

Tense Markers in Kono Language

Sahr Jimissa

*Language Education Department,
Milton Margai Technical University,
Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa*

Lansana Fatorma Mansaray

*Language Education and Communications Department,
Freetown Polytechnic, Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa*

Abstract: This work investigates how tenses are marked in Kono. The introduction provides the historical and social life of the Kono people. Also discussed are the statement of problem, which necessitated this work, the significance, aim and objectives of this research. Since not much materials are available on tense markers in Kono, we endeavoured to review relevant literature on tense markers in English, Krio, Mende and Loko. To accomplish the objectives set for this work, interviews were conducted with various native speakers of Kono and their responses were recorded for further analysis. On analyzing the data, we discovered that tenses are marked in Kono both by grammaticalization and lexicalization. The simple present tense is marked by the inflection of the verb with suffix /da/ or /a/ as the case may be. The past tense is marked in the pronominal form or by the use of the particle /wan/ or /fan/ and the future tense is marked by the particle /wan/. Also, time adverb is used in Kono to communicate information about tense.

Keywords: Kono, tense, markers, research, particle

1. Introduction

The understanding of every language, should involve a careful study and analysis of its grammar. The grammar of a language constitutes the rules by which it operates. Every language, irrespective of the amount of researches carried out on them, are equal, each has its own grammar. (Chomsky 1957:1) Defines grammar of a language as a “device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis”. From Chomsky’s and others perspectives, the study of grammar is geared towards accounting for these rules and structures acceptable in a language. Although the definition given could provide the bases on the study of a language, it is necessary to note that language is dynamic and that prescribing rules to effectively apply to them might not be acceptable in every situation. Therefore, what we refer to as grammar, could simply be a reflection of a language at a particular time.

Although time is a universal concept, but in grammar, reference is made to time through tense. In most languages, tense is indicated by the use of specific forms of verbs. Three forms of tenses are found in many languages, which are the past, present and the future. By tense, we understand the relationship between the form of a verb and the concept of time.

In Sierra Leone, English is the official language. This means English is used as a subject and as a means of instruction in the schools and for official functions. With this status, the grammar of English is studied extensively in our schools and colleges. But however, with the introduction of the teaching of indigenous languages in our learning institutions, this has fueled research in these languages. This means materials needed for pedagogic purposes are on the increase.

English is taught extensively in our institutions, there is a tendency for our teachers to adopt English pedagogues as a model for the teaching of indigenous languages. This research work is therefore an investigation into how tenses are marked or occur in Kono Language.

2. Why tense markers in Kono

Kono is one of the ethnic groups in Sierra Leone. They occupy the district called Kono, which is densely populated due to the diamond and gold mining activities in the district. According to the 2015 Housing and Population Census conducted in Sierra Leone, Kono has a population of 505,767 and occupies an area of 5,641 km (2,178 sq. Miles).

Generally, every language has a way of accounting or marking for tenses. For example, in English, verbs express states, events and actions just like any other Language. All the verbs in every language share a common characteristic - they encode information about the time of an action. English marks only two tenses the present and non-present, other languages mark for the future as well. There are others who mark in different ways,

unlike the ways mentioned above. For example, Mende, one of the predominant languages in Sierra Leone marks for the past and the future tenses. Innes (1967), stated that the aspect of the present tense in Mende is accounted for under the habitual/future tense.

As this work is an investigation on tense markers in Kono, it is necessarily to distinguish between time, which is a universal and a non-Linguistics and tense. These two have often been misunderstood by non-Linguists. The concept of time is divided into the present, past and the future, and can be independent of language. On the other hand, tense in Linguistics refers to a particular set of affixes that communicate information about the time frame in which something exist or occurs. (Berk 1999) In identifying time frame of an action or event that are ongoing, the present tense stands at the center of all tenses, the past tense refer to actions that have already taken place and the future tense refer to action that are yet to take place, each with a different form.

Although some workshop has been organized over the years, but they were geared towards developing the Kono orthography. It is obvious that during these workshops, they must have dealt with a little aspects of tense in per Se. It is therefore necessary to make a detailed investigation of tense markers in Kono. This studies focuses on that.

3. Statement of problem

The present educational system in Sierra Leone lays premium on the teaching of indigenous languages at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This came about as a strategy to eradicate the high rate of illiteracy in the country and to help the citizens to be literate in their mother tongue. (Sierra Leone literacy rate 2018 was estimated to be 43.21%). This is reflected in the New Educational Policy Statement on indigenous languages, which states that:

“The high rate of literacy is a setback to national development in Sierra Leone. Therefore, strategies must be developed to eradicate illiteracy. One of the quickest and best ways of doing so, is to give citizens the opportunity to be literate in their mother tongue (L1) and /or one of the community languages in the country”. (Chapter 3:3.33).

Although Kono is not among the indigenous languages chosen to be taught in the schools and colleges, it is necessarily to give opportunity to the other languages to develop in order to achieve the overall objective of the policy. To effectively achieve the learning of any language, to a large extent depends on the learning materials that have been developed for the teaching of that language. One of the objectives of this research work, is geared towards accomplishing this goal.

It would be naive to say that not much work or research has been carried out on the Kono language. Most of the research activities were on developing the writing system of the language. It is obvious in the process of developing the orthography, some aspects of tense makers must have been dealt with. It is therefore, necessary to make a detailed investigation on the tense markers in Kono, which this study is about.

The native speaker by intuition can efficiently communicate without violating the academic purpose. But effective language acquisition should not be done subconsciously, it also requires a conscious effort to learn the grammar of the language. Acquiring or learning a language consciously involves making use of the learning materials that are available. Language been dynamic and Kono sharing boundaries with three districts with different languages and also as a cosmopolitan district, it is necessary to develop a consistent learning materials that will maintain the standard of the language. As we attempt to study and identify tense markers in Kono, it is our hope that Kono will soon be taught in schools and colleges in Sierra Leone and therefore the preparations should start now.

4. Review of tense markers in other languages

As it is difficult to trace previous works done on tense markers in Kono, the review of literature constitutes a careful survey of how tenses are marked in other languages, where such investigations have been carried out. An attempt has been made to review some prominent works done on tense markers in English, Krio, Mende and Loko, to see how the grammatical category of tense is accounted for in these languages. The aspect of grammar captures both the syntactic and the morphology of a language. The rules involved in the sequencing of words in a language and the rules of reflection of a lexical item in a language, both belong to the aspect of grammar.

A further description was giving to grammar during the period in which Latin and Greek were referred as classical languages and they were widely used for official purposes. Since Latin on which teaching was traditionally concentrated is a model set of inflection, this in effect means grammar is tied with inflection. In this situation the non-linguist, may still speak of grammar and syntax as separate entities. The aspect of grammar,

which is generated by rules either in spoken or written form of a language is referred to as prescriptive grammar. This type of grammar prescribes rules that are based on what is evaluated as correct or incorrect set in a variety. Quirk et al (1985)

The prescriptive grammar approach does not provide an adequate account of the grammar of a language, therefore the descriptive approach emerges to correct the inability of the prescriptive approach to the study of grammar. Descriptive grammar aims to give an accurate account of the observable structures in the recorded text of a language. The descriptive grammarians have been able to show that the judgment of the prescriptive grammar is founded on no more objective, other than the willingness of the community to accept their judgments. But each language has his unique pattern of usage.

In an attempt to resolve these disputes or difficulties in languages, Chomsky introduced a new view on the study of grammar - that it should be predictive. Chomsky argued that since the potential number of grammatical sentences in a language is literally infinite, a grammar must predict whether any given utterance is or is not a grammatical sentence of a particular language. Chomsky invented the concept of generative grammar - the finite number of rules generate an infinite number of grammatical rules in language. Every speaker of the language, therefore acquires these rules at a very early age, which is different from the other speaker; Crystal (1971).

The attempt of reviewing the various forms of grammatical approach to the study of language provide a foundation for our investigation, since tense markers in Kono, form a component of the Kono grammar. Although we will occasionally in the work, refer to the prescriptive tradition of the study of language, a greater proportion of the analysis would be descriptive. This could be of help to us, since the reference materials available in Kono are inadequate, as far as tense is concerned. Also, there is no standard body/organization responsible for the codification of the language (Kono). The existing one, The Institute for Sierra Leonean Languages (TISLL) is busy with the translation of the Bible into Kono, with little or no linguistic investigation carried on the grammar of the Language.

Secondly, the grammar of any language is an embodiment of rules that describes the use of the language. Although the native speaker is fluent in his language, but he/she sometimes faces an embarrassing situations, if he/she is called upon to explain these rules to a foreigner or a person trying to learn the language. The descriptive approach could be an alternative to remedy the situation. Grammatical rules learned are more rigid and may also seem clearer, because they have been clearly spelt out in a learning situation.

Time is a universal concept, which can be regarded as a line on which actions are located. The time of utterance (now) is the present moment. Anything ahead of the present moment is in the future and anything behind it, is in the past. But in reality, this view of time in relation to language and more precisely to the meaning of verbs, lies in the affixes. Berk (1999), referred to them as a particular set of affixes that communicate information about the time frame in which something exist or occur. This formulates the three fold distinctions, such as the present moment, which must have emanated from the past and stretched into the future.

In English, verbs express states, events and actions. Generally, all verbs in a language, share one common characteristic - they encode information about time. English marks only two tenses - present and past, other languages mark future tense as well. There are others which mark in a different way, unlike the ways mentioned above. For instance, Mende, one of the predominant languages in Sierra Leone marks for the past and future tense. Innes (1967), states that the aspect of the present tense in Mende is accounted for under the habitual future tense.

In terms of morphology, English has no future tense. Although traditional grammarians argue that English realizes the future tense by the use of modal auxiliary plus the infinitive (will + infinitive), but we prefer to agree with the grammarians, who have treated tenses strictly as category realized by verb inflection. The modal auxiliary and infinitive could then be used to predict future events.

The existence of the past and present tense in English is justified by the fact that there is inflection on these forms unlike the future, which is not inflected, rather it is realized by the use of modal auxiliary verbs. Modal auxiliary verbs when used to mark the future make the statement ambiguous. This is because the auxiliary 'will' can be used to show ability, in addition to marking the future tense as purported by traditional grammarians. The following examples demonstrate the distinction between the present and past tense.

- Joe is quite well today - present tense
- Yesterday he was sick - past tense

Taking a look at how the present tense is marked, there is a morphological justification that the present tense is unmarked, since it is often realized by the base verb - which is uninflected. For instance, when we compare the verb 'need' when used in both the present tense and the past tense, the /-ed/ morpheme is added to make the past tense. Example:

- I need a rest - present tense
- I needed a rest - past tense

Also verbs in English are often marked by suffixes, although exceptions exist. For instance, the /s/ suffix in 'He jumps' is used to refer to the present tense, while the /-ed/ suffix in 'He walked' is a past tense marker. Although the vast majority of verbs mark past tense with a /-ed/ suffix, there exist few verbs in which when the infinitive end in /-n/ or /-nd/ takes /-t/ as a past tense marker in both spelling and pronunciation. Example:

Present tense	Past tense
Bend	Bent
Lend	Lent
Burn	burnt

There is yet another category that ends in /-nd/ and take a typical /-ed/ past tense markers, as in the following example:

Present tense	Past tense
tend	Tended
mend	mended

In some English verbs, the internal vowel change is used to mark the past tense. Example:

Present tense	Past tense
Sing	Sang
Dig	Dug
Fall	Fell
Ring	rang

There are other verbs in which the past tense is marked by a change in vowel and an addition of a suffix, which is realized in both the pronunciation and spelling. Examples:

Present tense	Past tense
Think	thought
Buy	bought
Seek	sought
Teach	taught

In some other cases, the present tense forms do not change except for the third person singular where in the /-s/ suffix is added to the verbs. Berk (1999) Examples:

- cut, put, cost, split, quit etc.

Quirk et al (1985) considered the discrepancies in verb forms under two categories or headings - regular and irregular verbs. In both forms the /-s/ form and /-ing/ participles are predictable from the base. The irregular verbs differ from the regular verbs in the past form and /-ed/ the participle of irregular verbs are not predictable from the base. For instance the irregular has different forms; for example:

Base	Call	Like	Try
/s/ form	Calls	Likes	Tries
/-ed/ form	Called	Liked	tried

From these examples given by Quirk et al, it is obvious that from the base of the verb, we can predict all its forms by rules. This is a powerful generalization, since the vast majority of English verbs belong to the regular class. New verbs or coined verbs from other languages adopt this pattern. Irregular verbs in forming their /-ed/ and /-s/ forms are predictable from the base just like regular. On the other hand the /-ed form is unpredictable. These are normally referred to as troublesome verbs, because there are no standard rules for accounting for their past and their past participle. Example:

Verb	Past (ed1)	Past (ed2)
Cut	cut	cut
Meet	met	met
Beat	beat	beaten
Come	came	come
Speak	spoke	spoken

From these examples above, the verbs in the first category are in the infinitive form, the /-ed1/ are in the past tense and the verbs /-ed2/ are in the past participle, although in the examples of the irregular verbs, the /-ed/ form is not realized.

With the exception of the main verb, there also exist what is referred to as the modal auxiliaries. The modal auxiliaries make different contributions to the verb phrase from language to language. English makes use of the auxiliary plus the infinitive form to predict the future events. For example:

- I will go to Kono tomorrow.
- It might rain tomorrow.

In the case of Krio, which is the lingua franca in Sierra Leone, it uses preverbal markers to communicate tense. These preverbal markers are usually auxiliary elements, indicating duration of an action or completion of an action. Example

Krio	English
A bin go	I went
A kin go	I always go (habitual)

As it has been established, English has no obvious future tense corresponding to time or tense relation as it occurs in the present and past. Several possibilities instead have been developed to denote the future tense. The future is rendered by means of modal auxiliaries or semi-auxiliaries or by simple present form or the progressive forms;

Quirk et al (1975/47). 'Will' and 'shall' are often used as the modal auxiliaries in English to predict future events. The modal auxiliary 'will' together with the infinitive is used for all persons, whereas 'shall' is used mostly in the first person.

For Kono, which is the focus of this investigation, sometimes uses verb particles to account for future events. Examples:

Kono	English
N naa	I come
A naa	he/she has come
Ɛ naa wan	he/she will come

It is necessary to note from the above examples given in Kono, that the future tense is marked by the pronoun /ɛ/ plus the verb 'naa' and the participle 'wan'. A careful observation of the examples above show that the auxiliary is embedded in the vowel /ɛ/, which denotes both pronoun and modal auxiliary.

On the other hand, Mende, one of the dominant languages in Sierra Leone, marks future tense by suffixation. The /-lo/ suffix is added to the verb to give the future tense. Examples:

Mende (future tense)	English
Nga walo	I will come
Wa walo	you will come
A walo	he/she will come
Moa walo	we will come
Ta walo	they will come

The past tense is marked as follows:

Mende Past tense	English
Ngi wailo	I came

Bi wailo	you came
I wailo	he/she came
Wu wailo	you came
Ti wailo	they came

From these examples, the suffix /-lo / is used to mark tense but does not have a distinctive meaning. It can be used to make reference to both the past and future. The distinction of these tenses is made clear by the use of the temporal adverbs, as the examples before show.

Mende	English
A walo	ha he/she/it comes today.
A walo	sina he/she/it will come tomorrow

This view given by Rev. Brown seems to be in line with Innes (1967) view on how tenses are marked in Mende. He also agrees with the two forms of tense in Mende - past and future habitual action. Example:

Mende	English
I wailo	he /she/it will come
Joe wailo	Joe comes

From the above examples, we observe that the wailo occurs both as present and future tense. As it has been suggested by Innes (1967), the present and the future tense use the same suffix to mark their tenses, the distinction that exist in identifying them is by the use of the temporal adverbs. Examples:

Mende	English
A walo	na He/she/it comes now.
A walo	sina He/she/it will come tomorrow.

Mende verbs are not inflected to indicate tense only, but they can be inflected to indicate whether the action is in progress or has already been completed. The verb is usually inflected by the suffix /-ma/and /-nga/ for perfect aspect. Examples:

Mende	English
Nya piema	I am doing it (progressive aspect)
Emmanuel lo piema	Emmanuel is doing it.
Ngi pienga	I have done it (perfective aspect)
Bi pienga	You have done it.

In Loko, one of the indigenous languages in Sierra Leone, tense/aspect cannot be without the involvement of the pronominal form system of the language. Time reference is determined by the choice of pronoun used in the verbal construction. Tense are therefore marked in Loko by grammaticalization. The present tense is marked by the subject pronoun root /ng/ plus the suffix /-a/ followed by the verb without inflection; Samba (2000). For example:

Loko	English
Nya nheɛlamoo oo ngaa	- I was a farmer
Bia nheɛlamoo oo bi	- you were a farmer
Ala nheɛlamoo	- He /she/it was a farmer
Mua nheɛlamoo oo mi	- We were farmers

The future tense is marked in Loko by the subject pronoun inflected by the suffix /-oo/ng + oo = ngoo. This is followed by the auxiliary /ba/ and the particle /o/ and the noun. Example:

Loko	English
Nya ngoo ba a nheɛlamoo.	- I will be farmer.
Bi boo ba a nheɛlamoo.	- You will be a farmer.

Ala ɔ ba - a nheɛlamɔ. - He/she/it will be a farmer.
Mua mɔɔba a nheɛ -labella. - We will be farmer.

Traditionally, most languages make use of temporal adverbs to mark time distinction. Even in languages where the concept of time is indicated by verbal inflections, the use of adverb tends to overshadow the tense markers. In such situations, the adverb tends to predict the time. A similar situation occurs in Loko. Example:

Loko	English
Kɛɛ ngaa gbengi.	- He worked yesterday.
Vonu ngɔɔ mba nhii.	- Next year I will plant.
Kɛɛ mba nwaɔ siaa haai.	- He sold rice today.

The underlined words above are temporal adverbs expressing time.

From the analyses above on how tense is marked in Loko. It reveals that the language has a unique form of marking for the various tense categories reviewed in this work. Also worth noting, is the difference that exists in the manner in which tense is realized.

Although these differences exist in the manner in which they are marked, but the tense categories have common features - present, past and future tenses.

From these reviews carried out, the concept of tense can be expressed in various ways from one language to another. It could be in the form of inflection of the verb as it occurs in English or by use of modal auxiliaries, as it is the case in Krio. These differences that exist in these realizations of tenses from language to language, gives enough justification why tense realization in Kono must be analyzed to elucidate, whether it conforms to any of these established systems mentioned above, or whether it has its own unique system.

5. Significant of the study

- i. The result of this research work will be of significance to those involved in teaching and learning Kono. It will be also useful to those carrying out research work in Kono.
- ii. The current dispensation in our educational system lays emphasizes on Mother Tongue Literacy. The literacy rate in Sierra Leone is estimated to be 43.21%, which is very low compared to other West African countries. This work will be a relevant resource material in the future.
- iii. This work will contribute towards achieving the overall goal of the indigenous language policy, which stresses the importance of teaching and learning of the indigenous languages.

6. Research procedures and output

Every research work has overall objectives to accomplish at the end of the work. To achieve these objectives, the research proceeded in the following order, which subsequently led to the results presented:

Objectives and hypotheses

The specific objectives of the study include the following:

- i. To identify tense markers in Kono.
- ii. To discover possible teaching and learning materials that would help in the teaching of tenses in Kono.
- iii. Identify similarities and differences in tense markers in Kono, English and other languages.

7. Limitation of the research

The outstanding problem encountered in this study is the unavailability on any previous work done on tense markers in Kono. Most of the published materials in Kono have been on religious literature-translating biblical stories into Kono.

Another problem encountered is with the process of getting a willing informant. Many were reluctant to avail themselves and the few that did, were expecting some financial benefits, as they thought that the exercise was a money making venture.

However, none of these limitations posed an obstacle to render the researcher incapable of carrying out the research.

8. Methodology

The Kono people naturally do not travel much, they have an adage that justifies that:- ‘kɔnɔɛ mbe an mbaa’. which means ‘the Konos are at home’. The ten years rebel war in Sierra Leone destroyed this tradition. Now Konos could be found in any district in Sierra Leone and even outside the country. This

displacement of the people has however helped in the collection of this data. The data was collected by interviews conducted with native speakers of Kono who are presently residing in Freetown. The information got was recorded for further analysis.

Although we have not been to trace any existing work done on tense markers in Kono, the existing work on Kono phonology done by Manyeh (1983) and the Kono orthography workshop manual, organized by The Institute of Sierra Leonean Languages (TISLL), has been of help to us in our investigation.

In every research work, objectives are set, which the researcher aims at achieving by the end of the investigation. To achieve these objectives, depends invariably on the methodology. For this study the following methods are employed to achieve the objectives set.

Data collection

- (a) Adult native speakers were interviewed and their responses recorded for detailed analysis. Some of these interviews were done surreptitiously in order to elicit vital information from the informant. These informants were from native speakers, whose language has not been very much influenced by other languages.
- (b) To accomplish the objectives set out for this study, a parallel description of tense markers in Kono and English was carried out to identify the similarities and differences that exist between them.
- (c) Also included in the research methodology, was the researchers' intuition as native speakers of Kono. They supplied additional information that was needed for this study.
- (d) The various researches carried out in Kono were of help. These materials were of use to accomplish the overall objectives of this study.

In the collection of the data, recorder was used to solicit relevant information from the informants. Native speakers of Kono whose mother tongue have not been drastically influenced by other languages were interviewed, and the information got were recorded. The data was then subsequently analyzed by the investigators. In addition, personal interviews with native speakers of Kono were conducted to complement the recorded data. The data collected was transcribed using the orthography we decided to go with in this work.

9. Analysis of data

The analysis of data is descriptive, which is both qualitative and quantitative and took the following forms. The data was collected in Kono and translated into English, a parallel description of tense markers in Kono and English was carried out to identify similarities and differences that exist in the two languages. As much research has been carried out on the English tenses than Kono, we made use of the English forms to determine how tenses are marked in Kono. In a situation where both forms show remarkable differences, we endeavoured to describe the differences that exist and established a form by which they are marked for tense.

Tense normally is a verbal construction, put together with other words in context to express the concept of time. In the collection and presentation of this data, the investigators established the major categories of tenses in a language--present, past and future tenses, which are associated with tense categories. Nominal cases were established to show their influence on verbal construction.

In attempting to capture the aspect of tense in Kono, the verb "to be" in English was conjugated and translated into Kono to identify how tense markers are accounted for in Kono.

As most languages make use of temporal adverbs to mark time distinction, we also investigated how adverbs are used in Kono to mark the time of an action. Sentences were developed in English based on how temporal adverbs are used to denote time of an action and we asked our informants to translate them into Kono.

10. Presentation and discussion of data

To capture the aspect of tenses in Kono, the following analyses present a detailed description of how tense is marked in Kono. The various tense categories - present, past and future tenses have been identified and examples have been provided, where necessary we explained how the grammatical categories operate in Kono.

A. The simple present tense

Kono (Kɔnɔ) marks for the simple present tense both in the pronominal form and by the use of suffixes. The following is a list of pronominal forms used in the simple present tense:

Kono	English
Mbe	I
E	You
Ɛ	He/she/it
Mbee	We
We	You
An mbe	They

For example to conjugate the verb ‘gboo nyen’ (to write), the pronominal forms are used together with the suffix /-da/ to mark the simple present tense as in the following examples:

Kono	English
Mbe gboo ꞑenda	I write
E gboo ꞑenda	you write
Ɛ gboo ꞑenda	you write
Mbee gboo ꞑenda	we write
We gboo ꞑenda	you write
An mbe gboo ꞑenda	they write

In other verbs like ‘taa’ ‘to go’, ‘dɔneche’ ‘to eat’ and ‘buiche’ ‘to run’, the pronominal forms are used and the verb inflected by the suffix /-a/. examples:

<u>Kɔɔ</u>	=	<u>English</u>
<u>Ta</u>	=	<u>To go</u>
Mbe taa	-	I go.
E taa	-	You go.
Ɛ taa	-	He/she/it goes.
Mbee taa	-	We go.
We taa	-	You go.
An mbe taa	-	They go.
Dɔneche	-	To eat
Kɔɔ	-	English
Mbe dɔnechea	-	I eat.
E dɔnechea	-	You eat.
Ɛ dɔnechea	-	He/she/it/eats.
Mbe dɔnechea	-	We eat.
We dɔnechea	-	You eat
An mbe dɔnechea	-	They eat
<u>Buichea</u>	=	<u>To run</u>
<u>Kono</u>	=	<u>English</u>
Mbe buichea	-	I run.
E buichea	-	You run.
Ɛ buichea	-	He/she/it runs.
Mbee buichea	-	We run.
We buichea	-	You run.
An mbe buichea	-	They run

B. The simple past tense

The simple past tense construction identifies actions that happened at a specific time in the past. The pronominal forms used for the past tense are different from those of the simple present tense. There are two groups of verbs- the polysyllabic verbs and the monosyllabic. Examples of polysyllabic verbs are:

Kono	English
Yenechea	To laugh.

Waichea	To work.
Kanchea	Kanchea To teach.

Examples of monosyllabic verbs are:

Kono	English
Taa	To go.
Faa	To die.
Naa	To come.

The pronominal forms used in both groups are different. The polysyllabic verbs use the following pronominal forms:

Kono	-	English (stop)
Na	-	I
Ya	-	You
Aa	-	He/she/it
Naa	-	We
Wa	-	You (plural)
An-na	-	They

On the other hand, the monosyllabic verbs use the following pronominal forms:

Kono	-	English
N'	-	I
I'	-	You
N'	-	We
A	-	He/she/it
Wo	-	You
An	-	They

There are two forms identified in marking the simple past tense in Kono. The construction consists of the pronominal form plus the verb uninflected for the first form. For example, in the case of polysyllabic verbs, the following operates:

Kono	-	English
Na gboo-nyen	-	I wrote
Ya gboo-nyen	-	You wrote
Aa gboo-nyen	-	He/she/it wrote
Wa gboo-nyen	-	You wrote
Naa gboo-nyen	-	We wrote
An na gboo-nyen	-	They wrote

ii. Kono	-	English
Na dɔneche	-	I ate.
Ya dɔneche	-	You ate.
Aa dɔneche	-	He/she/it ate.
Waa dɔneche	-	You ate.
An na dɔneche	-	They ate.

In some verbs, there is no verbal inflection to mark past tense in the examples above. The /-a/ suffix in the simple present tense is dropped in the past tense.

Monosyllabic verbs

Kono	-	English
N'táá	-	I went
I'taa	-	You went

A taá	-	He/she/it went.
N'taa	-	We went.
Wo taa	-	You went.
An taa	-	They went

It is necessary to note at this point that the Kono Language, like many West African languages, is a tonal language - a slight change in the tone of a word leads to a change in meaning. This is reflected above in the conjugation of the verb 'to go' in the past tense. The first person singular "N'táá" and first person plural "N'táá" have the same consonant and vowel composition but the difference lies in the tone. The first person singular is articulated with a fall in tone whereas the first person plural start with a fall and ends with a rise in tone.

Another form in which the simple past tense are marked is by the use of pronominal form and the verb particles /fan/ and /wan/. Examples are:

Kono		English
N'na gboo-Nyen fan.	-	I wrote.
Ya gboo-Nyen fan.	-	You wrote.
Aa gboo-Nyen fan.	-	He/she/it wrote.
Naa gboo-Nyen fan.	-	We wrote.
Waa gboo-Nyen fan.	-	You wrote.
An na gboo-Nyen fan.	-	They wrote.

ii Kono		English
N'taa wan.	-	I went.
I taa wan.	-	You went.
A taa wan	-	He/she/it went.
N'taa wan	-	We went.
Wo taa wan	-	You went.
An taa wan	-	They went.

C. Future tense

The future tense construction is an anticipated action in the future. English has no future tense markers but Kono marks for the future tense. It consist of the pronominal form, which is used for the simple present tense, with the verb and the particle /wan/. The pronominal forms used are as follow:

Kono		English
Mbe	-	I
E	-	You
ε	-	He/she/it
Mbee	-	We
We	-	You
An mbe	-	They

Example:

i Kono		English
Mbe gboo nyenda <u>wan</u>		I shall write
E gboo nyenda <u>wan</u>		You will write
ε gboo nyenda <u>wan</u>		He/she/it will write
Mbe gboo nyenda <u>wan</u>		We shall write
An mbe gboo nyenda <u>wan</u>		They will write

Although the pronominal forms for both simple present and future tenses are the same, the only difference are in the verbal particle /wan/, which is used to mark the future tense. Other examples are as follow:

ii Kono	-	English
Mbe taa wan	-	I shall go
E taa wan	-	you will go
Ɛ taa wan	-	He/she/it will go
Mbe taa wan	-	we shall go
We taa wan	-	you will go
An mbe taa wan	-	they will go

iii Kono	-	English
Mbe dɔnɛche wan	-	I shall eat
E dɔnɛche wan	-	You will eat
Ɛ dɔnɛche wan	-	He/she/it will eat
Mbe dɔnɛche wan	-	We shall eat
We dɔnɛche wan	-	You will eat
An mbe dɔnɛche wan	-	They will eat

Note: in the above examples, the verb particles that mark the future tense are underlined.

D. Temporal adverbs used in Kono to make time distinction

Traditionally, Kono uses adverbs to make time distinction. Although adverbs are used together with verbal constructions, their use overshadow the verbal meaning of the construction. The use of temporal adverbs in Kono, tells us more about time distinctions than the verbal categories. Examples:

Kono		English
i. Nna na waiche wan kunu.	-	I did my work yesterday.
ii. Sona mbe ka che aa.	-	It is raining now.
iii. Bi a-mu pɔn tɔmbɔɛ.	-	Today is the day for the poro dance.
iv. Komba ma nani gboo kan chena sauchema.	-	Komba did not come to this morning.
v. Sona ɛ chaa wan yɛchema.	-	It will rain tonight.
vi. Ɛ na wan saɲje.	-	He will come very soon.
vii. Na waiche wan kunu.	-	I worked yesterday.
viii. N'banda waiche a.	-	I have finished working.
ix. Na waiche wan banu.	-	I worked last year.
x. Na waiche wan nyinna.	-	I worked this year.
xi. Mbe waiche-a wan yeikɔ.	-	I will work next year.

From these examples, the temporal adverbs are underlined and they include

Kɔnɔ	-	English
Bii	-	today
Sauchema	-	This morning
Yɛɛchema	-	This night.
Saɲje	-	Soon/now
Mbanda	-	Finish
Banu	-	Last year
Ninna	-	This year
Yeikɔ	-	Next year

11. Conclusion

The concept of tense can be realized in various ways from language to language. English uses suffixes to communicate tense whereas Krio uses preverbal markers. These differences in tense realization have been the main concern in this investigation; to see whether Kono conforms to any of the ways other languages use to realize tense.

From the discussion of the data collected, it is clear that tense realization in Kono has a unique system. In Kono like many Mande languages, tense realization is very much reliant on the pronominal system. This is shown by the pronominal system displayed both in terms of phonology and syntax.

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i. To identify tense markers in Kono

a. From the discussion and analysis, it is clear that Kono like the other Mande language family members, has a unique system of marking tense. For the purpose of universal concept of tense, we realized that tense in Kono is realized both by grammaticalization and lexicalization. The simple present tense is marked by grammaticalization, wherein the verb is inflected by the suffix /-da/ or /-a/ as the case may be.

b. The past tense is marked either by the pronominal form with verbs in simple present tense, or by using the particle /fan/ or /awn/ preceding the verb.

c. The future tense in Kono is marked by lexicalization. This is done through the addition of the particle /wan/ to the verb. The modal auxiliaries 'will' or 'shall' could be partly accounted for in the particle /wan/.

d. Pronoun and pronominal forms in Kono are identified based on their tense categories. The simple present and future tenses use the same pronominal form, whereas the pronominal system used for the past tense is different from the others. Two forms of pronominal are used for the past tense. One for the polysyllabic verbs and the other for the monosyllabic verbs.

e. Finally, Kono like many other languages use temporal adverbs to make time distinction. The use of adverbs in Kono tend to overshadow the tense markers in the verbal categories, when they are used in the same construction.

ii. To discover possible teaching and learning materials that would help in the teaching of tenses in Kono.

Our language policy in Sierra Leone encourages teaching in the lower primary 1 to 3 to be done through mother tongue. This requires the development and production of teaching and learning materials in these languages. Although enormous efforts have been made towards acquiring these materials, not all the languages were adequately catered for. For instance, Kono is not among the languages selected to be taught in the schools and colleges. With just four languages selected to be medium of learning and subjects in our educational institutions, the overall objective of the mother tongue education policy will not be achieved.

Equal opportunities should be given to all the other languages to develop teaching and learning materials at the same pace. We envisaged that there will be problems if the mother tongue education is expanded to capture the other languages. This research findings will therefore provide teaching and learning materials necessary for teaching Kono.

iii. Identify similarities and differences in tense markers in Kono and other languages

Tense is realized in various ways from language to language. From the literature done, English uses suffix to communicate tense. Krio on the other hand, uses verbal markers. These differences have been our concern to see whether Kono conforms to any of the ways other languages use to mark tense. From the discussion of the data, it is clear that Kono has a unique system of marking tense. Kono, like many Mande languages, tense realization is very much reliant on the pronominal system. The Present and the future tenses use the same pronominal system; whereas the past tense uses a different pronominal system to realize it.

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