

## **The Progressive Aspect and Continuous Tenses in *siSwati* - A morphosyntactic and semantic analysis**

Peter Nichols

Department of the Languages and Cultures of Africa, SOAS

The progressive aspect in *siSwati* is achieved by a number of strategies. Use of the short / long (conjoint / disjoint) present / perfect tenses. Use of the formatives *-sa-* and *-se-*. The Compound tenses with *-be-* (continuous tenses). The problem is that in the literature (grammars) it is not entirely consistent or clear how these various strategies motivate this important aspectual feature.

The problem goes deeper than this. Descriptive grammars and linguistic studies happily reference TAM systems (Tense, Aspect and Mood) but these terms tend to overlap, conflict and contradict each other in subtle ways when hard and fast definitions are applied. Indeed, in many instances, they strongly resist rigid compartmentalization. Is the Potential a Mood? or an Aspect? Is the Perfect a Tense? or an Aspect? Is the Hortative a Mood? or an Aspect. Are Mood and Modality the same? and if not how do they differ?

I am particularly interested in the relationship in *siSwati* between the Progressive Aspect and the Continuous tenses. D.K. Rycroft (compiler of the Concise *SiSwati* Dictionary and SOAS scholar) and Ziervogel and Mabuza (authors of the Grammar of the Swati Language) differ in many respects in their analysis of the *siSwati* TAM system. Notably the Remote / Immediate distinction in Past and Future tenses. Their treatment of the use and semantic effect of the formatives of the Progressive and Exclusive (*-sa-* and *-se-*) implication are also markedly different.

I hope in this presentation to highlight one or two examples of difficulty where empirical research with native speakers of *siSwati* may be able to achieve resolution. During my forthcoming fieldwork I will be gathering data in order to construct a *siSwati* temporal paradigm which I can then analyse with the various theoretical tools available. prominent amongst these will be the standard Moving Ego / Moving Time models favoured in the cognitive linguistics literature, Robert Botne's cognitive analysis of Bantu tense systems using Privileged and Dissociated Domains (which I will briefly describe in this talk if time permits) and the Ascending Time and Descending Time models favoured by Derek Nurse and John Hewson also used primarily in the analysis of Bantu language TAM systems.

Clearly this will be an enormous ask for a PhD proposal. It is therefore my intention to gather temporal / aspectual data fairly broadly and then in my analysis focus on the progressive aspect, leaving the remaining areas of the temporal paradigm for post-doctoral research.