

ACADEMIA SINICA
Institute of Linguistics, Preparatory Office
Tense/Aspect & Predicate types in Malagasy /March 16, 2001
by
Charles Randriamasimanana

Point # 1: Tense vs Aspect in Malagasy.

Point # 1.1: Malagasy Tenses in the active voice.

- 1- **M-i-anatra** i Paoly.
Pres-prefix-root art Paoly
'Paul studies (habitually)' or 'Paul is a (good) student'
or 'Hey, Paul, go and study' (with relevant intonation).
- 2- **N-i-anatra** i Paoly.
Past-prefix-root art Paul
'Paul studied (as a rule)' or 'Paul was a (good) student'
or 'Paul just went to school to study.'
- 3- **H-i-anatra** i Paoly.
Future-prefix-root art Paul
'Paul will/is about to study' or 'Paul will go to school to study'.

Point # 1.2: Malagasy Tenses in the active & the passive voices.

- (4)a. **M-an-(s)oratra** ilay taratasy i Paoly.
Pres-prefix-root the letter art Paul
'Paul is writing the letter, i.e beginning the process of writing the letter.'
- b. **o-sorata-n'i** Paoly ilay taratasy.
PresPassive-root-by art Paul the letter
'The letter is being written by Paul.'
- (5)a. **N-an-(s)oratra** ilay taratasy i Paoly.
Past-prefix-root the letter art Paul
'Paul wrote the letter.'
- b. **No-sorata-n'i** Paoly ilay taratasy.
PastPassive-root-by art Paul the letter
'The letter was written by Paul.'
- (6)a. **H-an-(s)oratra** ilay taratasy i Paoly.
Fut-prefix-root the letter art Paul
'Paul will write the letter.'
- b. **Ho-sorata-n'i** Paoly ilay taratasy.
FutPassive-root-by art Paul the letter
'The letter will be written by Paul.' See Randriamasimanana (2000b)

Point # 1.3: Malagasy Aspects in the active voice.

Active voice associated with aspectual features such as **HABITUAL** or **PUNCTUAL** or **INCEPTION** typically with **i-** prefix verbs.

(7) **M-i-anatra** i Paoly. [= 1]
Pres-prefix-root art Paoly
HABITUAL/ INCEPTION
'Paul studies (habitually)' or 'Paul is a (good) student'
or 'Hey, Paul, go and study' (with relevant intonation).

(8) **N-i-anatra** i Paoly. [= 2]
Past-prefix-root art Paul
PUNCTUAL
'Paul studied (as a rule)' or 'Paul was a (good) student'
or 'Paul went to school to study.'

(9) **H-i-anatra** i Paoly. [= 3]
Future-prefix-root art Paul
INCEPTION
'Paul will/is about to study' or 'Paul will go to school to study'.

Active voice normally associated with aspectual features such as **DURATIVE** typically with **an-** prefix verbs; optionally with **i-** prefix verbs.

(10) **N-i-anatra** i Paoly no tonga aho.
Past-prefix-root art Paul when arrived I
DURATIVE Paul PUNCTUAL
'Paul was studying when I arrived'

(11) **N-an-(s)oratra** ilay taratasy i Paoly no tonga aho.
Past-prefix-root the letter art Paul when arrived I
DURATIVE PUNCTUAL
'Paul was writing the letter when I arrived.'

Point # 1.4: Malagasy aspects in the passive voices.

(12) **o-sorata-n'** i Paoly ilay taratasy.
PresPassive-root-by art Paul the letter
PUNCTUAL = right Here & Now
'The letter is being written by Paul.'

(13) **No-sorata-n'** i Paoly ilay taratasy.
PastPassive-root-by art Paul the letter
PUNCTUAL = at a specific moment in the Past
'The letter **was** written by Paul.'

(13') **Voa-soratr'** i Paoly ilay taratasy.
Perfective-root-by art Paul the letter
The letter **has been** written by Paul.'

- (14) **Ho-sorata-n'** i Paoly ilay taratasy.
FutPassive-root-by art Paul the letter
PUNCTUAL/INCEPTION
 'The letter will be written by Paul or is about to write the letter.'
- (15).a **N-an-didy** ilay mofo i Paoly.
 Pres-prefix-root the bread art Paul
Active Voice
 'Paul cut the bread.'
- b. **No-didi-n'** i Paoly ilay mofo. **Passive 1** (Direct Object > Subject)
PastPassive1-by art Paul the bread
PUNCTUAL
 'The (whole) bread was cut by Paul.'
- c. **N-an-didi-an'** i Paoly ilay mofo. **Passive 2** (Oblique > Subject)
PastPassive2-by art Paul the bread
DURATIVE/PARTITIVE
 '(Some of) the bread was cut by Paul.' See Randriamasimanana (2000b.)

Table 1
Malagasy Tense/Aspect Systems

Tense			
Active Voice	Past	Present	Future
	N-	M-	H-
Passive Voice1	Past*	Present	Future
	No-	ø-	Ho-
Passive Voice 2	Past	Present	Future
	N-	ø-	H-
Aspect			
Active Voice	DURATIVE	INCEPTIVE	PUNCTUAL
	-an** - prefix	an* - prefix	ø - prefix
	HABITUAL		
	-i - prefix		
Passive Voice1	BALLISTIC	(RESULTATIVE)	
	a-	ø/No/Ho- prefix...in(a) vs voa-	
Passive Voice 2	DURATIVE/PARTITIVE		
	-an... a/in(a)		

* But see example (35) below for the **a-** passive.

** N-amono [=n+an+vono] tsy n-aha-faty i Paoly.
 past-kill pst+an+root not past-cause-dead article Paul

Literally: 'Paul killed but did not cause (someone) to die.' i.e. freely translated into English: 'Paul tried to kill (someone) but did not manage to.'
 From Randriamasimanana (1999b: 514)

Point # 2: Tense/Aspect and Deictics in Malagasy.

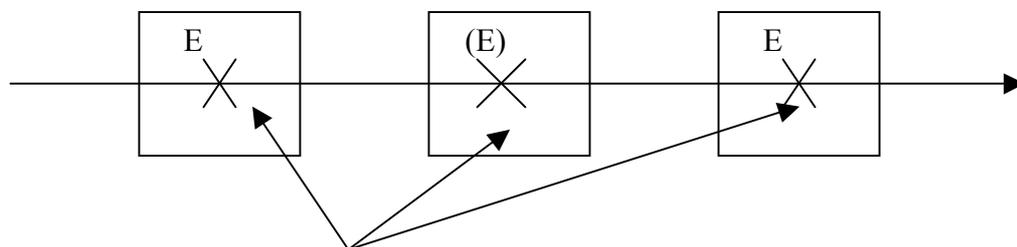
Point # 2.1: Preliminaries.

Tense as defined in Comrie (1985) and Aspect as defined in Comrie (1976).

Tense = external viewing/location of an event, hence in Malagasy use of tense-markers in conjunction with deictics such as ity ‘this-sing’, iry ‘that-sing’, ireto ‘these’, etc.

Diagram 1:

External Viewing/Perspective:

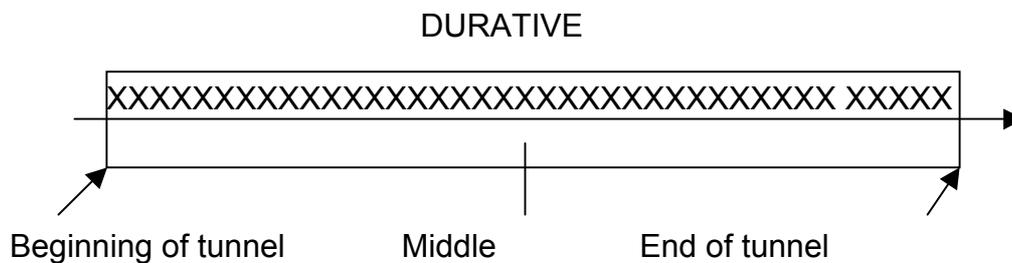


Illustrative example: A- Peter works..

Aspect = internal viewing of an event based on contrast PUNCTUAL/DURATIVE

Diagram 2’:

Internal Viewing/Perspective:



Illustrative examples: **B- Peter is working** (middle of diagram 2’).
C- Peter is working today.

One typical use of perfective aspect in English.

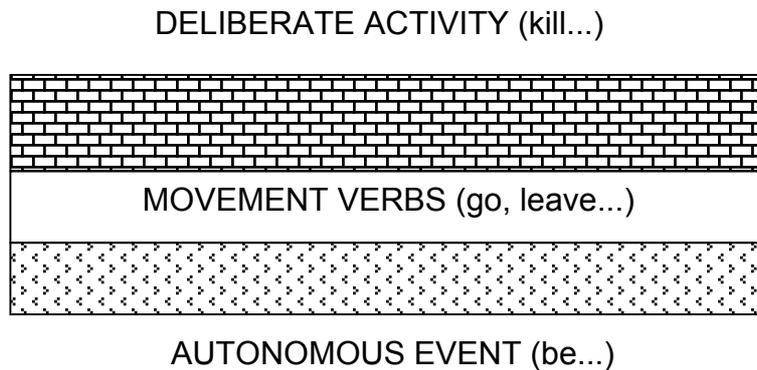
Form "has been working" depicting a situation as in Diagram 3’ below.

D- John **has been working** at Massey since 1980.

- (i) have en perfective
- (ii) be ing progressive
- (iii) has in present tense

- (i) "Perfective" means there is opposition between BEFORE and AFTER;
- (ii) "Progressive" indicates there is DURATION involved;
- (iii) "Present tense" on "have" implies that base box is HERE AND NOW.

Point # 3: Major predicate types in Malagasy on Diagram 4 below.

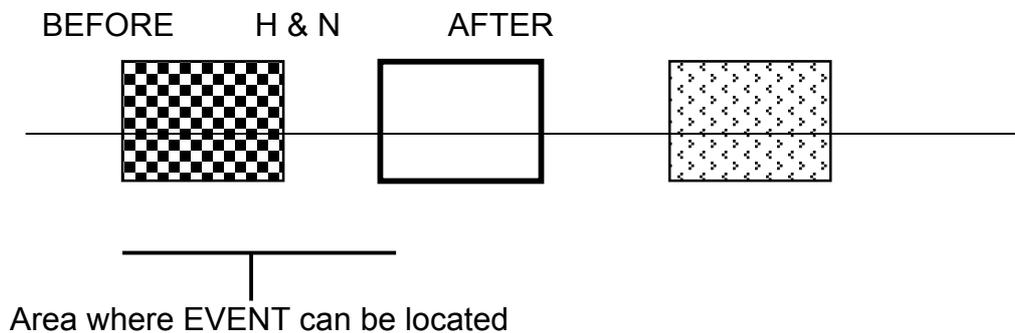


Point # 3.1: Preliminaries – [+/- CONTROL] & Locatability.

Point # 3.2: Crucial relevance of feature [+/- CONTROL] in English.
Consider the form "has worked" as depicted on Diagram 5 below.

E. John **has worked** at Massey.

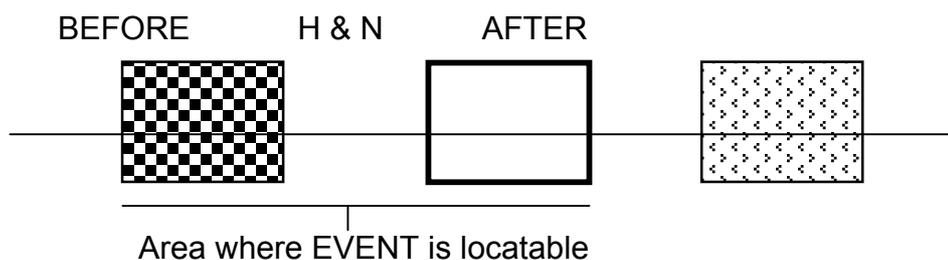
- (i) perfective have en
- (ii) non-progressive
- (iii) tense has in present tense



Now consider the form 'have known' as depicted on Diagram 6 below.

F. I **have known** Mary (since 1980/for a long time).

- (i) perfective have en
- (ii) non-progressive
- (iii) tense have in present tense



Point # 3.3: Aspectual markers either internal or external to predicate.

The Malagasy aspectual marker is internal to the predicate in case the predicate is accompanied by the feature [+ CONTROL]; but is external to the predicate if the latter is characterized by the feature [- CONTROL].

Point # 3.3.1 With [+ CONTROL] predicates, aspect is internal to the predicate.

(20) **o**-sorata-n' i Paoly ilay taratasy. [= 12]

PresPassive-root-by art Paul the letter

PUNCTUAL = right Here & Now

'The letter is being written by Paul.'

(21) **No**-sorata-n' i Paoly ilay taratasy. [= 13]

PastPassive-root-by art Paul the letter

PUNCTUAL = at a specific moment in the Past

'The letter **was** written by Paul.'

(22) **Voa**-soratr'i Paoly ilay taratasy. [= 13']

Perfective-root-by art Paul the letter

'The letter **has been** written by Paul.'

The above category of predicates corresponds roughly to verbs which describe DELIBERATE kinds of ACTIVITY.

Point # 3.3.2: With [- CONTROL] predicates, aspect is typically external to the predicate and is indicated by lexical items such as 'efa' = 'done' for perfective aspect and 'mbola'='still' for the nonperfective aspect.

(23) a. **o** Lehilahy lehibe i Paoly. [= 10 from first handout]

Zero Man big art Paul

'Paul **is** a big boy.'

b. **Efa** lehilahy lehibe i Paoly.

Perfective man big art Paul

'Paul is **already** a big boy.'

c. **Mbola** zazakely i Paoly.

Nonperfective child art Paul

'Paul is **still** a child.'

This second set corresponds by and large to AUTONOMOUS kinds of EVENT.

Point # 4.1: With [- CONTROL] predicates, it is impossible to have a tense-marker on the predicate, as illustrated in the contrast:

(24) a. M-i-petraka i Paoly. [+/- CONTROL] predicate

Pres-prefix-sit art Paul

'Paul sits.'

- (24) N-i-petraka i Paoly.
Past-prf-sit art Paul
'Paul sat.'
- (25) H-i-petraka i Paoly.
Fut-prf-sit art Paul
'Paul will sit.'
- (26) **Ma-ty** i Paoly. Typical [- CONTROL] predicate
?Pres-dead art Paul
'Paul is dead'
- (27) ***N-aty** i Paoly.
Past-dead art Paul
'Paul was dead.'
- (28) ***H-aty** i Paoly.
Fut-dead art Paul
'Paul will be dead.'

Point # 4.2: Now there is a third set of predicates made up largely of MOTION/-MOVEMENT verbs, which take a different set of aspectual markers which can only accompany a MOTION predicate.

- (29) **Ø-any** Antsirabe i Paoly. [Nonperfective aspect]
nonperfective-at/to Antsirabe art Paul
'Paul is at Antsirabe.'
- (30) **T-any** Antsirabe i Paoly. [Perfective aspect]
perfective-at Antsirabe art Paul
'Paul has been/was at Antsirabe.' Randriamasimanana (1999b)

Point # 4.3: One crucial characteristic of Motion/Movement verbs is that they can combine with either tense (marginally) or aspect:

- (31) **Ø-any** Antsirabe i Paoly. [State/Location only.]
Nonperfective-at Antsirabe art Paul
'Paul is at Antsirabe.'
- (32) **Ho any** Antsirabe i Paoly. [Movement verb only]
Future to Antsirabe art Paul
'Paul will go to Antsirabe.'
- (33) **T-any** Antsirabe i Paoly. [Perfective & ambiguous]
Perfective-at Antsirabe art Paul
'Paul went to Antsirabe' or 'Paul was at Antsirabe.'

[Either a Movement interpretation or a Location reading.]

Point # 5: Even **intransitive verbs** like ‘m-i-petraka’ = ‘present-sit’ in Malagasy can passivize and take the **tafa** perfective aspect-marker as a prefix. When such an intransitive verb does, there is an ambiguity between the [+ CONTROL] meaning ‘manage to + V’ and the [- CONTROL] interpretation, i.e. adversative passive, Act of God and the like.

- (34) **N-i-petraka** i Paoly. [Nonperfective aspect]
Past-prefix-sit art Paul
 'Paul sat, i.e. either the activity of sitting down or the position in which he is.'
- (35) **N-a-tsipi-n'** i Paoly ilay boky. [**BALLISTIC**, nonperfective]
Past-Pass.prefix.thrown-by art Paul the book
 'The book was thrown away by Paul.'
- (36) **Tafa-petraka** i Paoly. [Perfective aspect]
Perfective-sit art Paul
 'Paul managed to sit' or 'Paul found himself seated/sitting.'
 Randriamasimanana (1999b)

Table 2: Feature = +/-CONTROL & Major Predicate Types in Malagasy

[+ CONTROL] = Deliberate kinds of Activity

Predicates in this subclass can take both a tense-marker as well as an aspect-marker. Tense-marker and aspect-marker are distinct in the active voice, but tend to be amalgamated in the passive voice.

Active Voice	DURATIVE -an*- prefix	INCEPTIVE an*- prefix	PUNCTUAL ∅-prefix
	HABITUAL -i- prefix		
Passive Voice1	BALLISTIC -a- vs tafa	(RESULTATIVE) ∅/No/Ho- prefix...in(a) vs voa-	
Passive Voice 2	DURATIVE/PARTITIVE -an... a/in(a)		

[+/- CONTROL]=

A. Motion Verbs. Characteristic of this subclass are complex predicates combining a higher verb with a Prepositional Phrase taking special aspect-markers \emptyset VS t specific to this subclass of predicates; also the future tense-marker is definitely possible.

B. Intransitive verbs can passivize with nonperfective passive prefix *-a-* and perfective aspect- marker *tafa* internal to the predicate itself.

[- CONTROL]= Autonomous Events

Separate lexical items such as *efa* ‘done’, *mbola* ‘still’ serve as external aspectual markers on such predicates. Tense-markers usually not allowed on this subclass of predicates.

Point # 6: Similarities with Other Austronesian Languages?

Point # 6.1: A footnote from Huang (1995: 148): Behavior of **Motion verbs** in **Mayrinax**.

² There are two AF verbs in the language that do not take *pa-* to designate future events; that is, *musa* 'go' and *uwah* 'come'. Instead, they seem to follow NAF verbs by reduplicating the initial consonant of the root verb plus the vowel *a*, but unlike NAF verbs, the two verbs in question still keep the AF marker *m-*. Compare the sentences below:

(1)a. m -'a -'usa 'i' yumin a' . m -'a -'uwah 'i' limuy	
[AF-Red-go Nom Yumin]	[AF-Red-come Nom Limuy]
'Yumin will go'	'Limuy will come'
b. m -usa 'i' yumin	b'. m -uwah 'i' limuy
[AF-go Nom Yumin]	[AF-come Nom Limuy]
'Yumin is going'	'Limuy is coming'
c. m <in >usa 'i' yumin	c'. m <in >uwah 'i' limuy
[AF<Past>go Nom Yumin]	[AF<Past>come Nom Limuy]
'Yumin went'	'Limuy came'

Point # 6.2: Relevance of Feature Proximal vs Distal for Locatability?

A. Zeitoun (1992:48) in relation to **Tsou** focus system refers to Tung (1964)'s distinction between two items /mo/ and /moso/ in terms of proximity or remoteness.

B. Huang (1995: 156) in relation to 'Progressive/Imperfective events' in **Mayrinax** distinguishes between two items, i.e. *hani'an* (proximal) and *kia* (distal).

Point # 6.3: Relevance of aspectual feature **DURATIVE** in **Tsou** syntax?

- (37)a. mi-ta mimo ta cxumu
AF-Non Past-3sg drink Obl water
'He is drinking some water.'
- b. i-ta ima si cxumu
NAF-Non Past-3sg drink obl water
'The water has been drunk by him.'

Zeitoun (1992:11 ex. (26))

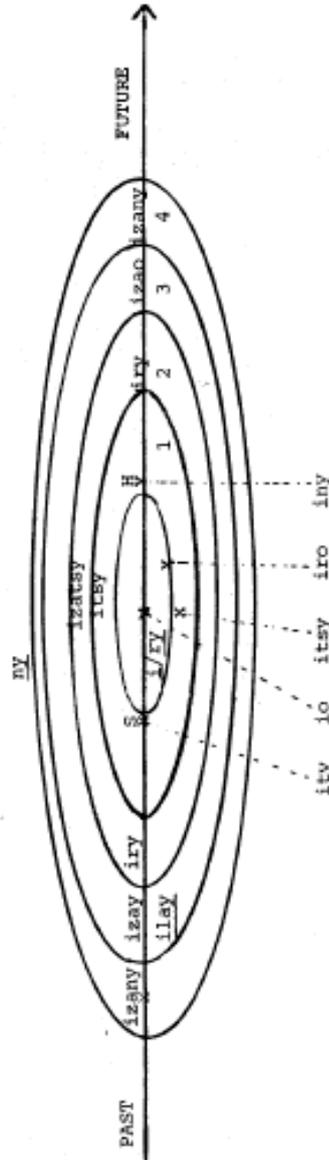
In (37)a. reference to 'beginning of tunnel' as described under Point # 2.1, whereas in (37)b., reference to 'end of tunnel'. This situation is somewhat similar to the contrast seen in the Malagasy data illustrated in (11) vs (13'). Also, according to Zeitoun (1992: 67-69) *n?a* refers to the INCEPTION of an activity with verbs like 'smoke' [see her example 184], but refers to the OUTCOME with achievement verbs like 'arrive' [see her example 185]

APPENDIX

The Deictics of Malagasy:

The set of Demonstratives: ity, iny, io, itsy, iro, iry, izatsy, izay, izao, izany.

The set of Definite Articles: i, ry, ilay, ny (underlined).



Note: S = SPEAKER, H = HEARER; 1 = layer 1 = Proximal
 2 + 3 = layer 2 + layer 3 = Intermediate
 4 = layer 4 = Distal.
 Innermost layer (unnumbered) = strict S HERE & NOW.

Appendix B

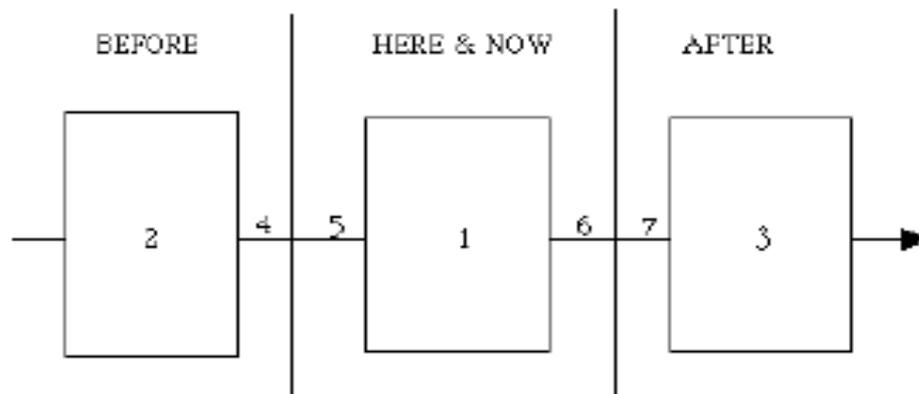


Diagram 2: Tense/Aspect System in English

- 1- Peter is working.
- 2- Peter worked. Peter was working.
- 3- Peter will work. Peter will be working.
- 5- Peter has just worked.
- 6- Peter is about to work.

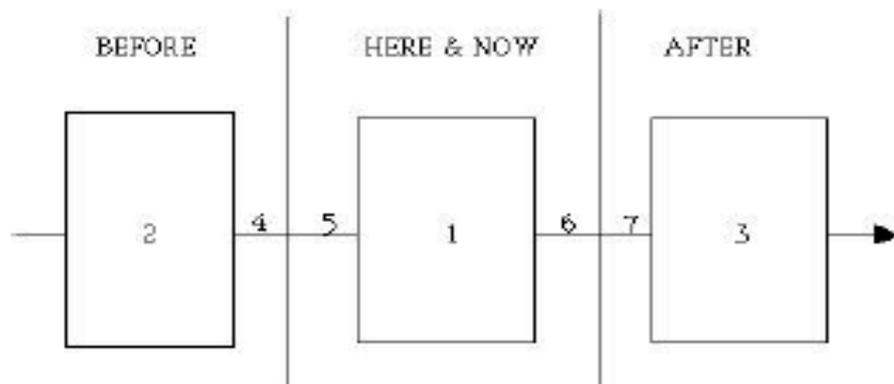
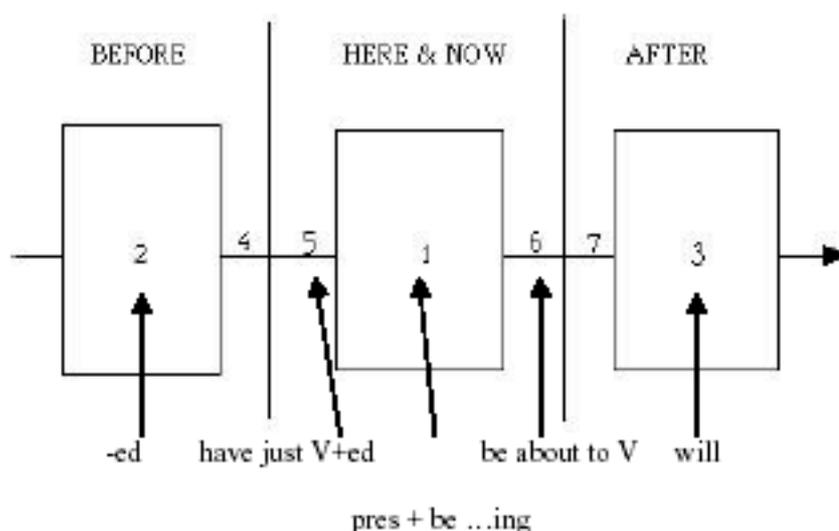


Diagram 3: Deictics and Tense in Malagasy

- 1- **Ity** m-amaky boky **ity** i Paoly
this present-read book this this article Paul
 'Paul **is** reading a book right here and now.'
- 6- **H**-amaky boky i Paoly **izao**.
 future-read book article Paul that
 'Paul **is going to/is about to** read books (very soon/soon).'

Appendix C

Tense and Aspect: Locatability in English



- 1- Peter **is** working. DURATIVE = XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.
Present + be...ing on [+ CONTROL] verb *work*. This combination of tense and aspect unequivocally locates the event in Box # 1 on the diagram above.
- 1- Peter worked. PUNCTUAL = X. Peter **was** working. DURATIVE = XXXXXXXX.
Past tense on the verb *work*. This tense locates the event in Box # 2.
- 2- Peter **will** work. PUNCTUAL = X. Peter **will** be working. DURATIVE = XXX.
Future tense on the verb *work* locates the event in Box # 3.
- 5- Peter **has just** worked. PUNCTUAL = X.
 The combination *have + just + Ved* locates the event in Zone # 5.
- 6- Peter **is about** to work. INCEPTION, i.e. beginning of tunnel
Be about to V forces an internal viewing of the event and locates it in Zone # 6.

