

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

TENSES IN MASIKORO

BY
CLOVIS REMBOHONY

*A Linguistic Project Submitted To The Graduate School
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Translation Studies*

JULY, 2008

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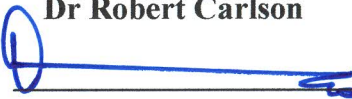
Approved:

Supervisor: 

Dr Maik Gibson

Second Reader: 

Dr Robert Carlson

External Reader: 

Prof. Okoth Okombo

July, 2008

Student's Declaration

TENSES IN MASI KORO

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners.

(Signed) 

Clovis Rembohony

July, 2008

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is an attempt to provide a description of a limited topic in Masikoro grammar.

Up to now a few linguists have written about this language, basically on discourse, stories, and proverbs. Very little has been written on grammar. I have never found any grammar exclusively done on Masikoro language.

This linguistic project, therefore, is to describe tense in Masikoro in a way using linguistics theories I have learnt in class.

Masikoro has three tenses, the Present tense, the Past tense, and the Future tense. Only these three basic tenses have each their particular form. Complex tenses like Present Perfect or Pluperfect, and Aspects such as Progressive and Completed are covered under these three basic tenses. As for meaning, these basic tenses have two main roles. First, they express time reference, and second, they express the order of occurrence of events. The role of tense marking in subordinate clauses is also discussed.

Since this work is the first detailed study of this subject, I hope it will provide a foundation for those who will do further study on the Masikoro language in future. I also hope it will be a relevant tool for the Masikoro Bible translation team for understanding the overarching of the tense-system.

To
My wife Mihaja, a physician woman,
And,
My daughter Vololona.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First, “To God is the glory in the highest”.

Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to the NEGST Community led by Dr Douglas Carew Vice- Chancellor that has encouraged me during my struggle in study.

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In particular to Dr Maik Gibson my project supervisor who has unceasingly led me to achieve an academic work,

Fourth, to the whole family of SIL and WYCLIFFE, in particular to Dr Katherine Barnwell the mother of the “FIARAHA- MIASA LIOKA” (Luke Partnership) of Madagascar.

May God bless all who have contributed for the accomplishment of this project.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person
ADV	adverb
ADVP	adverbial phrase
ART	article
ASS	associator
CON	conjunction
Cs	circumstantial suffix
D	derivational prefix
EXC	exclusive (we)
FUT	future
I	inflectional prefix
IMP	imperative
INC	inclusive (we)
INQ	informative question- marker
LOC	adverb of location
NEG	negation, negative
PART	participle
PASS	passive
PL	plural
PN	pronoun

POS	possessor
PR	preposition
PRG	progressive
PRS	present
PST	past
Q	question particle/marker
RECP	reciprocal
SB	subordinator
TEMP	temporal adverb
W	a clitic marking the want.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this linguistic project we present a study in the field of the Masikoro language, a language spoken in the south-western region of Madagascar between two rivers, Fihereña in the south and Mangoky in the north. Three tribes live side by side from east to west in that region; the Bara living on the long mountain of Añalavelo, the Vezo on the sea-cost, and the Masikoro living in the fertile flat land between the long mountain and the sea-cost. Velonandro, in his book, extends the geographical and dialectical delimitation of Masikoro up to the Onilahy river in the south far (Velonandro 1995, 10). But that delimitation exceedingly covers another tribe, the Tañolahy living on the side of Onilahy river. Its language, although very close to Masikoro, undergoes some influence from its neighbors like Mahafaly and Tañalaña. Thus, we think that Masikoro and Tañolahy are not the same language.

A grammatical research on Masikoro language will be the concern in this work. Up to now a few linguists have written about this language basically on discourse matter, stories, and proverbs. Only a small portion of those works deal with grammar or language rules. But grammar is among the most important linguistic features after vocabulary in learning language, a valuable tool for expressing ideas. People have satisfied themselves only with the traditional grammar of the national language, the ‘Malagasy Ofisialy’¹ on account of the idea that all languages² existed in Madagascar

¹ The *Malagasy Ofisialy* is the national, standardized language, formed by selection of vocabularies among all languages which exist in Madagascar. However, it is mainly drawn from the *Merina* language spoken in the capital-city. Thus, one remarks that there is almost no Masikoro word in this *Malagasy Ofisialy*.

² Thus, people think that, apart from the national language, the rest are just Dialects, not languages.

can be harmonized by one only rule. That is not totally true. Even though they have the same word order ‘Verb-Object-Subject’ (VOS) in general, some distinctions exist. It is evident that Masikoro differs much from the ‘Malagasy Ofisialy’ morphologically and semantically. Then those differences may cause dissimilarity in some constructions. As this is an introductory chapter we are avoiding to do more detail about that; we leave it to be discussed in the following chapter.

The topic of this work is the “**Tenses in Masikoro**”.

Tense means time. The tense of a verb refers to the time of the action or state of being it expresses. We immediately link tense to the verb because in Masikoro tense is primarily marked by prefix on verb as we will see in details later.

Going more profound concerning time, linguists speak also of what is called aspect.

Then, Comrie says,

“... Although both aspect and tense are concerned with time, they are concerned with time in very different ways... Tense locates situation in time while Aspect views the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (Comrie 1985, 3, 5).

To clarify this distinction between tenses and aspects, we consider the following English examples. (i) *I study Masikoro*. (ii) *I studied Masikoro*. The difference between the two examples is one of tense. (i) is in present tense centered on the present moment while (ii) is in past tense centered on the time prior to this present time. We know that (ii) is in past tense because of the physical form, the suffix *-ed* on verb *study* that expresses the past tense. Two more examples are, (iii) *I study Masikoro*. (iv) *I am studying Masikoro*. Both are centered on the present moment but there is a difference between them that is one of aspect. (iii) is in Simple Present, expressing a general situation or an habit while (iv) is in Present Progressive

