Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics
Volume [18] 2025, 203-218

A Sketch of Tense, Aspect and Modality in Bongcher

Niloy Chakraborty*

Abstract

The paper has examined tense, aspect and modality in Bongcher, a Tibeto-Burman language of Kuki-Chin branch. The aspect and modality has been discussed with reference to past, present and future tenses, and simple, completive, incompletive, irrealis, and progressive tenses in Bongcher. In addition, few distinctive modality markers, such as /-tʰəi/, /raŋnaŋ/, /-inlaŋ/, /val/ etc. have also been discussed. Both primary and secondary data were analysed for this study, with the majority of the data coming from the speakers of Ompi and Nelsipara village in the district of Gomati. The study focused on Bongpui clan for data which was collected during a field visit in September and October, 2025 in Nelsipara and Tuicholong (Near Ompi) villages, in Amarpur sub-division.

Keywords: Bongcher, Tense, Aspect, Mood, Modality, Irrealis Aspect

1. Introduction

In recent years, modality has been acknowledged as a valid cross-linguistic grammatical category for linguistic typological studies[1]. It is a category that is closely associated with tense and aspect in that all three categories are categories of the clause and are generally, but not always, marked within the verbal complex (Palmer, 2001, p.3). In a theoretical sense, all three are involved in the circumstance or occurrence that is reported by the utterance. Aspect is concerned with the nature of the event, specifically with its 'internal temporal constituency', whereas tense is plainly concerned with the time of the event (Comrie, 1976, p.3). Modality is concerned with the status of the proposition that described the event (Palmer, 2001, p.3). In contrast to tense and aspect, modality just refers to the condition of the proposition rather than any specific aspect of the event. Making a binary[2] distinction between 'non-modal' and 'modal' or 'declarative' and 'non-declarative' and linking this distinction to the notional contrast of 'factual' and 'non-factual' or 'real' and 'unreal' is one way to analyse it (Palmer, 2001, p.4).

The word 'tense' comes from the Latin translation of the Greek word 'khronos', which means 'time' (Lyons, 1968). The grammatical system of a language that expresses tense, aspect, and mood or modality is known as tense-aspect-mood or TAM in short. It is also

* Tripura University; nilaychk@gmail.com

frequently referred to as tense-modality-aspect, or TMA. According to Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994), tense conveys 'location in time', aspect deals with the 'fabric of time a single block of time, continuous flow of time, or repetitive occurrence', and mood or modality illustrates the 'degree of necessity, obligation, probability, ability, etc.'

Grammatical categories of tense[3], aspect[4] and mood (TAM) are incorporated into verbs to represent time, temporal structure, and modality. TAM typically takes the shape of morphemes in verbs. Aspect describes the dynamism of an action, whether it is finished or on-going, while tense describes the manifestation of time, whether it is past or not. Similarly, speakers' attitudes regarding the action such as command, certainty, prohibition, wish, or will are reflected in their mood. Along with aspect and mood, Crystal (2008) challenges the use of tense as a category in the grammatical description of verbs, focusing mainly on how the grammatical category indicates time. However, Comrie (1985) notes that aspect is the grammaticalization of the expression of internal temporal constituency, which is concerned with the nature of the event, whether it is on-going or completed, and tense is concerned with time, or the grammaticalization of its placement in time. According to Palmer (2001), the status of the notion describing the event is what modality is all about. Similarly, Bybee et al. (1994) point out that mood and modality can be refused as the grammaticalization of speakers' (subject) emotions and beliefs because they are not as easily defined as tense and aspect. Aspects are several perspectives on a situation's internal temporal constituency (Holt, 1943 as cited by Comrie, 1976). In conclusion aspect relates the internal temporal structure of an action, mood connects the purpose toward the proposition, and tense relates the time of an action.

2. The Language

Sailo (1992) states that Tripura is home to nineteen recognized tribal communities, among which Bongchers identify themselves as the sixth-largest sub-tribe of the Halam community. However, the exact number of Halam sub-tribes remains uncertain and continues to be a matter or scholarly discussion. Historical records provide varying classifications of the Halam sub-groups. The Tripura State Gazetteer (Vol. 16, Part 29, Census 1931) lists nine Halam tribes: Morsum, Rangkhol, Koloi, Kaibeng, Bongshel, Rupini, Korbong, Thangchep, and Chorai. Furthermore, the 1931 Census identified as many as nineteen Halam sub-tribes, indicating the complexity and fluidity of Halam ethnographic classification. Despite these variations, there is broad agreement among scholars and community members that Bongchers constitute one of the sub-tribes of the Halam tribe. The community is also referred to as *Bongshel* or *Bongshi* (Sailo, 1991, p.3). Etymologically, the term Bongcher derives from two native lexical items: *bong* means 'to cut' and *cher* means 'sprout'. The Bongchers represent one of the smallest indigenous communities in Tripura, with an estimated population ranging between 680 to 1000 individuals (Bongcher, 2011, p.vi). Most Bongchers are concentrated in settlements

located at the foothills of the Baramura range, particularly in Kulai, Ambassa, Nelsibongcher Para of Ompi. Smaller populations are also found in Agartala, Dhanalekha and Teliamura. Linguistically the language comes under Old-Kuki-Chin group. Schematically it can be represented as Sino-Tibetan > Tibeto-Burman > Kuki-Chin > Old Kuki-Chin > Bongcher.

3. Research Objectives and Methodology

The paper has discussed the TAM in the Bongcher language. The paper is divided into four sections such as tense markers in the language, aspectual discussion on Bongcher, moods in Bongcher and lastly different modal in Bongcher, which has been discussed under a single section called discussion. For this study, both the primary and secondary sources of data were employed. The secondary data has been collected from books, journals, articles, records, and the digital archive. Community speakers from Gomati district (Tripura) were interviewed during fieldwork, conducted in September and October, 2025 which served as the main source of data. Nikon D5300 digital camera and a Zoom H4N Pro audio recorder were used to record and digitize the data. We primarily distributed questionnaire related to tense, aspect and mood. Apart from this, we have also recorded folk narratives to get comprehensive data. In this data collection, total 8 community members have involved from different age groups, gender and literacy backgrounds.



Figure 1: Map of Ampi (Ompi), place of data collection

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the distribution of mood and modality with special reference to tense and aspect in the Bongcher language. The primary goals of this paper are as follows—

a. To describe how tense and aspectual qualities are expressed in the language.

b. To analyse moods and modality in Bongcher, especially the markers.

c. To identify the individual lexical elements (if any) and morphemes (free and bound) that conveys the aspect and tense of the language.

4. Discussion

4.1. Tense

According to Payne (1997), tense is "the grammatical expression of the relation of the time of an event at some reference point of time, usually the moment the clause is uttered." Languages are able to categorize tenses according to two-way distinctions, such as past vs. non-past, future vs. non-future, and present vs. non-present) and three-way distinctions (past, present, and future). Among the Tibeto-Burman languages that regularly differentiate between future and non-future tenses are Angami (Giridhar, 1980), Dimasa (Longmailai, 2014) from the Bodo-Garo group, and Mongen Ao (Coupe, 2007) from the Naga group. Moreover, tense is a category used in the grammatical description of verbs (along with aspect and mood), referring primarily to the way the grammar marks the time at which the action denoted by the verb took place (Crystal, 2000, p.384).

The characteristics of Bongcher TAM are covered in the further details below. We can characterize the present tense in Bongcher as a situation situated temporally with or during the moment of utterance, the past tense as located prior to the moment of utterance, and the future tense as located subsequent to the moment of utterance because tense locates the time of a situation in relation to the moment of utterance (Comrie, 1976). Bongcher makes a distinction between the past, present, and future tenses. Here are some sentences from Bongcher that demonstrate the use of tense markers and basic tenses—

1. *sita* *a-se*
   [Present]
   3SG PRO PRE-go
   'Sita goes'

2. *ram* *a-se-laijiŋ*
   3SG PRO PRE-go-PROG
   'Ram is going'

3. *sita* *a-se-ta*
   [Past]
   3SG PRO PRE-go-PST
   'Sita went'

4. *ram* *a-se-jei-ta*
   3SG PRO PRE-go-COMPL-PST
   'Ram had gone'

5. *sita* *ələi-se-laijiŋ*
   3SG PST-go-PROG
   'Sita was going'

6. *sita* *se-a-ti*
   [Future]
   3SG go-PRO PRE-FUT

'Sita will go'

7. *atak* *se-a-ti-laijiŋ*
   3SG go-PRO PRE-FUT-PROG
   'S/he will be going'

In the aforementioned examples, the present tense is unmarked in Bongcher, which is really an interesting feature of the language. In examples 3—5, the past tense is marker by two separate morphemes, such as suffix */-ta/* and prefix */alәi-/*, and lastly the future tense is marked by the suffix */-ti/* in examples 6—7. Tense in Bongcher is marked by different suffixes which is again elaborated in the following examples 8—10.

8. *rubi* *minjani* *ompipara* *a-se-ta*
   3SG yesterday ompipara PRO PRE-go-PST
   'Rubi went to Ompipara, yesterday'

9. *laksmi* *avani* *udaipur* *a-se*
   3SG today udaipur PRO PRE-go
   'Laxmi goes to Udaipur, today'

10. *ram* *nautuka* *sʌbrum* *se-a-ti*
    3SG tomorrow sabroom go-PRO PRE-FUT
    'Ram will go to Sabroom, tomorrow'

The above sentences (8—10) demonstrate that the underlying verb */se/*, means 'go' stays the same even though it appears with distinct adverbial times, */minjani/* 'yesterday', */avani/* 'today', and */nautuka/* 'tomorrow'. Nevertheless, the morphemes */-ta/*, */-ti/* are added to indicate different locations in time. Separate suffixes indicate each tense; in other words, different markers are used to inflect the verb. The tense system in Bongcher is displayed in the table—1 below:

Tense	**Tense-Marker**
Present	*Ø*
Past	*/alәi-/, /-ta/*
Future	*/-ti/*

Table 1: Tense Markers

However, Bongcher's use of tense is frequently ambiguous, like other Tibeto-Burman languages. One of Bongcher's structural characteristics is the indistinctiveness of tense. Here are few examples—

11. *avani* *ku-atak* *in-a* *om-mak*
    today PRO PRE-3SG house-LOC stay-NEG
    'S/he is not at home today'

12. *minjani* *ku-atak* *in-a* *alәi om-mak*
    yesterday PRO PRE-3SG house-LOC PST stay-NEG
    'S/he was not at home yesterday'

13. *nautuka* *ku-atak* *in-a* *om-nani*
tomorrow PRO PRE-3SG house-LOC EXIS-FUT-NEG
'S/he will not be at home tomorrow'

The aforementioned examples demonstrate how the verb ends in the first two sentences */avani/*, which means 'today', and */minjani/*, which means 'yesterday'—are identical despite occurring at separate adverbial times. In other words, time reference is not grammaticalized since there is no clear agreement between the verb ends and the adverbial time. Additionally, the above examples demonstrate that the verb primarily distinguishes between the realis and irrealis forms. Therefore, it is more convenient to talk about aspect rather than tense in Bongcher.

4.2. Aspect

Aspect in Bongcher denotes an action's time distribution. Aspects are several perspectives on the internal temporal components of a situation or an event. In other words, aspect shows the internal organization of a situation or occurrence. Bongcher contains the following kinds of aspects.

4.2.1. Simple Aspect

In Bongcher, simple aspect shows simple statement, habitual, universal truth. Following examples 14—19 shows the simple aspect in Bongcher—

14. *sərat* *əini-raŋ* *dut* *a-pek*
[General statement]
cow we-DATmilk PRO PRE-give
'Cow gives us milk'

15. *kʰomol* *ni-raŋ* *a-rebel*
[Universal truth]
earth sun-ACC PRO PRE-revolves
'The earth goes round the sun'

16. *atak* *bu* *ke-nek*
[Habitual aspect]
3SG rice PRO PRE-eat-PRS
'S/he eats rice'

17. *atak* *naŋ-raŋ* *ke-di*
[Stative verbs]
3SG 2SG-DAT PRO PRE-love
'S/he loves you'

18. *atak* *bu* *ke-nek-ta*
[Simple past]
3SG rice PRO PRE-eat-PST
'S/he ate rice'

4.2.2. Completive Aspect

The completion of an action is shown by the completive aspect in Bongcher. Therefore, a completed action is referred to as the

completive aspect. As in the following examples, the completive form of the verb is created by appending the past suffix */-ta/* to the active verb together with the completive aspect marker */-jəi/*, which means 'complete or finish'.

19. *atak* *bu* *ke-nek-jəi-ta*
    3SG rice PRO PRE-eat-COMPL-PST
    'S/he has eaten rice'

20. keima a-se-jəi-ta
    1SG PRO PRE-come-COMPL-PST
    'I have gone'

21. *ani* *a-se-jəi-ta*
    3PL PRO PRE-come-COMPL-PST
    'They have gone'

4.2.3. Incompletive Aspect

In Bongcher, an incompletive aspect denotes an incomplete action. A faulty action at a specific point in the past is referred to as the incompletive aspect. The suffix */-niŋ/* is added to the verbal root to produce the verb's incomplete form, as in the following examples (22) & (23)

22. *atak* *tʰeihai* *ročok-niŋ* *ka-sak-ta*
    3SG mango buy-ICPL PRO PRE-eat-PST
    'S/he bought mango and ate'

23. *kəima* *kančili* *pak-ka* *ročok-niŋ* *ki-ni-pek*
    1SG shirt CLF-one buy-IPLC me-to-give
    'I bought a shirt for myself'

4.2.4. Progressive Aspect

In Bongcher, the progressive aspect denotes the continuation of an action. Regarding the progressive aspect, Bongcher presents a two-way contrast in tense, such as past and present but no future. The marker */-laijiŋ/* expresses the progressive aspect. A few examples that illustrate Bongcher progressive aspect are provided below.

24. *kəima* *twi* *a-in-laijiŋ*
    1SG water PRO PRE-drink-PROG
    'I am drinking water'

25. *kəima* *twi* *aləi-in-laijiŋ*
    1SG water PST-drink-PROG
    'I was drinking water'

4.2.5. Irrealis Aspect

In Bongcher, the term 'irrealis' or 'unrealized aspect' refers to an action that will occur soon; as a result, it is exclusively used in the future tense with the marker */-ti/*. In the irrealis aspect, the following examples discuss in details.

26. *naŋ* *kančili* *pak-ka* *ročok-ki-ti*
    2SG shirt CLF-one buy-PRO PRE-FUT
    'You will buy a shirt'

27. *kəima* *čə* *putla* *le* *rədai-a-ti*
    1SG DEM doll with play-PRO PRE-FUT
    'I will play with the doll'

28. *ram* *bazar-a* *se-a-ti*
    ram market-LOC go-PRO PRE-FUT
    'Ram will go to bazaar'

4.3. Mood

Mood indicates syntactic and morphological characteristics of verbs, instead of verbal inflections that enable speakers to convey their attitude toward what they are saying (Palmer, 2001). Following section gives a detailed discussion of the various moods found in Bongcher language.

4.3.1. Indicative Mood

In Bongcher, factual and habitual assertions are made using the indicative mood. It also describes the status of the action in connection to the verbal act or the moment the action occurs. As will be covered below, the indicative mood in Bongcher is expressed for three tenses—present, past and future.

In Bongcher, the present indicative describes the action occurring or the situation at the moment of the speech act. It also refers to statements that are factual and actions that are routinely performed. Here are the few examples—

29. *sita* *a-er*
    [Active]
    3SG PRO PRE-cook
    'Sita cooks'

30. *hima* *in* *pak-ka* *a-om*
    [Stative]
    DEM house CLF-one PRO PRE-EXIS
    'This is a house'

31. *kʰomol* *a-čeŋ*
    [Factual]
    earth PRO PRE-round
    'Earth is round'

32. *ram* *ani* *librari* *a-se*
    [Habitual]
    3SG everyday library PRO PRE-go
    'Ram goes to library everyday'

The activity that occurred prior to the speech act is referred to as past indicative. In Bongcher, the non-future suffix */-ta/* is added to the past indicative suffix for both stative and active verbs. For instance—

33. *ram* *a-mu-ta*
    [Active]
    3SG PRO PRE-see-PST
    'Ram saw'

34. *naŋ* *kə-rətəi-ta*
    2SG PRO PRE-run-PST
    'You ran'

35. *atak* *kolom* *kə-nəi-ta*
    [Stative]
    3SG pen PRO PRE-has-PST
    'S/he had a pen'

36. *niŋ* *aləi* *daktor*
    2SG PST doctor
    'You were a doctor'

The future indicative describes a certain activity that will undoubtedly be carried out after the speech act. In Bongcher, the future tense marker */-ti/* indicates both the definite and the dubitative future suffix. Both active and stative verbs utilize the future suffix */-ti/*. Here are some instances—

37. *ani* *rəsəi* *a-ti*
    [Active]
    3PL learn PRO PRE-FUT
    'They will learn'

38. *kəima* *bazar-a* *se-ki-ti*
    1SG bazaar-LOC go-PRO PRE-FUT
    'I will go to the market'

39. *atak* *kolom* *kʰat-ka* *nəi-ki-ti*
    [Stative]
    3SG pen CLF-one have-PRO PRE-FUT
    'S/he will have a pen'

40. *ram* *daktor* *om-a-ti*
    3SG doctor EXIS-PRO PRE-FUT
    'Ram will be a doctor'

It should be noted that, as demonstrated in the examples below 41—43, Bongcher expresses the progressive tense in indicative mood by appending the progressive aspect suffix marker */-laijiŋ/* to the verb.

41. *kəima* *a-rətəi-laijiŋ*
    1SG PRO PRE-run-PROG

'I am running'

42. *kəima* *ələi* *a-rətei-laijiŋ*
    1SG PST PRO PRE-run-PROG
    'I was running'

43. *kəima* *rətəi-laijiŋ* *a-ti*
    1SG run-PROG PRO PRE-FUT
    'I will be running'

4.3.2. Imperative Mood

The imperative mood in Bongcher denotes command or request to perform certain action by the listener. The subject of the imperative mood is always in the second person and often may not be overtly expressed. The imperative form of the verb is obtained by adding the imperative suffix */-ro/* to the active verb. On the other hand, the polite form of the imperative is created by prefixing the active verb with */rəŋmuŋin/* stands for 'please' as in examples (46) & (47). The following examples illustrate this—

44. *rətəi-ro*
    run-IMP
    '(You) run

45. *rəsəi-ro*
    learn-IMP
    '(You) learn

46. *rəŋmuŋin* *ram-raŋ het-ro*
    please 3SG-ACC call-IMP
    'Please call Ram'

47. *rəŋmuŋin* *ink^{h}a* *rohoŋ-ro*
    please door open-IMP
    'Please open the door'

4.3.3. Hortative Mood

In Bongcher, the hortative mood is employed to express a certain desire or to imply that a certain action will be taken. The hortative suffix */-ri/*, or */-rese/* is added to the active verb in Bongcher to produce the hortative form of the verb. Here are such instances—

48. *mastor* *ačaŋ* *ri-ki-ti*
    teacher become HORT-1SG-FUT
    'Let me become a teacher'

49. *atak-raŋ se-ri-an-ti*
    3SG-ACC go-HORT-PRO PRE-FUT
    'Let her go'

50. *ani* *bu* *a-sak-rese*
    3PL rice PRO PRE-eat-HORT
    'Let them eat'

4.4. Modal Construction in Bongcher

Bongcher uses specific 'modal structures' to convey the subjunctive mood. The simple finite verb is used with specific affixes to create the modal forms in Bongcher. Below is a detailed discussion of various modal-formations in Bongcher—

51. *kəima la a-sak-tʰəi-ta*
    [Modal of Ability][5]
    1SG song PRO PRE-sing-MOD ABL-PST
    'I could sing'

52. *sita la a-sak-tʰəi*
    3SG song PRO PRE-sing-MOD ABL
    'Sita can sing'

53. *niŋ raŋnaŋ a-nek*
    [Modal of Certainty][6]
    2SG MOD CER PRO PRE-eat
    'You must eat'

54. *atak la raŋnaŋ a-sak-ta*
    3SG song MOD CER PRO PRE-sing-PST
    'S/he must have sang the song'

55. *niŋ kʰɔm a-nek-jəi-ta val*
56. [Modal of Probability][7]
    2SG also PRO PRE-eat-COMPL-PST MOD PRO
    'You might have eaten'

57. *laksmi kʰɔm a-hoŋ val*
    3SG also PRO PRE-come MOD PRO
    'Laxmi may also come'

58. *atakma hoŋ-inlaŋ kəima se-ki-ti*
    [Modal of Condition][8]
    3SG come-MOD CON1SG go-PRO PRE-FUT
    'If she comes, I will go'

59. *hana naŋma om-inlaŋ*
    DEM 2SG EXIS-MOD CON
    'If you were there'

60. *atak kʰamkʰa tʰo-ki-ti*
    [Modal of Determination][9]
    3SG MOD DET do-PRO PRE-FUT
    'S/he will do it'
61. *naŋ kʰamka se-ki-ti*
    2SG MOD DET go-PRO PRE-FUT
    'You will go

62. *atak* *bu* *ka-nek-nəŋ*
[Modal of Necessity][10]
3SG food PRO PRE-eat-MOD NEC
'S/he needs to eat food'

63. *naŋ* *boi* *kʰat-ka* *ke-nəŋ*
2SG book CL-one PRO PRE-MOD NEC
'You need a book'

5. Conclusion

The paper presents a descriptive and analytical study of the grammatical categories of tense, aspect, mood, and modality in Bongcher, a lesser-documented Tibeto-Burman language belonging to the Kuki-Chin branch and spoken by Bongcher community of Tripura, India. The study is significant because linguistic descriptions of Bongcher remain scarce, and the paper contributes to the documentation and preservation of an endangered indigenous language. The analysis demonstrates that Bongcher formally distinguishes three tenses present, past, and future. The present tense is generally unmarked, while the past is expressed through the prefix /-*alə*i/ and the suffix /-*ta*/, and the future is marked by /-*ti*/. Nevertheless, the study observes that tense distinctions are frequently ambiguous and that temporal reference often depends on contextual adverbials rather than verbal inflection alone. This feature aligns Bongcher with many other Tibeto-Burman languages where the grammatical opposition between realis and irrealis is often more prominent than a rigid tense system. Consequently, the author suggests that aspectual distinctions provide a more reliable framework for understanding temporal reference in the language. Five aspectual categories are identified: simple, completive, incompletive, progressive, and irrealis. The simple aspect is used for habitual actions, universal truths, and general statements. The completive aspect, formed through the marker /-*jə*i/, denotes actions that have been fully completed. The incompletive aspect, marked by /-*niŋ*/, signals unfinished or partially completed events. Progressive aspect is expressed through /-*laijiŋ*/ and highlights actions in progress, while irrealis aspect is associated with future or unrealized events and is marked by /-*ti*/. The paper further identifies three major mood categories indicative, imperative, hortative. Subjunctive moods are realized through modal constructions. Particularly noteworthy is the rich inventory of modal markers. The suffix /-*tʰə*i/ express ability, /-*raŋnaŋ*/ indicates determination, and /-*nəŋ*/ conveys necessity. These markers illustrate how Bongcher grammaticalizes different shades of epistemic and deontic modality. The study demonstrates that Bongcher possesses a highly structured TAM system characterized by the

interaction of tense, aspect, mood, and modality. The findings not only enrich our understanding of Kuki-Chin linguistics but also provide valuable documentation of an underrepresented language, thereby contributing to broader typological and comparative studies of Tibeto-Burman languages.

Abbreviations

1SG—first person singular
2SG—second person singular
3SG—third person singular
3PL—third person plural
ACC—accusative case
CLF—classifier
COMPL—completive
EXIS—existential copula
FUT—future
HORT—hortative
ICPL—incompletive
MOD ABL—modal of ability
MOD CER—modal of certainty
MOD CON—modal of condition
MOD NEC—modal of necessity
MOD PRO—modal of probability
MOD DET—modal of determination
PRS—present
PROG—progressive
PST—past

References

Abbi, A. (2001). *A manual of linguistic fieldwork and structures of Indian languages*. Lincom Europa.

Bauman, J. J. (1975). *Pronouns and pronominal morphology in Tibeto-Burman* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of California, Berkeley.

Bhat, D. N. S. (1999). *The prominence of tense, aspect and mood*. John Benjamins.

Bhat, D. N. S., & Ningomba, M. S. (1997). *Manipuri grammar*. Lincom Europa.

Binnick, R. I. (1991). *Time and the verb*. Oxford University Press.

Bohnemeyer, J. (2019). Elicitation and documentation of tense and aspect. *Language Documentation and Conservation*.

Brahma, D. (2014). Inflectional processes of tense and aspect in Bodo. *Language in India, 14*(1).

Chung, S., & Timberlake, A. (1985). Tense, aspect, and mood. In T. Shopen (Ed.), *Language typology and Syntactic Description: Vol. 3. Grammatical categories and the lexicon* (pp. 202–258). Cambridge University Press.

Comrie, B. (1985). *Tense*. Cambridge University Press.

Coupe, A. R. (2013). Tense, but in the mood: Diachronic perspectives on the representation of time in Ao. *Language and Linguistics, 14*(6), 1105–1138.

Crystal, D. (2000). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. Blackwell.

Dahl, Ö. (1985). *Tense and aspect systems*. Basil Blackwell.

Givón, T. (1984). *Syntax: A functional-typological introduction*. Vol.1 John Benjamins.

Palmer, F. R. (2001). *Mood and modality*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139167178

Singh, C. Y. (1999). Tense and aspect in Kuki-Chin. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area, 22*(2)

Sailo, S. 1992. *The Bongchers.* Directorate of research, government of Tripura.

[1] People in contemporary Western civilization are used to precise descriptions of time, locations and other time-related phenomena. At home, a lot of people talk about minuscule intervals of time, like minutes, seconds etc. It is theoretically possible to achieve an unlimited degree of precision by combining the linguistic possibilities with those of normal mathematical motion. However, such accuracy is not achievable in many other cultures, possibly only through direct appropriation of phrases from more advanced societies. In fact, some cultures place relatively little importance on temporal location accuracy; in Yidiny, for example, it is impossible to lexically distinguish between the concepts of 'today' and 'now' (Dixon, 1977, p.498-499).

[2] Apart from the aforementioned binary distinctions, there is one more distinction i.e. 'realis' and 'irrealis'. According to Mithun (1999: 173), 'the realis portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception' On the other hand, 'irrealis portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination' (Palmer 2001: 1). The concept of realis and irrealis can be better realised in Papuan language Amele, which can distinguish it 'remote past', 'habitual past' and 'present' from 'future', 'imperative', 'hortative', 'counterfactual' and 'negative'. For instance—Palmer (1990, p.371-405)

a. *ho* *bu-busal-en* *age qo-in*
pig SIM run out-3SG+DS+REAL 3PL hit-PL+REM.PAST
'They killed the pig as it ran out'

b. *ho* *bu-busal-eb* *age qo-qag-an*
pig SIM run out-3SG+DS+IRR 3PL hit-3PL-FUT
'They will kill the pig as it runs out'

The above examples show that the realis marker *–en* is used to mark the 'remote past', whereas the irrealis marker *–eb* is used to denote the 'future'.

[3] From a linguistic point of view, tense refers to how situations are described linguistically in terms of their temporal position; in many languages, this is done through grammatical phenomena. However, the grammatical categories that express time as verbal particles make comprise a group that makes it possible to express information about the temporality of the situation in a less accurate way than other ways. Only the anteriority, simultaneity, and posterity of a circumstance in relation to another on a timeline are typically coded by the grammatical categories that represent time in languages (Comrie, 1985).

[4] According to Smith (1991, p.22), 'The concepts of aspect play a role in all languages, so far as we know. And the aspectual systems of different languages are strikingly similar […]. We define in Universal Grammar a maximally general aspectual system. It has the basic aspectual categories that generally occur in languages of the world, and on which particular variation depends.

[5] In Bongcher, the use of */-tʰəi/* typically indicates the modal of ability. In Bongcher, the modal of ability is formed by the tense-marking the base verb with suffix */-tʰəi/*.

[6] Modal of Certainty is structured out of prefixing */raŋnaŋ/* to the following finite verbs of present, past and future indicative mood.

[7] In Bongcher language, a different modal of probability marker */val/* is employed in relation to food and beverages, whereas the modal of probability can also be expressed by the suffix marker */-tʰəi/*, which is again polysemous to modal of ability. For instance—

c. *ram* *kʰɔm* *a-hoŋ-tʰəi*
3SG also PRO PRE-come-MOD PRO
'Ram will also come'

On the other hand, the optional addition of the word */ kʰɔm/* fulfils the grammatical requirements.

[8] In Bongcher, the conditional mood is conveyed by appending /*–inlaŋ/*, which means 'if', to either active verb */čaŋ/* or */om/* which states 'remain or stay'.

[9] Bongcher expresses modal of determination by the suffix */-kʰamkʰa/*, which has been shown in the examples 59—60.

[10] In Bongcher, present, past and future tense markers are combined with the suffix */-nəŋ/*, which means 'need' to obtain modal of necessity.