrete, actual, realis, but implies nothing whatever about the event’s inner structure, except that in the absence of adverbial or grammatical specification it is usually to be interpreted as a singular, completed event. Morphologically it is completely unmarked, so that it seems to be unmarked both grammatically and semantically.

With some verbs the Perfective is stative, with the implication that a process of change of state has been completed, thus:

(58)	<i>ì p̀̀</i>	‘I got wet, am wet’, compare	<i>ì b̄</i>	‘I came’.
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In the sentence of (61), taken from a written text, the first three verbs are clearly Habitual, but the last two are ambiguous, and only assumed to be Habitual rather than Recurrent because they continue a series of related sub-events, and there is no change in the narrative viewpoint.

- (61) (a) *bā hé-ɔ̄ ɲɔ̄ wō-ɔ̄ kotoku-hi a-mi kē*
 (3PL)come buy-HAB take put-HAB sack-PL ASSOC-in move
wō-ɔ̄ mele kē kwɔ̄-ɔ̄ wo kē yà-á ma
 put-HAB steamer move climb-HAB sea move go-HAB town
kpa-hi a-nɔ̄.
 several-PL ASSOC-LOC
 ‘They come buy and put (it) in sacks (and) load (it) on a ship (and) take (it) overseas to various countries.’

The verbs in (62) could similarly be either Habitual or Recurrent, depending on whether or not the recurrence of the events is thought of as a regular rule. Given the discourse context, however, the verbs should probably be interpreted as in Habitual aspect.

- (62) *e sisi jí wà nà-á wɔ-ɔ-me sī ke a*
 3SG meaning is 1PL thank-HAB god-DEF-PL LOC PREP 3PL
mɔde ne à bɔ-ɔ̄
 effort COMP 3PL do-HAB
 ‘It means that we thank the gods for their efforts.’

Despite their phonological similarity and semantic proximity, these two suffixes do not have the same categorial status. They differ in the following ways:

It appears that with very few exceptions every verb has a Habitual form, but not every verb can occur in the Recurrent form, for example:

- (63) *dù* ‘bathe’ Habitual: *è dù-ɔ̄ e-he* ‘s/he bathes him/herself’ but:
 Recurrent: **è dù-ú e-he*

A verb can be Habitual or Subjunctive or Negative, but it cannot combine any two of these features. However a Recurrent verb can be marked as Subjunctive, indicated by the high tone on the pronoun in (64).

- (64) *e sa ne é gbè-é fufu*
 3SG suit COMP 3SG.SUB pound-REC fufu
 ‘He ought to pound fufu.’
 but **e sa ne é gbè-ɔ̄ fufu*
 3SG suit COMP 3SG.SUB pound-HAB fufu

Further, many Recurrent forms (not all) can be negated.

(65)			Negative:	
	Simple	<i>hě́</i>	‘support’	<i>hě́ wē</i> ‘not support’
	Recurrent	<i>hě́-ě́</i>	‘hold, carry’	<i>hě́-ě́ wē</i> ‘not hold’

As can be inferred from (65), Recurrent forms may be lexicalized to varying degrees, and their meanings may be more or less distant from the meaning of the root. (66) gives further examples of partly lexicalized Recurrent stems:

(66)	<i>sà</i>	‘suit, be suitable’	Recurrent: <i>sà-á</i>	‘prepare’
	<i>kpè</i>	‘meet’	<i>kpè-é</i>	‘help; marry a woman’
	<i>tsǎ́</i>	‘set out, set down’	<i>tsǎ́-ǎ́</i>	‘teach’

If a verb is nominalized, it does not preserve any of the features of the finite verb, including the Habitual, but most Recurrent forms can be nominalized, as in (67).

(67)	Simple Stem	Nominal	Recurrent Stem	Nominal
	<i>hě́</i>	<i>hě́-mī</i>	<i>hě́-ě́</i>	<i>hě́-ě́-mī</i>
	‘support’	‘supporting’	‘carry’	‘carrying’
	<i>gbè</i>	<i>gbè-mī</i>	<i>gbè-é</i>	<i>gbè-é-mī</i>
	‘hit’	‘hitting’	‘pound’	‘pounding’

We therefore conclude that the Recurrent morpheme is not a member of the grammatical paradigm, but a lexical extension suffix, part of the lexical stem.

Formally, therefore, despite its semantics, a verb whose stem carries only the Recurrent suffix is Perfective. The two underlined (serial) verbs in (68) agree in having formally Perfective aspect, although the second verb is Recurrent and the first is not. The apparently progressive semantics of the expression comes from the Recurrent form of the second verb.

(68)	<i>a</i>	<i>bā</i>	<u><i>wó</i></u>	<i>jukwě</i>	<i>ɔ</i>	<i>kē</i>	<u><i>yà-á</i></u>	<i>ɲa</i>	<i>nɔ</i>
	3PL	come	take	child	DEF	move	go-REC	bush	LOC
	‘They were taking the child to the bush.’								

This expression was followed in the spoken text by a purpose clause in Subjunctive form (to be discussed below), *kó né á yá gbè è* ‘to kill her’. The next sentence began in a topicalized clause with the same Recurrent verb as the previous sentence. It is given in (69):

(69)	<i>nē</i>	<i>a</i>	<u><i>yà-á</i></u>	<i>hluu</i>	<i>keke</i>	<i>le...</i>
	LINK	3PL	go-REC	long	then	TOP...
	‘as they were going along for a time, ...’					

The main event of the sentence was expressed following this clause with Perfective (non-Recurrent) verbs. It thus appears that a verb with the Recurrent

(not the Habitual) suffix may, as in these expressions, correspond in usage to an English progressive, despite its formal character as Perfect.

c. Negative: Dangme employs several syntactic strategies for negation, depending on the modal structure of the verb. A single paradigmatic form negates the declarative Perfective and Habitual forms. That is to say, the contrast between these realis forms is not maintained in the negative. The irrealis forms, that is, all the forms marked as Subjunctive or Absolute, are negated using different strategies, which are discussed in the next section.

The phonological form of the realis negative depends on the tone class of the verb: if it has a final Low, the stem vowel is raised, there is a suffix consisting of a high vowel, and the whole has High tone. If the stem has final High tone, the tone does not change and a particle *we* either follows the verb, in the Krobo dialect, where it could be regarded as a suffix, or is placed at the end of the clause as a sentential adverbial, in the Ada dialect. Final mid tone verbs follow the pattern of High tone verbs (Krobo dialect), or of Low tone verbs (Ada dialect).

(70)		Negative
	High <i>lá</i> ‘sing’	<i>lá wē</i>
	Low <i>dò</i> ‘dance’	<i>dú-í</i>
	Mid <i>dū</i> ‘bathe’	<i>dú wē</i> (Krobo) <i>dú-í</i> (Ada)

Other dialects follow either Ada or Krobo, with some individual variants (see Dakubu 1987: 68-71 for details). It seems quite likely that these complementary negation strategies are of different origins.

d. Subjunctive: The Subjunctive marker, signifying non-actual, irrealis modality, is expressed by a prefixed High tone. The details of its phonological realization depend on the syntactic status of what precedes it, and secondarily on the tonal environment. That is, the syntactic juncture between the verb expression and a phrase that is not part of the verb is phonologically marked. If the subject is one of the pronouns that behave as a component of the verb expression, i.e. a pronoun realized as a vowel, the prefix is realized as High tone of that vowel. The first person singular with the Subjunctive prefix is uniquely realized as *má*.

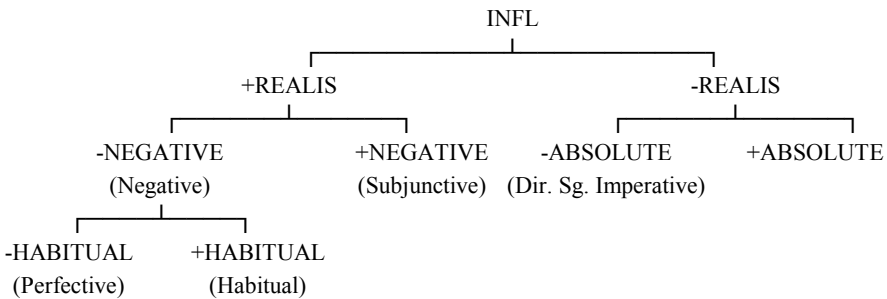
(71)	<i>ó bā</i> ‘you (sing.) should come’	<i>é bā</i>	‘s/he should come’
	<i>á bā</i> ‘they should come’	<i>má bā</i>	‘I should come’.

However, if the subject is an NP, or one of the nominal pronouns (a pronoun of shape CV) precedes the Subjunctive marker, the Subjunctive is expressed as High tone on a copy of the final vowel of the subject (or of anything not part of the VP, see (76b)). If either the final syllable of the subject or the

4.1.2 *The Grammaticized Serial Construction*

In addition to and in combination with the features listed above, a number of features are expressed by pre-verb items, most of which can be said to be grammaticized verbs on both grammatical and etymological grounds. That is, the pre-verbs are “dependent verbs” because they are part of a construction that is headed by another, “free”, verb, and grammaticized in the senses that their semantic content is limited to a very few features, perhaps only one, and that while the stems can be regarded as heads of morphological words, their grammatical paradigms are drastically reduced from that displayed in the previous

Diagram 1: The Simple Finite Verb in Dangme



section. Fundamentally, only the contrast realis/irrealis is expressed on non-head verbs. This grammaticized serial construction resembles the comparable structure in Ga (see Dakubu elsewhere in this volume), except that it is more elaborate.

Two degrees of grammaticized serial construction may be recognized. In a series headed by a free verb preceded by one or more dependent verbs, only the head can be marked for the paradigmatic features Habitual or Negative. If it is Subjunctive, the Subjunctive prefix of High tone is carried by the preceding item, and dependent verbs are also marked. However some series include a secondary head, *ma* or sometimes *ya*, *ko*, or *ke*, which heads its own series, although the free verb remains the overall head. We shall return to this after discussing the pre-verb items in the simpler series, in order of decreasing proximity to the head.

a. Deictic Verbs: The head of the verb construction can be immediately preceded by a verb of deixis, either *bā* ‘ventive’ or *yā* ‘itive’. They are evidently

Subjunctive:	<i>é</i>	<i>kó</i>	<i>bá</i>	<i>lá</i>
	3SG.SUBJV	CTR.SUBJV	VENT.SUBJV	sing
	‘May s/he not come sing!’			
	<i>Kofĩ</i>	<i>kó</i>	<i>tró</i>	<i>kětẽ</i>
	Kofi (SUBJV)	CTR.SUBJV	carry	basket
	‘Kofi is not to carry the basket!’			

If no subject is expressed, an expression including *ko* is interpreted as a singular negative direct imperative. If the subject is the second person plural pronoun, it may be interpreted as either a direct or an indirect plural negative imperative.

- (78) a. *tsá* *kó* *bā*
 EMPH (SUBJV) CTR.SUBJV come
 ‘Please do not come!’
- b. *nye é* *kó* *nù*
 2PL SUBJV CTR.SUBJV drink
 ‘Don’t drink!; you (pl.) must not drink.’

d. Adverbial Pre-Verbs: Three other pre-verbs are less central to the grammar and have the force of adverbials.¹⁸ These are *pá* ‘again’, which seems to be related to the free verb *kpàlé* ‘return, do again’, *pí* ‘for nothing, in vain’, which appears to be derived from the negative form of *pe* ‘surpass, exceed’ and reflects negatively on the value of the event, and *tsá*, which lends emphasis to requests or commands and is not obviously related to any verb. (*Pi* also functions as a negating particle, and may be preceded by *tsa*, this time with low tone (Dakubu 1987: 41)) Whether *pí*, which connotes negative affect, or *pá* comes first in the series seems to be indeterminate, but *tsá* always comes first if it is used. All three contribute single features, which we shall refer to as Pejorative, Repetition, and Emphasis. They may be marked as Subjunctive (that is, a preceding constituent of the phrase may receive non-lexical high tone if the head verb is Subjunctive). In (79), the head and the entire expression is Perfective.

- (79) *à pí pá kē bā há lè*
 3PL PEJ REP move VENT give 3SG
 ‘They brought it to him again for nothing.’

In (79) the pre-verbs appear in the unmarked order, but this order may be changed, according to what appears to be a pragmatic strategy of fronting an item for focus or topicalization:

1. The Counter-Factual verb *ko* is fronted to precede *pá* in the presence of Subjunctive marking, or if there is no expressed subject, i.e., in singular direct imperatives. This gives *ko* scope over the entire following expression.

- (80) è tsá kó pá ké bá
 3SG EMPH (SUBJV) CTR.SUBJV REP move SUBJV:VENT
 há le
 give 3SG
 ‘She should certainly not give (it) to him again!’

2. The Transitive verb *kē* may be fronted when its object is expressed. This can be overridden by fronting of *ko*, compare (80) above with the sentences in (81). The high tone of *ó* in (81a) marks *ke* as Subjunctive.

- (81) a. ó kē wɔ kó yà nane kpatami mi
 2SG.SUBJV move 1PL CTR.SUBJV go foot settling in
 ‘Do not let us go astray’ (‘Lead us not into temptation’)
 b. è sé ne yi ɔmē kē nyu ɔ kò
 3SG suit.NEG COMP women DEF-PL move water DEF CTR
 bā há le
 VENT give 3SG
 ‘The women ought not have brought him the water.’

The result of this operation seems to be that the object of *ke* is topicalized.

e: The Secondary Grammaticized Serial String. Three pre-verbs head sub-strings of their own:¹⁹ *mà*, etymologically related to the free verb *mà* ‘be in motion’, *yà* which like the deictic is related to the free verb *yà* ‘go’, and the Counter-Factual verb *kò* in one of its uses. Semantically, the first two express the feature [inchoative], and in combination with Subjunctive marking on the free verb they label an event as future. The difference between the two seems to be that *ya* implies that the event or the process leading into it has already been initiated, so that it might be considered to mark “proximate inchoation”, while with *ma* this is not so. The Inchoative verb itself is usually Perfective.

The construction is recognized as distinct from other grammaticalized serializations because of the tonal juncture that follows the sub-head. This position apparently represents a barrier to tonal assimilation. The tones of these verbs are not replaced by the Subjunctive high tone prefix, which instead is realized in the manner normal at a left boundary of a VP, i.e., between an NP subject and the verb, rather than between constituents of the verb construction. That is, the Subjunctive High tone prefix to the free verb or an intervening dependent verb is not marked as High tone of *ma* or *ya*, but as a copy of its vowel with High tone (unless the following tone is also High, in which case it is often not marked at all). Thus there is a contrast (besides the tone difference) between *yā* the Itive Deictic and *yà* the Inchoative, demonstrated in (82).

- (82) a. *wà yá yē jeha a*
 1PL (SUBJV) ITIVE.SUBJV eat year DEF
 ‘We are going to celebrate that year.’
- b. *nene wa yà á pèé nɔ ɔ...*
 REL 1PL INCHO SUBJV do LOC TOP
 ‘What we are about to do ...’

The same phenomenon distinguishes *ko* as an ordinary dependent or pre-verb (83a) from its occurrence as a secondary head, which is possible only in the absence of an expressed subject, and is interpreted as a direct singular negative imperative (83b).

- (83) a. *é kó nǔ̀*
 3SG.SUBJV CTR.SUBJV drink
 ‘S/he ought not to drink.’
- b. *kò ó nǔ̀*
 CTR SUBJV drink
 ‘Don’t drink!’

In (84a), the free verb is marked Subjunctive by the high tone on the Transitive verb *ke*, but since the Repetition verb has lexical high tone, neither it nor the Transitive verb is overtly marked Subjunctive. This is also true of (84b), where the Subjunctive marker before the head verb *ba* raises the normal Mid tone of the Definite marker, part of the object of *ke*, to a lowered High tone.²⁰

- (84) a. *kò pá kέ bā*
 CTR (SUBJV) REP(.SUBJV) move.SUBJV come
 ‘Don’t bring (it) again!’
- b. *kò pá kè kùsǐ !ó bā*
 CTR (SUBJV) REP move basket DEF.SUBJV come
 ‘Don’t bring the basket again!’

The scope of the Counter-Factual in this kind of construction includes some kinds of (non-grammaticalized) serial construction. In (85), *ko* heads a pre-verb string to the free verb *wo*, and apparently has scope over the serialized VP *ke ba* as well.

- (85) *kò pá wó kusii ɔ kέ bā*
 CTR (SUBJV) REP lift basket DEF move.SUBJV come
 ‘Don’t bring the basket again!’

Other pre-verbs never precede the Counter-Factual. An Inchoative can head a string that includes one or more of *pí*, *pá*, *kē*, or a deictic, but a pre-verb that occurs before the Inchoative cannot also occur after it, directly under the head,

i.e. any given pre-verb can occur only once in the whole. The sentences in (86) illustrate the inchoative construction with dependent verbs preceding the Inchoative verb.

- (86) a. *Na pi pá mà á yē nɔ*
 Na PEJ REP INCHO SUBJV eat thing
 ‘Na will eat again in vain.’
- b. *Na ké pa mà á yà*
 Na move.SUBJV REP INCHO SUBJV go
 ‘Na will take it again.’
- c. *mēni wǎ á kē ɲo ɔ yà á pèé*
 WH 1PL SUBJV move salt DEF INCHO SUBJV do
 ‘What are we going to do with the salt?’

In (87), the dependent verbs are shared between the Inchoative and the head verb.

- (87) a. *è pí mà yá há mi sika*
 3SG PEJ INCHO(SUBJV) ITIVE.SUBJV give 1SG money
 ‘S/He will go give me money in vain.’
- b. *Na pá yà á ké há mi*
 Na REP INCHO SUBJV move.SUBJV give 1SG
 ‘Na is going to give it to me again.’

Under most circumstances it makes little semantic difference whether a dependent verb is under the Inchoative or directly under the head verb. The two sentences in (88) mean the same thing, although they are presumably distinguishable on pragmatic grounds. Note that the Inchoative verb is marked Subjunctive in (88b), where the transitive verb immediately precedes it.

- (88) a. *à mà ké jè*
 3PL INCHO (SUBJV) move.SUBJV leave
- b. *a ké mà á jè*
 3PL move.SUBJV INCHO SUBJV leave
 ‘They will take it.’

Like other non-imperative constructions involving the Subjunctive, expressions with Inchoative verbs are not negated by either of the strategies described so far.

This concludes our description of the Dangme verb. The analysis presented is based on the principle that tonal variation in the components of the verb is to be treated as variation in the expression of paradigmatic features, and it must be admitted that not all details can yet be accounted for. For example, the sources of tone variation in the Repetition verb, and of some occurrences of High tone

before the Transitive verb, have yet to be determined. However we are satisfied that these problems have no bearing on the imperfective V - OBJ - V+SUFF construction, to which we now turn.

4.2 *The Periphrastic Imperfective Construction*

We are now in a position to discuss the periphrastic imperfective construction, in which a head verb takes a phrasal complement that expresses aspect, in the light of the inflected verb structure and the features it expresses. A typical example of this construction in Dangme is (89a), which may be compared to (89b). The latter is in the simple (non-periphrastic) Perfective form.

- (89) a. \dot{e} $\eta\bar{e}$ *tso* ɔ *he* $b\bar{o}l\bar{e}-\bar{e}$
 3SG be.at tree DEF LOC surround-SUFF
 ‘He is going around the tree.’
- b. \dot{e} $b\bar{o}l\bar{e}$ *tso* ɔ *he*
 3SG surround tree DEF LOC
 ‘He went around the tree.’

The following characteristics of sentences like (89a) are to be noted:

- (i) The position of the verb glossed ‘be.at’ in (89a), labelled AUX by Heine among others (as discussed in section 3) is filled by a member of a system of four finite verbs.²¹ This verb is the head of the construction.
- (ii) The position of $b\bar{o}l\bar{e}$ in (89a) can be filled by any verb that can occur in its position in (89b).
- (iii) The verb in the position of $b\bar{o}l\bar{e}$ in (89a), which we refer to as the “event verb”, is non-finite, and takes a suffix that is expressed according to dialect by vowel copy or *-e* or *-ye*, with mid tone.

4.2.1 *The Imperfective Head Verbs*

The four verbs that occur in the finite verb position are $\eta\bar{e}$, $h\bar{i}$, $h\bar{i}\bar{i}$, and $b\acute{e}$ or $b\acute{i}$. These verbs all occur as free verbs, but two of them, $\eta\bar{e}$ and $b\acute{e}$, are paradigmatically defective, and $b\acute{e}$ does not occur with pre-verbs. All normally take locative objects.

$\eta\bar{e}$ means ‘be at a place’ or ‘have’, depending on the role of its object. It occurs only in the Perfective form, that is, it is never Habitual, Negative, Subjunctive or Absolute, but it can occur with pre-verbs. In its locative sense it can be used intransitively, as (90c) shows.

- (90) a. \grave{a} $\eta\bar{e}$ *bo*
 3PL have cloth
 ‘They have cloth.’

- b. à ηē tsu ɔ mi
 3PL be.at room DEF LOC
 ‘They are in the room.’
- c. à bā ηē da
 3PL VENT be.at continually
 ‘They were (somewhere) continually.’

In the meaning ‘have’, ηē normally implies that the situation is in existence at the time of speaking, and is replaced by hĩē ‘hold, have in the hand’ if the expression is to be understood as referring to a past situation not continuing in the speaker’s present. In its locative sense it is used with both present and past time reference, as the examples in (91) demonstrate.

- (91) a. è ηē hiɔ
 3SG be.at here
 ‘She is here.’
- b. í ηē hiɔ be ne ē bā
 1SG be.at here time COMP 3SG come
 ‘I was here when he came.’
- c. è ηē hiɔ hĩē
 3SG be.at here yesterday
 ‘He was here yesterday (and probably is no longer).’
- d. Kofi ηē Somanya kē sá
 NAME be.at NAME PREP past.time
 ‘Kofi still lives in Somanya.’
- e. e ηē Somanya kē jè jehã ne be ɔ
 3SG be.at NAME move leave year DEM time DEF
 ‘He has lived in Somanya since last year.’

It seems that in either sense, the meaning of ηē is durative, implying a locative situation that began in the past, and that will be interpreted as continuing into the present unless a temporal adverbial specifies otherwise. The tone of the first person singular pronoun, see (91b), is significant. All pronouns normally have low tone in the Perfective, but the first singular uniquely has high tone in the Habitual and Negative. The fact that it has high tone with the formally Perfective ηē suggests that the feature Habitual is part of the lexical semantics of ηē, in both its senses.

A periphrastic expression with ηē as head verb means that an event has been initiated and is already or is about to be in progress. It does *not* mean that the event is in full swing: the simple Perfective is used for that, as the interpretations of the sentences in (92) show.

(92) Periphrastic:

be ne i bā, Kofi ηē kete tró-ē
 time DEM 1SG come Kofi. be.at basket carry-SUFF
 ‘When I came, Kofi was carrying the basket’, i.e. he was in the
 process of raising it to his head.

Simple:

be ne i bā, Kofi tró kusii ɔ
 time DEM 1SG come Kofi carry basket DEF
 ‘When I came, Kofi was carrying the basket’, i.e. he actually had it
 on his head.

When the goal of the event is added, its verb usually takes the Recurrent suffix, see *yà-á* in (93a), and the whole construction has future implications. Compare this to (93b), where the same sentence is in Perfective aspect and has present progressive meaning.

- (93) a. *Kofi ηē kete tró-ē*
 Kofi AUX basket carry-SUFF
ke yà-á ηmɔ ɔ nɔ
 TRANS go-REC farm DEF LOC
 ‘Kofi is going to (is about to) carry the basket to the farm.’
 b. *Kofi tró kete kē yà-á ηmɔ ɔ nɔ*
 Kofi carry basket TRANS go-REC farm DEF LOC
 ‘Kofi is (at this moment) carrying the basket to the farm.’

In contrast to both a simple Perfective and a simple Habitual, therefore, a periphrastic imperfective expression with *ηε* can be identified as Inceptive.

In serial constructions, both Habitual stem semantics and Perfective grammar seem to be reflected in the agreement possibilities. A serial construction with two *ηε* periphrastic expressions (both grammatically Perfective) is possible, as in (94a), but it is also possible for an ordinary simple Perfective verb to be followed by a *ηε* expression, as in (94b), which is not surprising if the latter is also grammatically Perfective. Note the occurrence of the Transitive pre-verb in the second VP of (94a, b). Alternatively, however, a series beginning with this construction can continue with a verb in the Habitual. In this construction, demonstrated in (94c), the Inceptive feature is particularly clear, since the first verb *be* ‘pass over, overflow’ initiates the event of fat pouring down.

- (94) a. *à ηē tohi gbè-ē kē ηē se ɔ-me hā-ā*
 3PL be.at goats kill-SUFF move.be.at stool DEF-PL give-SUFF
 ‘They are killing goats and giving them to the stools.’

- b. *alɔŋɔ wó kpã kē ŋē e kue wō-ō*
 hare take rope move.be.at 3SG neck put-SUFF
 ‘Hare took a rope and was putting it on his neck.’
- c. *è ŋē bè-ē pú-ó sī*
 3SG be.at pass-SUFF pour-HAB down
 ‘It is/was pouring out.’

On the basis of such examples and their occurrences in text, two uses of the construction can be distinguished. When related to a Perfective event, whether or not it is in a serial construction with it, a periphrastic imperfective with *ŋe* denotes immediacy, an action or situation initiated at the very time of the specified event. Thus in (94b), the implication is that hare had no sooner taken the rope than he was putting it on the other animal’s neck. Depending on the pragmatic strategy adopted, however, it may mean that no sooner was the event denoted by the periphrasis begun, than something else (had) happened. This is the case in (94c) and in (95), where a periphrastic expression (underlined) referring to an event that is viewed as having duration contextualizes a formally Perfective serial event.

- (95) *wεε ne à bā ŋē fià-ā pum, wεε*
 behold LINK 3PL VENT be.at strike-SUFF EXCL behold
ne à bā kē wetse nani kē fō sī
 LINK 3PL VENT take master spider move hit down
 ‘No sooner had they started wrestling than bam, they felled Mr. Spider’

It seems therefore that the periphrastic imperfective construction when used with this particular head verb combines a notion of duration with focus on the inception of the event. In some contexts, but by no means all, this may have a future implication.

bé: This verb (in some dialects *bí*) is the replacive negative of *ŋē* in both possessive and locative senses, and can be glossed as ‘be absent’. Like *ŋe*, *be* takes no paradigmatic markers, except that its high tone could be considered to represent the negation marker. It normally takes a locative object, although intransitive use is possible.

- (96) a. *noko bé mĩ*
 something absent inside
 ‘It is empty’, ‘nothing is in it.’
- b. *sika bé e dē*
 money absent 3SG hand.LOC
 ‘S/He has no money, does not have money.’

Contrary to what one might expect, a periphrastic construction with *be* does not negate the same construction with *ɲɛ*. The latter is negated by the NEGATIVE member of the paradigm, identically with the simple Perfective and the Habitual. The function of the periphrastic construction headed by *be* is to negate all Subjunctive verbs other than imperatives, which are negated with *ko* (see the preceding section). That is, it negates inchoatives (with *ma* or *ya*) and non-Counter-Factual conditions.

- (97) a. *è bí e lo eko nã-ã*
 3SG absent 3SG meat any get-SUFF
 ‘S/He would not get any of his meat.’
 b. *è bé sika a há-ã*
 3SG absent money DEF give-SUFF
 ‘S/He will not give the money.’

In serial constructions, a periphrastic construction with *be* is followed by a Subjunctive and therefore non-Negative verb, as in (98). Note that in this construction, *be* can occur with a pre-verb (and its object), depending on the argument structure of the complement verb.

- (98) a. *ò kē kpade ko bé kpē-ē ke*
 2SG move ghost DET absent meet-SUFF move.SUBJV
yá sù o si tomi he
 ITIVE.SUBJV reach 2SG downloading place
 ‘You won't meet any ghost before you reach your destination, you will reach your destination without meeting any ghost.’
 b. *(e na kãã) è bé nyé-ē mà á gbè*
 (3SG see LINK) 3SG absent able-SUFF INCHO SUBJV kill
le
 3SG
 ‘(S/He saw that) s/he would not be able to kill her.’

The lexically expressed NEGATIVE feature of the first, imperfective VP with *bé* therefore has scope over the entire series. It seems that this verb must also be considered inherently or lexically both Negative and Subjunctive, since even though the High tone prefix does not precede it, it requires Subjunctive agreement in the following VP. Thus both *ɲɛ* and *be* lexically express features that on other verbs require paradigmatic marking.

hĩ, hĩĩ hĩĩ is the Recurrent form of *hĩ*, ‘stay, remain, continue in a place’. They both take the normal range of paradigm features and dependent verbs. If one compares expressions that differ only in substituting *hĩ* for *ɲɛ* as the only verb, it appears that both signify duration, but that while the latter implies reference to a specified event time, *hĩ* is non-specific.

- (99) *ì hĩ Somanya* ‘I live, stay, in Somanya’
 è hĩ Somanya jeha ne be ɔ ‘S/He lived in Somanya last year’
 ì ηē hiɔ ‘I am/was here (at a specified moment)’

Although it evidently has durative meaning, at least as salient is the fact that *hĩ* has inchoative meaning. The sentence *è hĩ sĩ*, which includes the Locative object *sĩ* ‘down’, can mean either ‘s/he stayed, lived’, or ‘s/he sat down’. It would seem that basically, the verb means to have arrived at and therefore be at a location, and that the idea of getting into a particular posture at the location arises by default, that is, ‘sitting’ is assumed because none of lying, standing, squatting etc. is specified.

The Recurrent form also has inchoative as well as durative meaning. Compared to the Habitual form of the same verb (101c), it implies a contingently recurring situation, as opposed to an unqualified customary event or situation.

- (100) a. *è hĩ-ĩ hiɔ*
 3SG stay-REC here
 ‘S/Hhe lives here.’
 b. *è bā hĩ-ĩ huu*
 3SG VENT stay-REC long
 ‘S/He sat for a long time.’
 c. *è hĩ-ɔ hiɔ*
 3SG stay-HAB here
 ‘S/He customarily sits here, is here.’

As heads of imperfective constructions these two stems behave rather differently. *Hĩ* is usually Subjunctive, and is often preceded by the inchoative pre-verb *ma*. The combination of its inherent Habitual and Inchoative properties with the Subjunctive feature indicates that the event is proposed as having an extended time span that coincides with that of a proposed situation or another proposed event. The presence of *ma*, as in the first sentence in (101a), affirms that it will actually happen. In (101b), the first clause is future, with *ma* and the verb *hĩ* with Subjunctive marking, followed by a clause with the same verb, also with Subjunctive marking but without *ma*, heading an imperfective construction. This stem has been found occurring in the Perfective, but only in the presence of the Counter-Factual pre-verb, and therefore in a conditional expression, as in (101c).

- (101) a. *à mā yá hĩ duɔmi bēē-ē*
 3PL INCHO (SUBJV) ITIVE.SUBJV stay rubbish sweep-SUFF
 ‘They will be sweeping away rubbish.’

- b. *è mà á hĩ sĩ kone é hĩ ní*
 3SG INCHO SUBJV stay LOC LINK3SG.SUB stay things
hòó-ò há mɛ
 cook-SUFF give 3PL
 ‘S/He will/should stay to be cooking for them.’
- c. *è kò hĩ kětē ɔ tró-ē*
 3SG CTR stay basket DEF carry-SUFF
 ‘(If ... then) s/he would have continued to carry the basket, would have been carrying the basket’

If an imperfective expression with *hĩ* occurs in a serial construction, the other VP need not be periphrastic, but it must agree with it in paradigmatic form, as in (102), where both verbs are Subjunctive.

- (102) *a mà wó nine ké hĩ munyu*
 3PL INCHO (SUBJV) raise arm move.SUBJV stay language
tũ-ē
 express-SUFF
 ‘They will talk with their hands’; ‘raise their hands and be talking with them’

It seems that in the imperfective VP, focus on the moment of *inception* is contrasted with its temporally generalized *inchoation*, according to whether *ye* or *hĩ* is used at head position.

Use of *hĩĩ*, as might be expected, confirms recurrence of an event over a period of time. This period of time may be entirely in the past or extending into the future. In the imperfective construction this verb is invariably in the Perfective form.

- (103) a. *à hĩ-ĩ blɔ hĩá-ā*
 3PL stay-REC way remove-SUFF
 ‘(In those days) they traveled, used to travel.’
- b. *he né è hĩ-ĩ yà-ē ɔ hí*
 place REL 3SG stay-REC go-SUFF DEF good.NEG
 ‘Where he has been going isn't good.’

The contrast between the Perfective Recurrent verb in the imperfective construction and the Habitual aspect permits a subtle distinction in meaning between two versions of a sentence as in (104). Both versions have future implications, but the difference is not readily translatable into English. The Habitual version, (104a) specifies that the recurrent inception of the event is not contingent on the satisfaction of any external conditions on Kofi's carrying of the basket, that is, the first clause is a context, not a condition, whereas in (104b), our going to market is viewed as a condition on the recurrence of the event.

(104) a. Habitual:

ke wà yà-á jua nɔ, Kofi tró-ó kete
 if 1PL go-REC market LOC, Kofi carry-HAB basket
 'If we go to market, Kofi (by custom) carries the basket.'

b. Paratactic Recurrent:

ke wà yà-á jua nɔ, Kofi hĩ-ĩ kete tró-ē
 if 1PL go-REC market LOC, Kofi stay-REC basket carry-SUFF
 'Any time we go to market, Kofi carries the basket.'

Any future implications of *hĩĩ* are thus accounted for by its Recurrent feature, and balanced by its past implications. Like *hĩ* it can be said to focus on the inchoative phase of an event, but since it specifically confirms recurrences of that phase, at least some of its recurrences are presumed to be in the past.

These two verbs are negated according to their paradigmatic modality. Therefore, imperfective constructions with *hĩĩ* like those with *ɲe* are negated by the paradigmatic Negative, identically with other declaratives, the Perfectives and Habituals. A construction with *hĩ* in irrealis Subjunctive modality, on the other hand, is negated with a periphrastic construction employing *be*, if an Inchoative verb is present, or otherwise *ko* plus the Subjunctive. The array of Positive-Negative equivalencies is tabulated in (105).

(105) Type:	Aspect/Mood	Positive	Negative
Realis:	Perfective	<i>è tró kete</i>	<i>è tró wē kete</i>
	Peri. Perfective	<i>è ɲē kete tró-e</i>	<i>è tró wē kete</i>
	(Recurrent)	<i>è hĩ-ĩ kete tró- e</i>	<i>è tró wē kete</i>
	Habitual	<i>è tró-ó kete</i>	<i>è tró wē kete</i>
Irrealis: ²²	Future	<i>è mǎ á tró kete</i>	<i>è bé kete tró-ē</i>
	(Peri.)	<i>è mǎ á hĩ kete tró-ē</i>	<i>è bé kete tró-ē</i>
	Indir. Imperative	<i>é tró kete</i>	<i>é kó tró kete</i>
	(Peri.)	<i>é hĩ kete tró-ē</i>	<i>é kó tró kete</i>
	Dir. Imperative	<i>tró</i>	<i>kò ó tró</i>

Broadly, whether Inceptive, Inchoative or Negative Subjunctive, all four types of the periphrastic imperfective VP construction focus on the prospective occurrence of a durative event. This prospectivity can appear from a past or present point of view. Since Habitual aspect is part of the semantics of all four head verb stems, and Inceptive, Inchoative, Negative and Subjunctive are introduced by the choice of stem, and in the case of Subjunctive also by the grammatical marker, the feature [Prospective] can be attributed to the suffix that marks the non-finite verb. In this paper it will henceforth be glossed 'PROSP'.

Whether the same suffix can usefully be said to have locative implications seems doubtful, but it may be noted that local scholars have occasionally (not

in the current standardized orthography) spelled it *he*, as in, for example, *e ŋe nɔ yehe* ‘s/he is eating’. This is etymologically suggestive, since *hé* ‘place’ and *hè* ‘body, self’ are both used as Locative heads (Postpositions), but nobody seems to pronounce it that way.

4.2.2 *The Objects of the Prospective VP*

It has been remarked already that in a periphrastic construction, an object of the (non-finite) event verb precedes it. There seem to be no restrictions on the role of the object: it can be a Theme, like *ketɛ* ‘basket’ in (93), a Patient, like *tohi* ‘goats’ in (94a), or a locative Goal, like *e kue* ‘his neck’ (94b). If the complement verb is ditransitive, both objects precede it, in the same order as they follow it in non-periphrastic constructions, namely Goal (or Recipient) -Theme. This is quite different from the Ewe construction, where the second object may precede the aspect marker (in Inland dialects, see 38, 39 above), thus falling within its scope, but never precedes the verb itself.

- (106) a. *è tsɔ̃-ɔ̃ jukue ɔ-mɛ la*
 3SG set-REC child DEF-PL song
 ‘S/He taught the children a song.’
 Prospective:
è ŋɛ jukue ɔ-mɛ la tsɔ̃-ɛ
 3SG be.at child DEF-PL song teach-PROSP
 ‘S/He is teaching the children a song.’
- b. *è mà á há mi sika*
 3SG INCHO SUBJV give 1SG money
 ‘S/He will give me money.’
 Prospective:
è bé mi sika há-ã
 3SG absent 1SG money give-PROSP
 ‘S/He will not give me money.’

With some verbs, a Comitative object can appear, as object of the Transitive pre-verb. The same possibility exists in an imperfective expression. The pairs of sentences in (107) show a parallel semantic difference.

- (107) a. Goal:
è tũ mi munyu
 3SG spoke 1SG language
 ‘S/He spoke to me, advised me.’

Prospective:

è *ɲē mi munyu tū̄-ē*
 3SG be.at 1SG language speak-PROSP
 ‘S/He was advising me.’

b. Comitative:

è *kē mi tū̄ munyu*
 3SG move 1SG spoke language
 ‘S/He spoke with me.’

Prospective:

è *kē mi ɲē munyu tū̄-ē*
 3SG move 1SG be.at language speak-PROSP
 ‘S/He was talking to me.’

If there is an Instrumental object, it appears as object of the Transitive pre-verb, and the complement verb can be preceded by both a Goal and a Theme.

(108) Simple:

è *kē klama a tū̄ jiji ɔ munyu*
 3SG move machine DEF speak crowd DEF language
 ‘He addressed the crowd with the loud-speaker.’

Prospective:

è *kē klama a ɲē jiji ɔ munyu*
 3SG move machine DEF be.at crowd DEF language
tū̄-ē
 speak-PROSP

‘He was addressing the crowd with the loud-speaker.’

Some verbs must take a Locative object that is not a semantic Recipient but an abstract Goal. This kind of object also precedes its verb in the imperfective construction, as demonstrated by (109a, b). If there is both a Patient or Theme and a Locative of this type, the order in both simple and imperfective expressions is Patient/Theme - Locative. All adverbial expressions, however, remain outside the Complement (109c). Dangme therefore seems to be an exception to the claim that in this type of construction, only one Object, the direct Object, precedes its verb.

(109) a. Simple:

e púe sī
 3SG fall LOC
 ‘It fell (down).’

Prospective:

è ηē sī púe-ē
 3SG be.at LOC fall-SUFF
 ‘It was falling.’

b. Simple:

è bā le sī
 3SG come 3SG LOC
 ‘S/He lowered it.’

Prospective:

è ηē le sī bā-ē
 3SG be.at 3SG LOC come-SUFF
 ‘S/He is lowering it.’

c. Prospective with Adverbial Phrase:

à mà yá hĩ duomi bèé-ē
 3PL INCHO(SUBJV) IT.SUBJV stay rubbish sweep-PROSP
 ηé e hla mĩ
 PREP 3SG front LOC
 ‘They will be sweeping away rubbish in front of him.’

4.2.3 *The Categorical Status of the Complement VP*

In non-periphrastic verb expressions, Dangme is clearly an SVO language. The OV arrangement observed in the imperfective construction is typical in this language, as in many others, of constructions generally regarded as nominalizations. The question therefore arises, whether the construction is fundamentally a Locative VO structure. Note that in example (81a) we have a construction in which the head verb (*ya* ‘go’) is followed by a formally nominalized verb preceded by its Object and followed by a Locative particle, apparently conforming to Heine’s outline of the classic periphrastic imperfective structure, yet (81a) is not an instance of the Dangme imperfective construction.

We examine the problem of the syntactic status of the complement in the imperfective construction from two points of view: by comparing it with another, very similar structure, that has a demonstrably nominal character, and by considering whether and how it can be preposed to the clause for focus

Deverbal Nominals and Gerundives. The Dangme VP is commonly nominalized by preposing any objects, and adding the suffix *-mĩ*.²³ Objects precede the nominalized verb in the same order as they follow it.²⁴

(110) Finite:

ì kǎné womi ɔ
 1SG read book DEF
 ‘I read the book.’

Nominalization:

womi ɔ *kǎné-mĩ*
 book DEF read-NOM
 ‘reading the book’

Finite:

ì *hǎ́* *le* *womi* ɔ
 1SG give 3SG book DEF
 ‘I gave him the book.’

Nominalization:

le *womi* ɔ *hǎ́-mĩ*
 3SG book DEF give-NOM
 ‘giving him the book’

Apart from functioning as head of an NP, the Dangme noun has two fundamental grammatical characteristics: it can be pluralized, usually by suffixation of the plural morpheme *-hĩ*, and it must be preceded by the plural association morpheme *ā* if the NP it heads includes a plural possessor, as in (112).

(111)				Possessive	
	Singular	<i>gbé</i>	‘dog’	<i>gbé tsú</i>	‘dog’s house’
		<i>tsú</i>	‘house’	<i>gbé tsú-hĩ</i>	‘dog’s houses’
	Plural	<i>gbé-hĩ</i>	‘dogs’	<i>gbé-hĩ ā tsú</i>	‘dogs’ house’
		<i>tsú-hĩ</i>	‘houses’	<i>gbé-hĩ ā tsú-hĩ</i>	‘dogs’ houses’

On this basis, several constructions employing the *-mĩ* form can be distinguished, but not all turn out to be true nominalizations. In some contexts, particularly in subject position, the deverbal shows plural association with its plural object. Some such deverbals cannot be pluralized, but others can. In some cases, pluralization is more readily accepted if the NP is Definite, in which case the NP is pluralized by suffixing *-mε* to the Definite marker. On the other hand, some, like *nra-mi* ‘dream’, behave like ordinary abstract nouns, presumably in consequence of a diachronic process of lexicalization. Some of the possibilities are demonstrated in (112). They are quite different from what obtains in the complement of an imperfective prospective construction, where neither pluralization nor plural association marking is possible. It may also be noted that the non-finite prospective verb with its object cannot occur in subject position (compare (112a, g)).

(112) a. Plural Agreement:

womi-hĩ *a* *kǎné-mĩ* *hĩ*
 book-PL ASSOC read-NOM good
 ‘Reading books is good.’

- b. *e ji wɔ-hĩ a tsé-mĩ klama*
 3SG is god-PL ASSOC call-NOM Klama
 ‘It is Klama for calling the gods.’
- c. Plural Head:
womi kãné-mĩ ɔ-mɛ
 book read-NOM DEF-PL
 ‘the readings of a book’
- d. *womi kãné-mĩ-hĩ*
 book read-NOM-PL
 ‘readings of a book’
- e. *ni tsɔ̃ɔ̃-mĩ ɔ-mɛ*
 things teach-NOM DEF-PL
 ‘the teachings’
- f. *ni-tsɔ̃ɔ̃-mĩ-hĩ munomuno ɔ-mɛ*
 things-teach-NOM-PL different DEF-PL
 ‘the different lessons’
- g. *i nrā-mĩ-hĩ hĩ*
 1SG dream-NOM-PL good.NEG
 ‘my dreams are not good’
- h. *ì dé ɛ i nrā-mĩ-hĩ fuu*
 1SG say 3SG 1SG dream-NOM-PL plenty
 ‘I told him many of my dreams.’

A number of verbs, including among others *pɔ̃* ‘do frequently’, *hĩ* ‘be good, easy’, *bɔ̃nĩ* ‘begin’, *sũɔ̃* ‘like’, *sũjme* ‘dislike’, regularly take a complement consisting of a *-mi* form preceded by its objects. This construction resembles the periphrastic imperfective construction much more closely than those demonstrated in (112): the complement head cannot be pluralized, and Plural Association with its object is not marked. Expressions in (113) may be compared with those in (112). In (113i), Plural Association is marked, but between the Postposition *he* ‘self’, which is the head of the complement of *fɔ̃mi*, not *fɔ̃mi* itself, and its possessor.

- (113) a. *è hĩ pɔ̃-mĩ*
 3SG good.NEG cut-NOM
 ‘It was difficult to cross.’
- b. *è bɔ̃nĩ ɛ sĩ bā-mĩ*
 3SG begin 3SG LOC come-NOM
 ‘He began to lower it.’
- c. *è pɔ̃-ɔ wɔ-hĩ tsé-mĩ*
 3SG often-REC god-PL call-NOM
 ‘He often calls upon the gods.’

- d. *è pò-ó wɔ-hĩ a tsé-mĩ
3SG often-REC god-PL ASSOC call-NOM
- e. è sũõ womi-hĩ kãné-mĩ
3SG like book-PL read-NOM
'S/He likes to read books.'
- f. *è sũõ womi-hi a kãné-mĩ-hĩ
- g. à bónì yi ɔ-me gbè-mĩ
3PL begin women DEF-PL kill-NOM
'They began killing the women.'
- h. *à bónì yi ɔ-me ā gbè-mĩ-hĩ
- i. è sũõ ni-hĩ a he fɔ-mĩ
3SG like things-PL ASSOC LOC wash-NOM
'S/He likes to wash things.'

On the other hand, a form of this type in this construction can be headed by a Postposition, a property associated with NPs, and not possible in the prospective constructions. In (114a) the head of the complement of *bɔni* is the Postposition. In (114b), repeated here from (81a), the head of the complement of *ya* is the Postposition *mĩ*.

- (114) a. ì bónì nrā-mĩ nõ
1SG begin dream-NOM POST
'I began to dream.'
- b. ó kē wɔ kó yà nãne kpátã-mĩ
2SG.SUBJV move 1PL CTR.SUBJV go foot settle-NOM
mĩ
POST
'Do not let us go astray.'

It is clear that there is more than one construction in which an event verb takes the suffix *-mi* and is preceded by its objects. Overall, however, such constructions are rather more NP-like than the complement of a periphrastic prospective. If the *-mi* form is a gerundive, the form we have semantically labelled "prospective" may be grammatically labelled a participle.

Focus. In Dangme, an object can be put in focus by exporting it to a position preceding the subject. The focus marker *nē* (Krobo; *lē* in Ada) is optional. As the examples in (115) show, either object of a ditransitive verb may be preposed for this purpose, including Locative objects.

(115) Unmarked:

- a. è ŋò nyũ ɔ mā páipò ɔ nyã
3SG take water DEF put pipe DEF LOC
'S/He set the water by the pipe.'

Focus:

b. *nyũ ɔ̄ nē̄ è ɣ̄ɔ̄ mǎ páipò ɔ̄ nyǎ̄*
 waterDEF FOC 3SG take put pipe DEF LOC
 ‘It was the water (not the oil) that s/he put by the pipe.’

c. *páipò ɔ̄ nyǎ̄ nē̄ è ɣ̄ɔ̄ nyũ ɔ̄ mǎ̄*
 pipe DEF POST FOC 3SG take waterDEF put
 ‘It was by the pipe (not the house) that he put the water.’

Of the two constructions consisting of finite verb plus O-V complement that we have examined, the gerundive allows its object to be exported to focus position before the subject, or alternatively the entire complement can be exported.

(116) Unmarked:

a. *è sũ̄ɔ̄ womihi kǎné-mĩ̄*
 3SG like books read-NOM
 ‘He likes to read books.’

Focus: Object of Gerundive:

b. *womihĩ nē̄ è sũ̄ɔ̄ kǎné-mĩ̄*
 books FOC 3SG like read-NOM
 ‘It is books that he likes reading.’

Focus: Gerundive:

c. *womihĩ kǎné-mĩ̄ lē̄ è sũ̄ɔ̄*
 books read-NOM FOC 3SG like
 ‘It’s reading books that he likes.’

With the participial or prospective construction, however, only the first alternative is available. Whether the entire prospective phrase is to be interpreted as in focus or only its object can only be determined from the discourse context.

(117) Unmarked:

a. *è ɣ̄ē̄ womihĩ kǎné-ē̄*
 3SG be.at books read-SUFF
 ‘S/he is reading books.’

Focus:

- b. *womihi lē è ηē kâné-ē*
 books FOC 3SG be.at read-SUFF
 ‘It is books that he is reading; reading books is what he is doing.’
- c. **womihi kâné-ē lē e ηē*
 books read-SUFFFOC 3SG be.at

In this respect, therefore, the prospective together with its object does not behave like a nominalized VP constituent of a VP. We may note that this is not to be attributed to lexically based restrictions on focus of the complement of the finite verb, since the object of the same verb in its other functions can be focussed.

(118) Unmarked:

- a. *Kofi ηē sika*
 ‘Kofi has money’
- b. *Kofi ηē Somanya*
 ‘Kofi is at Somanya.’

Focus:

- c. *sika lē Kofi ηē*
 money FOC Kofi have
 It is money (not sense) that Kofi has.’
- d. *Somanya lē Kofi ηē*
 Somanya FOC Kofi be.at
 ‘Kofi is at Somanya (not Ada).’

We conclude that in view of the order difference and the non-finite nature of V, the OV complement of the VP in the Dangme prospective construction can be considered a nominalization of a kind, but it is not a noun phrase. The event verb is constrained to follow the head verb, a situation as suggestive of serial constructions as of V+Complement. We suggest that Object+Verb-SUFF is a syntactic type in this language with a categorial range that includes participials, gerundives, and true nominalizations.

All the head verbs characteristically take locative complements when they occur in other constructions, and the suffix to the complement or event verb characterizes the construction semantically as Prospective, thus directed at some temporal goal. In these highly metaphorical senses, then, the construction can be characterized as Locative. We also conclude that, while all the finite

verbs imply duration, neither “progressive” nor “stative” (Dakubu 1987) is a suitable label for the construction, since these labels miss the essential features of Inception and Inchoation. The conventional English translations tend to obscure the basic semantics, which combines putative duration with the feature [prospective].

5 Conclusions

In both Dangme and Ewe, we have demonstrated that the imperfective aspect construction is an elaboration of a Verb plus nominalized VP complement type of construction that exists in several guises and could hardly be said to be marginal or unusual in either language or indeed the languages of the area generally. In Ga there are verbs that regularly take a nominalized VP complement, for example:

- (119) *e-bɔi gbekeɓii ε bi-mɔ* (Ga)
 3SG-begin children DEF ask-NOM
 ‘He began asking the children.’

Even in the Comoe languages that do not have this type of construction, nominalizations in which the object precedes the nominalized verb exist. In Akan for example we have the following compound nouns derived from Verb-Object VPs (examples from Christaller 1965 [1864]):

- (120) N-V N-V N-V N-V
dwon-to agua-di aho-pe ade-nim
 song-utter trade-do self-love thing-know
 ‘singing’ ‘trading’ ‘self-love’ ‘knowledge’.

In Akan, however, Verb+Object is also frequently nominalized without changing order, so that for example *nim ade* ‘know thing’ can alternatively be nominalized as *nimdee* ‘knowledge’. This kind of nominalization is extremely rare in Dangme and Ga, although it is a regular process in Ewe (see example 30; cf. Duthie 1996, Ofori 2002).

Semantically what seems to be specific and constant to the construction is its combination of imperfective and inceptive/ inchoative/ prospective aspectual meanings, and a locative and/or existential head verb. In Dangme “progressive” meaning in the sense of ongoing realized action is not really applicable. In Ewe, however there is a distinct progressive construction. The “progressive” interpretation may thus not be available for the so-called OV structure in all the languages.

Also constant and characteristic is the morpho-syntax, in which a very small set of markers that select a nominalized event or verb phrase co-occurs with a small set of head verbs. In Ewe there are two post verb aspect markers (in most dialects) as opposed to just one in Dangme, and there are at least six head verbs in Ewe as opposed to four in Dangme. Ewe thus has a wider variety of types of the construction, carrying a wider range of semantic features. (Dangme by contrast has a more complex finite V word structure.)

A possibly more important difference between the two languages is that in Dangme but not in Ewe both objects, ie., both a Goal and a Theme, precede a ditransitive event verb. This seems to be fairly unusual, since most authors have claimed that only one object can precede the event verb in this type of construction. In all Ewe dialects only one object can occur together with the event verb within the scope of the Progressive marker. In Prospective constructions, however, two objects occur together with the event verb within the scope of the Prospective aspect marker, but only the Theme precedes the event verb. What is particularly remarkable is that in Ewe, unlike virtually all the Kwa languages for which we have good data, Goal and Theme occur in no fixed order, and in the Prospective either object may precede the event verb. These differences are demonstrated by examples (38) and (106-109), partially reproduced and expanded below for convenient comparison.

- (121) a. *é-le akɔ́nta fiá ɖevi-á-wó gbé* (Inland Ewe)
 3SG-be.at:PRES maths teach child-DEF-PL PROSP
 THEME GOAL
 ‘S/he is going to teach the children mathematics.’
- b. *é-le ɖevi-á-wó fiá akɔ́nta gbé* (Inland Ewe)
 3SG-be.at:PRES child-DEF-PL teach maths PROSP
 GOAL THEME
 ‘S/he is going to teach the children mathematics.’
- c. *è ɣē jukue ɔ-me la tsɔ̃-ē* (Dangme)
 3SG be.at child DEF-PL song teach-PROSP
 GOAL THEME
 ‘S/he is teaching the children a song.’
- d. **è ɣē la jukue ɔ-me tsɔ̃-ē* (Dangme)
 3SG be.at song child DEF-PL teach-PROSP
 THEME GOAL

In Ewe certain kinds of Prepositional Phrase expressing a Goal or a location can occur within the scope of the Prospective marker, although following the event verb. In Dangme, where nothing can intervene between the event verb and the Aspect marker, a Prepositional Phrase occurs outside the VP. The examples in (122) contain locative prepositional phrases. (122b) repeats (109c).

- (122) a. *amatsi-a le dɔ wa le é-ŋú gbé* (Inland)
 medicine-DEFbe.at:PRES work do LOC 3SG-side PROSP
 THEME LOCP
 ‘The medicine is going to work on him/her.’
- b. *à mà yá hĩ duɔmi bèé-ē* (Dangme)
 3PL INCHO(SUBJV) IT.SUBJV stay rubbish sweep-PROSP
ŋé e hla mĩ
 PREP 3SG front LOC
 ‘They will be sweeping away rubbish in front of him.’

A third difference concerns extractability of constituents for focus and its implications for categoriality. In both languages an object can be focussed by extraction to initial position. However the entire nominalized complement with its aspect marker can be extracted in Ewe only, not in Dangme. This is demonstrated in (33b, c) and (118), repeated below as (123).

- (123) a. Internal argument of eventive verb in Focus
- Ewe: *mɔlu yé Áma le ɔa-ɔa-m*
 rice aFOC name be.at:PRES RED-cook-PROG
 ‘RICE Ama is cooking.’
- Dangme: *womihi lē è ŋē kǎné-ē*
 books FOC 3SG be.at read-PROSP
 ‘It is books that he is reading;
reading books is what he is doing.’
- b. Aspectual Phrase in Focus
- Ewe: *mɔlu ɔa-m yé Áma le*
 rice cook-PROG aFOC NAME be.at:PRES
 ‘RICE COOKING Ama is’
- Dangme: **womihi kǎné-ē lē è ŋē*
 books read-PROSP FOC 3SG be.at

The situation suggests that while in Ewe the nominalized event aspect phrase is clearly a constituent of the VP, subcategorized for by the verb, the situation in Dangme is somewhat ambiguous. As indicated in the previous section, Dangme gerundive phrases can be focused as wholes, like associative NPs but unlike Prospective phrases, or the object can be extracted alone (116), while "normal" associative NPs must be extracted as wholes. The situation is reminiscent of what obtains with verbid expressions (Dakubu 2004), where the extractability of the object alone or with its verbid head depends on the particular verbid, resulting in ambiguity of categorization for the construction type in general.

Perhaps a major distinction needs to be made between languages like Dangme and Ewe which show no functional trace of a nominal class and concord system and those in which such systems are active. In such languages it becomes especially clear whether or not the complement of the first verb is a nominalization. In the instances known to us it takes a class concord affix. Tuwuli according to Stewart (1989) is more closely related to Ewe than to the Comoe (Tano) languages, but it has an active system of nominal prefixes. Harley (elsewhere in this volume) shows that that language has a comparable progressive construction, in which however a locative element follows the head verb, not the event verb. The following sentence is an adaptation of his example (86)

- (124) Tuwuli: *bɛ-la-mla awɛ ka-bɔa*
 3PL-be-LOC hands NOM-hit
 ‘They are clapping with their hands.’

Likpe, on the other hand, is classed in Stewart (1989) as relatively closely related to the Comoe (Tano) languages like Akan or Guang. It has a very similar construction, but apparently without a Locative marker of any sort. The following example is from Ameka (2002a:97):

- (125) Likpe: *ɔ-lɛ́ ka-mɔ́ bo-té*
 3SG-hold Pfx-rice NOM-sell
 ‘S/he is selling rice.’

In both Tuwuli and Likpe, the prefix that nominalizes the event verb is a nominal class prefix.

Very strikingly, however, the language with a construction that seems to fit Heine et al.’s schema best is Kaansa (Gan), a Gur (Grusi) language, described by Mieke (1998). Kaansa has an active class system, marked by suffixes. In this language the last morpheme in the nominalized verb itself is a Locative affix, and the complement of the head verb is not just a nominalization but an NP, as shown by the fact that in (126) below, the object and the nominalized verb are in associative (‘genetive’) relationship. The examples are from Mieke (1998), with glosses and translations translated and adapted by the authors. The item glossed NOM is a nominal class suffix.

- (126) Kaansa: *a mi ma ú-bosoʔ-m-o*
 1SG be 3SG-care.for-NOM-LOC
 ‘I look after him.’
yirera ma ú-khɪ-gɪ wá dǎfi-m-ɔ
 smith be 3SG-iron-SG GEN forge-NOM-LOC
 ‘The smith is engaged in forging his iron.’

On a broad typological scale, therefore, the complement of the head verb is a nominalization of a VP, but whether or not this nominalization is an NP is highly variable.

Perhaps the solution to the Locativity question is that typologically it is usually present, but its expression cannot be located on any particular constituent. In Dangme, Ewe and Likpe it is a semantic feature of the head verb. In Tuwuli it surfaces as a clitic to the head verb. In Kaansa, on the other hand, it is represented by a suffix or particle that follows the event verb.

Finally, we observe that while it is possible that Likpe may have developed the construction under influence from Ewe, the dominant lingua franca in the area (Ameka 2002a) we have found no reason to think that Ewe or Dangme has developed the construction under the influence of the other. The differences between the two languages are such that we must assume that diachronically speaking they are the result of internal developments within each language.

Endnotes

¹ In Dakubu (1987) this form is termed the “Potential”. Although this is not an unsuitable term language-internally, we have changed it here because Ewe distinguishes the Subjunctive from the Potential, and the Dangme form is semantically more similar to the former, although in some respects it combines the two. The Dangme form is also clearly cognate with the Ga Subjunctive.

² The forms in (1) are from the standard colloquial dialect. There is variation across dialects, especially with respect to the expression of the forms in (1b) and (1c) which we shall return to. The variation can be reduced to the coastal or southern vs. inland or *Ewedomegbe* (see Atakpa 1997 and Ansre 2000 on these dialects respectively; see also Kluge 2000). For instance, the realization of the progressive and the prospective morphemes is the same in the southern and the standard. In the inland dialects, however, the progressive morpheme is realized as a high tone without the ‘m’, while the prospective is *gbé*.

³ (Heine 1994: 268) summarizes the evolution of the progressive construction in Ewe thus:

Stage I	*le Verb-	Verb- me	
II	*le Verb-	Verb- mé	
III	le Verb-	Verb- mí	intransitive verbs
	le	Verb- mí	transitive verbs
IV		Verb- mí	optional form for both intransitive and transitive verbs

... in its initial stage (I) the progressive clearly forms a phrase level construction, whereas Stage IV is clearly a word-level phenomenon, since progressive marking has been reduced to a verbal suffix.

⁴ For example, Warburton et al. (1968: 171) note that “In the ingressive (i.e. intentional) [i.e. prospective FKA&MEKD] /le/ may be replaced by a verb of motion such as /va/, /gbɔ/ ‘to come’, /yi/ ‘to go’”. Similarly Rongier et al. (1990:112) say that “L’intentionnel est marqué par

le nom locatif 'gé'. Le verbe locatif est variable. Les plus fréquents sont 'lè', 'nò', 'yi' [...], 'dè' (aller) et 'gbóna' (revenir)".

⁵ One can paraphrase the imminent prospective construction using simple terms in the spirit of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) espoused by Anna Wierzbicka and her colleagues as follows (see e.g. Wierzbicka 1988, Goddard 1998 and see Ameka 1991 for justification):

at time *t* one can think this:
 not much more time after now, X happens
 because someone wants it

⁶ It has been suggested that the prospective developed out of the nominalizing suffix *gbé* (Heine and Reh 1984). If this suggestion is correct then the purposive sense of the prospective marker should not be too surprising.

⁷ The preposition *le* 'LOC' which is in heterosemic relation to the present locative verb also tends to be elided very often in Anlo, more than in the inland dialects. However when it is stranded, i.e. the complement is focused it must be overtly realised.

E.g. *É-kpɔ́e* (le) *afě-á* *me*
 3SG-see-3SG LOC house-DEF containing.region
 'He saw her in the house.'
Afě-á *me-é* *wò-kpɔ́e* *le*
 house-DEF containing.region-aFOC 3SG-see-3SG LOC
 'IN THE HOUSE he saw her at.'

⁸ In the orthography of non-Ewe Gbe varieties, a nasalised vowel is represented by the vowel followed by "n". In Ewe orthography nasalisation is indicated by a tilde.

⁹ The French glosses of the Ajagbe sentences as well as the schematic representation of constituent order representations given by Fiedler have been translated into English. Her terminology in the glosses has been maintained.

¹⁰ We profoundly thank Gloria Akutu Vondee and Samuel Odonkor for their indispensable contributions to the preparation of this part of the paper on Dangme.

¹¹ This construction was called the "modal construction" in Dakubu (1987). In view of other linguistic uses of "modal", choice of this term was unfortunate, and it is abandoned in this paper.

¹² This section develops (with extensive revisions) an approach first presented in a paper to the Linguistics Association of Ghana by Dakubu in January 1999. Most of the ground is also covered in Dakubu (1987), but in a less systematic manner.

¹³ Dangme has three contrastive tones, High Mid and Low, although the Mid-Low contrast is neutralized in many contexts, especially in the Ada dialect (see Dakubu 1974; 1986). In this paper they are transcribed with the acute accent for High tone *ú*, the grave accent for Low tone *̀*, and the bar, *̄*, for Mid tone. Only underlying tones, not surface tones (which are more likely to vary with dialect) are marked, and only verb forms (including subject pronouns) are tone marked, except occasionally when the tones of other forms are relevant to the discussion.

¹⁴ In Dakubu (1987: 63) the distinction was not recognized, so that the description there of the Habitual suffix on Low tone stems is wrong.

¹⁵ Klama is the body of Dangme religious lore and poetry, see Huber 1963.

¹⁶ Strictly speaking, therefore, and in conformity with our treatment of negation in Ga, the High tone of negation is the morpheme of negation proper, distinct from the particle or suffix with vowel change, which perhaps signify Realis modality.

¹⁷ Brackets around the label (SUBJV) indicate that its expression is neutralized by the tonal context (i.e., occurrence before a High tone).

¹⁸ Unlike those discussed above, these pre-verb items do not correspond to anything in the Ga grammaticized serial construction. However they are reminiscent of the verb construction in several Central Gur languages, which incorporates various kinds of adverbials, usually at the beginning of the phrase.

¹⁹ Possibly four: it seems that *kɛ* sometimes heads such a string, but this has yet to be properly investigated.

²⁰ This phenomenon has been observed in the Ada dialect.

²¹ This is the item termed “modal verb” in Dakubu (1987), see note 11.

²² The distinction between the two kinds of irrealis expression evidently corresponds to the two values of the feature VOLITIONAL in Ga, although its expression, especially as reflected in negation, is quite different.

²³ This morpheme is at least as likely as the Prospective suffix to be locative in origin, since it is homophonous with the locative noun meaning “inside”. On the other hand, these resemblances may be purely fortuitous.

²⁴ This is not the only form of nominalization in Dangme (see Dakubu 1987: 89), but it is the most productive and the form most relevant to our topic.

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