

# TENSE-ASPECT MARKING IN BABANKI

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# INTRODUCTION

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Goal: Provide a description of tense-aspect marking in Babanki, a Grassfields Bantu language of the Ring subgroup spoken in North-West Cameroon (Hyman 1980, Akumbu & Chibaka 2012).

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## INTRODUCTION: HIGHLIGHTS

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- multiple past and future tenses as well as a progressive/non-progressive aspect distinction.
- a conjoint-disjoint contrast similar to the CJ/DJ distinctions which have been extensively documented in Narrow Bantu (van der Wal & Hyman 2017 and references cited therein).
- Tense-aspect markers are expressed through an extensive system of multiple exponence, which may involve pre- and/or post-verbal particles, prefixes and suffixes, and tone.

## INTRODUCTION: ROAD MAP

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- preliminary aspects of Babanki morphology and tonology
- indicative tenses as they appear in the perfective
- indicative tenses as they appear in the progressive
- corresponding negatives
- Conclusion

- Structure of Babanki sentences: STVO
- Subject-Verb agreement
- Subject pronouns



# AGREEMENT

Table I

class	Pro	Agr		class	Pro	Agr
1	γə	∅		7	ká	ká
2	və	ə		8	və	ə
3	ghá	ə		9	zə	∅
5	zá	ə		10	sá	sá
6	ghá	ə		13	tá	tá
6a	mə	∅		19	fá	fá

- CV structure of verbs
  - verb root: CV or CVC,
  - verb stem: CV, CVC, CVCV or CVCCV

# BABANKI VERB FORMS

Table 2

root tone	root	stem	infinitive	imperative	gloss	stem shape
H	zhî	zhî	á- <sup>↓</sup> zhî	zhî	‘eat’	CV
H	lám	lám	á- <sup>↓</sup> lám	lám	‘cook’	CVC
H	shí	shítá	á- <sup>↓</sup> shítá	shítá	‘collect’	CVCV
H	sáŋ	sáŋtá	á- <sup>↓</sup> sáŋtá	sáŋtá	‘sift’	CVCCV
L	lè	lè	á-lè	lèé	‘lose’	CV
L	kùm	kùm	á-kùm	kùmá	‘touch’	CVC
L	shì	shìsà	á-shìsà	shìsá	‘remove’	CVCV
L	lìm	lìmsà	á-lìmsà	lìmsá	‘heat’	CVCCV



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- Babanki distinguishes four present/past and three future tenses, which we refer to as P0-P3 and F1-F3.
  - Pre-verbal segmental tense auxiliaries (Table 3) held constant across the perfective and progressive aspects as well as in the corresponding negatives.

# BABANKI TENSE DISTINCTIONS

Table 3

Tense	AUX	Approximate time period
P0	`	Present, a few minutes ago
P1	yì	Today
P2	tè	Yesterday to about 2 weeks ago
P3	à N-	More than 2 weeks ago
F1	à	Not longer than in a few minutes
F2	nè	Later today
F3	lù	From tomorrow on



# PERFECTIVE MARKING

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In the perfective aspect there is a distinction between conjoint (CJ) and disjoint (DJ) forms in all seven tenses. I schematize the analysis of main clause affirmative (MCA) perfective tense marking in Table 4, where ... refers to the position of the verb stem. The tonal marking is intended to be underlying, e.g. P1 DJ /ǎ yì/ and P2 /ǎ tǎ/ which are however realized [ǎ yî] and [ǎ tâ] by H tone spreading.



## CONJOINT AND DISJOINT TENSE MARKING

Table 4

Tense	Conjoint	Disjoint
<b>P0</b>	` ...	á ... ` lí
<b>P1</b>	yì ...	á yì ...
<b>P2</b>	tè ...	á tè ...
<b>P3</b>	à N ... (')	á N ... ` lí
<b>F1</b>	à ...	á à ... '
<b>F2</b>	nè ...	á nè ... '
<b>F3</b>	lù ...	á lù ... '



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## PROPERTIES OF BABANKI CONJOINT AND DISJOINT FOLLOWING VAN DER WAL & HYMAN (2017)

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- (i) The DJ is used with truth value focus, either contrastively ('Bung DID eat the fufu') or when the truth value is part of the assertion (i.e. not presupposed): "Hey, guess what? Bung ate the fufu').
- (ii) The CJ is used when the truth value is presupposed, either in answer to a question 'What happened?' (answer: 'Bung ate the fufu') or when focus is on another element of the utterance, either in answer to a WH question, e.g. 'Who ate the fufu?', answer: 'BUNG ate the fufu'. 'What did Bung eat?', answer: 'Bung ate the FUFU'. 'What did Bung do with the fufu?', answer: -'Bung ATE the fufu', or contrastively, e.g. 'Bung ate the FUFU, not the vegetables'.
- (iii) The verb can occur at the end of a MCA sentence with DJ marking; it cannot occur at the end of a MCA sentence with CJ marking (there must be something following the verb).





## PROPERTIES OF BABANKI CONJOINT AND DISJOINT FOLLOWING VAN DER WAL & HYMAN (2017)

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- (iv) There is no CJ/DJ contrast in negatives or relative clauses (where the verb can occur last).
- (v) Non-contrastive negative and relative clause marking of P (non-future) tenses looks like the CJ marking in MCA (where one does not expect focus marking of truth value). While this is typical of CJ/DJ languages, the future tenses are different: their marking in negatives and relative clauses looks more like the DJ in main clause affirmative clauses.
- (vi) The DJ forms are more segmentally marked than the CJ forms. As seen in Table 4, the DJ forms all involve a H tone schwa that precedes the TAM auxiliary. P0 and P3 also have a postposed marker /`lí/.



## ANALYSIS OF CJ FORMS

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(1) H	a.	Bún	tè	zhì	kā-báyn	'Bung ate the fufu'
		Bung	P2	eat	7-fufu	
	b.	Bún	tè	lám	kā-báyn	'Bung cooked the fufu'
		Bung	P2	cook	7-fufu	
	c.	Bún	tè	sə̀ŋtá	kà-báyn	'Bung sifted the fufu'
		Bung	P2	sift	7-fufu	

## ANALYSIS OF CJ FORMS

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(2) L	a.	Búnj	tè	lè	kè-báyn	'Bung lost the fufu'
		Bung	P2	lose	7-fufu	
	b.	Búnj	tè	kùm	kè-báyn	'Bung touched the fufu'
		Bung	P2	touch	7-fufu	
	c.	Búnj	tè	lìmsè	kè-báyn	'Bung heated the fufu'
		Bung	P2	heat	7-fufu	

## ANALYSIS OF CJ FORMS

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(3) H	a.	Bún	à	n-zhì	kā-báyn	'Bung ate the fufu'
		Bung	IPFV.P3	N-eat	7-fufu	
	b.	Bún	à	n-làm	kā-báyn	'Bung cooked the fufu'
		Bung	IPFV.P3	N-cook	7-fufu	
	c.	Bún	à	n-sə̀ŋtá	kà-báyn	'Bung sifted the fufu'
		Bung	IPFV.P3	N-sift	7-fufu	

## ANALYSIS OF CJ FORMS

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(4) L	a.	Bún	à	n-lèé	kā-báyn	‘Bung lost the fufu’
		Bung	IPFV.P3	N-lose	7-fufu	
	b.	Bún	à	ŋ-kùmá	kā-báyn	‘Bung touched the fufu’
		Bung	IPFV.P3	N-touch	7-fufu	
	c.	Bún	à	n-lìmsá	kā-báyn	‘Bung heated the fufu’
		Bung	IPFV.P3	N-heat	7-fufu	



## DJ FORMS

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Disjoint forms involve a DJ marker /á/ occurring between the subject and the verb (which however fuses with the /á/ auxiliary in the F1). Except for the spreading of the H of this /á/ onto the TAM auxiliaries /yì/ and /tè/, yielding [yî] and [tê], the P1 and P2 tone patterns are the same as CJ. I illustrate with P2 H and L forms.

## ANALYSIS OF DJ FORMS


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(5) H	a.	Bún	á	tê	zhì	kā-báyn	'Bung ate the fufu'
		Bung	PFV	P2	eat	7-fufu	
	b.	Bún	á	tê	lám	kā-báyn	'Bung cooked the fufu'
		Bung	PFV	P2	cook	7-fufu	
	c.	Bún	á	tê	sə̀ntá	kə̀-báyn	'Bung sifted the fufu'
		Bung	PFV	P2	sift	7-fufu	

## ANALYSIS OF DJ FORMS

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(6) L	a.	Búnj	é	tê	là	kè-báyn	'Bung lost the fufu'
		Bung	PFV	P2	lose	7-fufu	
	b.	Búnj	é	tê	kùm	kè-báyn	'Bung touched the fufu'
		Bung	PFV	P2	touch	7-fufu	
	c.	Búnj	é	tê	lìmsè	kè-báyn	'Bung heated the fufu'
		Bung	PFV	P2	heat	7-fufu	



# ANALYSIS OF DJ FORMS

Both P0 and P3 work differently from the CJ. First, they both acquire a post-verbal auxiliary /`lí/, represented by the P3 DJ forms in (7) and (8).

- (7) H    a.        Bún      á        n-zhí    ↓lí        kè-báyn    ‘Bung ate the fufu’  
                  Bung    PFV.P3   N-eat    P3        7-fufu
- b.        Bún      á        n-lám    ↓lí        kè-báyn    ‘Bung cooked the fufu’  
                  Bung    PFV.P3   N-cook   P3        7-fufu
- c.        Bún      á        n-sǎŋtǎ ↓lí        kè-báyn    ‘Bung sifted the fufu’  
                  Bung    PFV.P3   N-sift    P3        7-fufu

## ANALYSIS OF DJ FORMS

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(8) L	a.	Bún	é	n-lée	lí	kè-báyn	‘Bung ate the fufu’
		Bung	PFV.P3	N-lose	P3	7-fufu	
	b.	Bún	é	η-kúmè	lí	kè-báyn	‘Bung touched the fufu’
		Bung	PFV.P3	N-touch	P3	7-fufu	
	c.	Bún	é	n-límsè	lí	kè-báyn	‘Bung heated the fufu’
		Bung	PFV.P3	N-heat	P3	7-fufu	



## FUTURE DJ FORMS

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The H of the DJ marker /ǎ/ spreads onto the future auxiliaries /à/, /nè/ and /lù/. Rather than creating a HL falling tone, the result is that the L of these markers is delinked. As seen in the F2 DJ forms in (9), the delinked L triggers downstep on H tone verbs

# FUTURE DJ FORMS

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(9) H	a.	Bún	á	né	↓zhí	kā-báyn	‘Bung will eat the fufu’
		Bung	PFV	F2	eat	7-fufu	
	b.	Bún	á	né	↓lám	kā-báyn	‘Bung will cook the fufu’
		Bung	PFV	F2	cook	7-fufu	
	c.	Bún	á	né	↓sántá	kā-báyn	‘Bung will sift the fufu’
		Bung	PFV	F2	sift	7-fufu	

# FUTURE DJ FORMS

The corresponding L tone verbs show that the future DJ forms also involve a post-verbal H which fuses with the L tone of the noun prefix /kà-/, converting it to M:

(10) L	a.	Búnj	á	né	lè	kā-báyn ‘Bung will lose the fufu’
		Bung	PFV	F2	lose	7-fufu
	b.	Búnj	á	né	kùm	kā-báyn ‘Bung will touch the fufu’
		Bung	PFV	F2	touch	7-fufu
	c.	Búnj	á	né	lìmsá	kā-báyn ‘Bung will heat the fufu’
		Bung	PFV	F2	heat	7-fufu

## PROGRESSIVE FORMS

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The first important thing to note is that the progressive forms do not distinguish CJ from DJ. There is only one form per tense which is marked by a nasal prefix except in the P0 and a /L/ schwa suffix on the verb. In most cases the /L/ /-ə/ suffix is realized with the same tone as the verb root.



# PROGRESSIVE FORMS

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- (11) H    a.      Bún      lám-é                      kè-báyn                      ‘Bung is cooking fufu’      (P0)
- Bung      cook-PROG              7-fufu
- b.      Bún      tǎ              n-lám-é      kè-báyn      ‘Bung was cooking fufu’ (P2)
- Bung      P2              N-cook-PROG      7-fufu
- c.      Bún      é              né      n-lám-é              kè-báyn      ‘Bung was cooking fufu’ (F2)
- Bung      PFV              F2      N-cook-PROG      7-fufu



## PROGRESSIVE FORMS

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- (12) L a.      Búŋ      kùm-ə                      kə-báyn                      ‘Bung is touching fufu’      (P0)  
                  Bung      touch-PROG              7-fufu
- b.              Búŋ      tǎ              ŋ-kùm-ə                      kə-báyn      ‘Bung was touching fufu’(P2)  
                  Bung      P2              N-touch-PROG              7-fufu
- c.              Búŋ      á              né ŋ-kùm-ə                      kə-báyn      ‘Bung was touching fufu’ (F2)  
                  Bung      PFV              F2 N-touch-PROG      7-fufu

## PROGRESSIVE FORMS

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It is however the H-L pattern of the CV(C)CV verb stems /səŋtə/ 'sift' and /shítə/ 'collect' that show that the suffix must be L:

- (13) H    a.        Bún        səŋtə                kə-báyn        'Bung is sifting fufu' (P0)  
                  Bung        sift.PROG                7-fufu
- b.        Bún        tǎ    n-səŋtə                kə-báyn    'Bung was sifting fufu' (P2)  
                  Bung        P2    N-sift.PROG    7-fufu
- c.        Bún        á     né    n-səŋtə        kə-báyn    'Bung was sifting fufu' (F2)  
                  Bung        PFV   F2    N-sift.PROG    7-fufu

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PST tenses show the same segmental marking as the CJ forms, while the FUT tenses have the same /ǎ/ preceding the tense auxiliary as in the DJ forms. There are tonal differences, however.

First, except in P3, the PST tenses have a H tone following the tense auxiliary which produces a rising tone in the case of P1 and P2: /yǐ'/ → [yǐ̌], /tǎ'/ → [tǎ̌].

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The same H tone accounts for the tonal differences between the P0 CJ and the corresponding progressive:

- (14)    a. /Búŋ ` lám kèbáyn/    → Búŋ làm kēbáyn    ‘Bung has cooked the fufu’  
         b. /Búŋ ´ lám-è kèbáyn/    → Búŋ lámé kèbáyn    ‘Bung is cooking the fufu’

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There is no CJ/DJ distinction in the negative, although it is tempting to identify the omnipresent negative H tone schwa as the same *á* observed in the DJ.

Negative indicative verb forms all involve the markers *á kó`* preceding the tense auxiliaries, as in the following P2 Neg perfective forms:



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- (15) a.      Búnj      á      kó      tèt      zhì      kē-báyn      ‘Bung did not eat the fufu’  
         Bung      PFV      NEG      P2      eat      7-fufu
- b.      Búnj      á      kó      tèt      làm      kē-báyn      ‘Bung did not cook the fufu’  
         Bung      PFV      NEG      P2      cook      7-fufu
- c.      Búnj      á      kó      tèt      sàntá      kē-báyn      ‘Bung did not sift the fufu’  
         Bung      PFV      NEG      P2      sift      7-fufu

- |    |      |     |     |    |       |         |                               |
|----|------|-----|-----|----|-------|---------|-------------------------------|
| a. | Búnj | é   | kó  | tà | lè    | kè-báyn | ‘Bung did not eat the fufu’   |
|    | Bung | PFV | NEG | P2 | eat   | 7-fufu  |                               |
| b. | Búnj | é   | kó  | tà | kùm   | kè-báyn | ‘Bung did not touch the fufu’ |
|    | Bung | PFV | NEG | P2 | touch | 7-fufu  |                               |
| c. | Búnj | é   | kó  | tà | lìmsà | kè-báyn | ‘Bung did not heat the fufu’  |
|    | Bung | PFV | NEG | P2 | heat  | 7-fufu  |                               |

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I have presented part of the Babanki tense, aspect, and mood distinctions (perfective and progressive), both affirmative and negative. I have shown that there are seven indicative tenses in the language and that a conjoint-disjoint contrast similar to, but more pervasive than the CJ/DJ distinctions which have been extensively documented in Narrow Bantu is found in Babanki. A full study of the TAM system of the language requires a systematic presentation of all of the forms, including the imperative, subjunctive, and conditional moods.

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