A MICRO-VARIATION ANALYSIS OF THE VERBAL STRUCTURE OF LUNGU AND NAMWANGA LANGUAGES

Pethias Siame

Department of Literature and Languages, Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia

Kennedy Njenje Kangwa

Department of Literature and Languages, Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia

Djalilova Malika Shuxratovna

International School of Finance and Technology, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Azizbek Khurramov

International School of Finance and Technology, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Abstract: The paper presents a micro-variations analysis of tense in Lungu which is classified as M14 and Namwanga classified as M22. Lungu is spoken in the Northern Province of Zambia while Namwanga is spoken in Muchinga Province of Zambia. The paper aims to establish the micro-variations in the verbal structure of Lungu and Namwanga languages. The article adopted the qualitative descriptive design and used interviews, document analysis and comparative methods to collect and analyse data. Using micro-variations and comparative Bantu morphology (CBM) framing, the paper identifies and compares the various categories of micro-variations of tense in the Lungu and Namwanga languages. The article also evaluates the similarities and micro-variations in the two languages. The study shows that tense in Lungu and Namwanga languages is as has been attested by other Bantu languages. The study establishes that tense in the two languages is mutually intelligible. The analysis also reveals that Lungu and Namwanga languages are genetically related and share common structural components of tense. Therefore, there are more morphological similarities in the verbal structure than micro-variations in the two languages in terms of form.

Keywords: Analysis, comparative Bantu, micro-variation, verbal structure, Zambia

1. Introduction

Lungu and Namwanga languages are spoken in Zambia. Lungu is classified as M14 while Namwanga is classified as M22 (Guthrie, 1948). Lungu and Namwanga languages are cross-border languages. They are spoken along the border of Zambia and Tanzania. The native speakers of the Lungu language are in Mpulungu district. On the other hand, Namwanga is spoken in the Nakonde and Isoka districts. Lungu and Namwanga are spoken along the of boarder of Zambia and Tanzania (Nurse & Philippson, 1999). It is envisaged that the origin of the Lungu and Namwanga is common and the two languages are believed to be dialects of Fipa as their ancestor or mother language in Southern Tanzania (Nurse & Philippson, 1999). This situation shows that the Lungu and Namwanga languages are daughters of the Fipa language. It can be argued that the two languages can be described as sister languages because they stem from the same ancestor language.

However, very few studies have been conducted and documented on Lungu and Namwanga languages. This study is important because there has been no research that has documented a morphological comparative analysis of the two languages in terms of verbal structure, especially tense. This entails that the Lungu and Namwanga languages are less explored. The researchers of the present study must hasten to point out that negligence of research and documentation of Bantu languages endangers their existence which correlates with Brenzinger (1998). This implies that

minority African languages are no longer endangered by the languages of their former colonial masters but are being replaced by major languages in their territories. These major African languages have already been coded and given the official status for use in governance and initial literacy. For instance, in Zambia, Bemba (M42) is the regional official language in Northern and Muchinga Provinces where the Lungu and Namwanga languages are spoken (Guthrie, 1948). This scenario promotes inferiority and superiority complex among the languages involved. Therefore, Bemba has taken over the teaching and learning of initial literacy in Northern and Muchinga provinces, a situation which can lead to language death of Lungu and Namwanga languages if research and documentation are not priotised.

The other gap is in Halemba (1994) where the scholar opines that he did not attempt to mark tones and other prosodic features in his studies on the Mambwe-Lungu languages because these and many other related phonological and morphological phenomena have never been studied. It can be argued that the only available related comparative literature is the work by Lumwanga et al, (2022) who conducted a phonological research by comparing feature changes or metathesis between Bemba and Mambwe languages as well as Siame & Banda (2024) who oulined the micro-variations on verbal extensions in ciLungu, ciMambwe and ciNamwanga languages. However, Lumwanga's study did not deal with morphology and only analyzed the Mambwe language, but did not deal with the Lungu and Namwanga languages which the present study has documented. Therefore, conducting the present study is befitting because it aims to enrich the documentation on the morphology of both Lungu and Namwanga languages and also to prevent the two languages from possible language death.

The paper is further motivated by Siame (2023) who only dealt with Mambwe and not Lungu and Namwanga which lays the foundation for a micro-variation comparative analysis of the language whose tense has not been documented. Therefore, the above work is groundbreaking for the present study which draws insights from the established tense categorization of the Mambwe language and uses it to compare tense in Lungu and Namwanga languages.

Further justification for the present study is based on the attestations by Halemba (1994), Doke (1945), and Watson (1958) that the studies on the Mambwe-Lungu and Namwanga languages are not of full-length hence literature is scarce because they are less documented. Therefore, this paper aims to supplement literature on the grammar of the Lungu and Namwanga languages and analyses the morphological structure of the tense to save the two languages from possible death. The paper has achieved the aim by determining similarities and evaluating the micro-variations in the morphological structure of tense in the Lungu and Namwanga languages.

2. Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted on the concept of micro-variations, particularly on the major Bantu languages and very few works have been done on minority languages. This section is a review of literature of both major and minor languages on micro-variation. As has been depicted in the literature, Lungu and Namwanga languages have been less explored and as such will greatly benefit from this documentation which will not only enrich literature and contribute to the general body of knowledge of micro-variations but will also preserve the two languages from possible death.

Mtenje-Mkochi (2018) does a micro-variation investigation of the nominal morphology of the closely related languages, namely, Cisukwa, Cindali, and Cilambya. While Mtenje-Mkochi conducted a nominal morphological analysis of languages in Malawi, the present study is an analysis of verbal morphology of the two closely related languages in Zambia. The three Malawian languages have been depicted as similar in the literature while their speakers characterise them as different languages (Botne, 2008; Mtenje, 2016). Mtenje-Mkochi (2018) observes that there are minute variations, but there are substantial similarities in the three Malawian languages. Therefore, the scholar concludes that the three languages are the same language and on a dialect continuum.

The study by Mann & Kashoki (1978) shows that the Lungu language is related to the Mambwe language in terms of ethnicity. The above literature entails that the two languages have similar linguistic features such as tense and are likely to have originated from the same mother language (Fipa) in Tanzania (Nurse & Phillpson, 1999). On the other hand, the Namwanga language does not have enough documentation on verbal morphology. However, literature shows that there is evidence of some phonological studies such as *The Downstep of Namwanga* (Bickmore, 2000). It is worth noting that the few available literature on phonology, morphology, and other levels of linguistics on the Namwanga language include; a collection of texts and their translations (Busse, 1936 & 1937; Busse, 1940 & 1941; Bickmore, 2000; Dewar, 1900; Lungu, 2020).

Concerning the Lungu language, related literature shows that the work by Werner (1940) produced a *Collection of Mambwe Proverbs*. Studies indicate that the available literature by Werner was recorded on the Mambwe-Lungu language conducted by Missionaries during the colonial period. Werner (1940) further opines that towards the end of the colonial period in Zambia, the other two grammars on Mambwe-Lungu were produced, one by Rupya (1958) and another, anonymously, by the London Missionary Society (LMS, 1962). The addition of the two documents aimed at enriching the grammar of the Mambwe-Lungu. This was a good move that aimed at preventing the language death. The present undertaking aims at enriching the few available literature on the grammar of the Lungu and Namwanga languages in Zambia.

Nonetheless, the existing literature on the Mambwe-Lungu gives the impression that nothing specific and detailed had been written on the languages before the 1980s (Polomé, 1980). The studies were foundations about languages which can preferably be described as grammatical sketches. This study aims to document the grammar of the two languages through a comparative analysis of tense. To support Polomé's argument, Jones (1893) shows that the earliest works purporting to describe the Mambwe language were based on the Lungu language because they contain a lot of misuse of the Mambwe grammar and have Swahili inclination. The above assumption is based on the literature provided by Watson (1958) and Halemba (1994) who opine that it is evident that Jones compiled his short Mambwe grammar from Lungu informants using a Swahili interpreter because it contains many foreign words, and misuses throughout the Mambwe pronunciation and written orthography. In his argument, Watson referred specifically to the *Outline of Ki-Mambwe Grammar* published by Jones (1893). It can be argued that the morpheme (ki-) in 'Ki-Mambwe' in the above title is archaic and has Swahili and Fipa inclinations. This could be attributed to Fipa being the ancestor language of the Mambwe native speakers. It is noteworthy that the prefix (ki-) is no longer used in the Mambwe language, instead (ci-) is a preference (Siame & Banda, 2021) and usually begins with a small letter for language(s). Based on the present orthography and grammar, Jones (1893) should have titled the study 'An Outline of the ciMambwe Grammar or simply ciMambwe Grammar'. Therefore, the present study is necessary for both Lungu and Namwanga languages as it will provide the current trends in grammar and orthographic designs.

Other notable related literature includes the translation of the New Testament Bible from English to Mambwe (Halemba, 1991), a *Mambwe-English Dictionary* (Halemba, 1994), an *Extensive Mambwe-Lungu Dictionary* (Halemba, 2007) with a grammar supplement and a *Comprehensive Grammar of the Mambwe Language* (Siame, 2019). Limited literature on the morphology of Lungu and Namwanga languages is one of the motivations for conducting a comparative study so that the literature on the languages is enriched. Therefore, this study provides more insights to understanding comparative Bantu linguistics.

It is envisaged that Lungu and Mambwe languages have separate ethnic identities and are treated as independent groups in the literature, although some linguists regard them as dialects of the same language (Siame & Banda, 2021). This literature shows that the two languages have separate linguistic entities and should be documented separately. Doke (1945) and Watson (1958) attest that

Lungu and Namwanga languages have not been the subjects of full-length studies. To preserve the languages' death and possible extinction, conducting the present comparative study is necessary.

The Lungu and Namwanga languages are not used as official Zambian languages for initial literacy and local government in Northern and Muchinga Provinces because they lack established grammar and orthographies for teaching and language planning (MoESVTEE, 2013). Due to the above scenario, the 2013 curriculum framework which the Zambian government prepared to offer initial literacy in local Zambian languages failed to materialize (Siame, 2022). Therefore, the two languages under study are not used for initial literacy in their speech communities instead Bemba as their regional official language is used. This documentation aims to contribute to the establishment of a common orthography and grammar for the languages which are related and can, in turn, be used for initial literacy and many national programs.

3. Theoretical Locale

This article is informed by the micro-variation and comparative Bantu morphology (CBM) frameworks. It must be pointed out that the initial theoretical inspiration of this paper is the macro-level comparative Bantu morphophonology theoretical framing which has been narrowed down to micro-variation theory and has been used to analyse similarities and differences in Lungu and Namwanga languages (Hyman & Mtenje, 1999; Bickmore, 2004; Mkochi, 2017; Mtenje-Mkochi & Mtenje, 2019). It is envisaged that the focal point of macro-variation analysis is that genetically related languages manifest major differences in syntactic, morphological, phonological, and other linguistic features. However, it is cardinal to argue that related languages like Lungu and Namwanga languages are also likely to manifest micro-variations as a consequence of historical, geographical, and social factors.

Therefore, this paper is motivated by what the researchers shall call micro-variation linguistic theory, particularly in Bantu languages. Micro-variation studies investigate subtle variations within the same or similar languages. For instance, these micro-variations manifest due to social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social class, or across closely related languages or dialects. Nonetheless, since literature depicts the two languages to be genetically related, the paper attempts not only to show the similarities but also to bring out the subtle differences between the two languages (Marten et al, 2007). This research is expected to contribute to a broader understanding of Bantu linguistic theory, documentation and preservation of the minority languages such as Lungu and Namwanga.

Literature shows that Marten et al, (2007) considered a sample of ten Bantu languages to explore morphosyntactic microvariation across 19 parameters, grouped into six topics: object markers, double objects, relatives, locative inversion, conjunct agreement, and conjoint/disjoint parameters. The above documentation was groundbreaking to the application of the micro-variation as a linguistic theory. There have also been increased numbers of edited volumes dedicated to micro-variations analysis such as Downing & Marten (2019), whose volume focused on syntactic doubling in various Bantu languages; Marten & Kula (2012) investigated microvariation in grammar of copulas across several Bantu languages; Bostoen (2009) examined micro-syntactic variations in three North-Central Bantu languages, Bemba, Pichinglis, and Giryama, and also shows differences and similarities in their syntactic structures.

On the other hand, Dom & Bostoen (2015) explored the variation of tense/aspect in the Kikongo language group. In addition, Marten & Van der Wal (2015) used the concept of micro-variation to explore Bantu subject inversion. Guérois et al, (2017) provided an analysis of micro-variation of 142 morphosyntactic features of 50 sampled Bantu languages. The study aimed to establish boundaries or considerations during micro-variations. All these studies were designed to highlight similarities and subtle differences within Bantu languages.

The current study examines the micro-variation of tense in the Lungu and Namwanga languages. Studies have shown that many Bantu languages bear micro-variations in the verbal structure due to their relatedness (Mkochi, 2019; Mtenje-Mkochi, 2018; Kadenge & Simango, 2014). Drawing theoretical insights from the above studies, the research uses a descriptive approach to establish the similarities and evaluate micro-variations in the verbal structure of the Lungu and Namwanga languages. The study focuses on establishing micro-variations of tense in Lungu and Namwanga languages. Considering that the two languages are minority languages, the study could be insightful in terms of language documentation and the production of shared material in the languages for teaching and learning purposes. It is hoped that this study could change the narrative for the language of initial literacy because the current status quo is to use Bemba for teaching and learning initial literacy in Lungu and Namwanga speaking environments.

Using the comparative Bantu morphology (CBM) theory, the article accounts for similarities and micro-variations in the morphological structure of tense in Lungu and Namwanga languages (Bickmore, 2004; Mtenje-Mkochi & Mtenje, 2019). Comparative analysis does not always point out similarities because during the comparison the differences also manifest (Hachipola, 2017). It is vital to point out that during the present comparative study, it is also possible to point out some variations although the core aim is to identify similarities in the structure of tense. It can be argued that genetically related languages are likely to manifest similarities in the morphological structure of tense. However, there is also a possibility of manifesting some variations as a result of language-specific morphological features. There is also a likeliness that there could be some peculiar manifestations and variations of tense in Lungu and Namwanga languages due to space because the languages are spoken in different locations. In addition, it is a common scenario for most Bantu languages to manifest morphological variations even when they belong to the same language cluster. Therefore, the two theories will guide the analysis of tense.

4.   Methodological Issues

The article adopted the qualitative descriptive approach which was supported by interviews, document analysis and comparative methods for data collection and analysis. The qualitative descriptive design is favorable for the present study because its objectives are non-statistical and are meant to understand, describe and explain the results of the linguistic phenomena used during data collection and analysis (Burns & Grove, 1997). Mutch (2005) adds the voice by attesting that the descriptive approach is used to report results of research by using descriptive words and sentences as they are used by owners of the language like Lungu and Namwanga languages. In other words, the morphological description and analysis of the Lungu and Namwanga languages is likely to generate peculiar aspects of tense which may require further research.

Data for this article were collected through interviews and document analysis. The study used six participants who were selected purposively and also verified the collected and analysed data. The selected informants were native speakers, readers and writers of the Lungu and Namwanga languages. Data were further subjected to comparison using the comparative method to identify similarities and micro-variations (Hachipola, 2017; Siame & Banda, 2024). Data were analysed thematically to justify the descriptive and comparative objectives. Since authors are speakers of the Lungu and Namwanga, they used their background knowledge of linguistics, inferences and introspections during the comparative analysis of tense. This comparative documentation is an insightful contribution to the development of verbal morphology of the Lungu and Namwanga languages.

5.   Results and Discussion

The study presents and analyses the verbal structure of the Lungu and Namwanga languages regarding the present, past and future tenses.

5.1 Verbal Morphology of Lungu and Namwanga

Several studies in Bantu languages have been conducted on aspects of subject and object marking, tense, aspect, and mood (Kiso, 2012). Drawing insights from Downing (2001), Myers (1987) and Ngunga (2000), the analysis of tense in Lungu and Namwanga adopts the overall verbal structure of Bantu as shown below:

[SM NEG TAM [MACROSTEM OM [STEM Root Extension(s) TAM FV]

It is expedient to indicate that Lungu and Namwanga conform to the verbal structure of Bantu languages (Nkolola, 1997; Miti, 2001; Mtenje, 2016). The researchers are quick to point out that the present comparative study in Lungu and Namwanga focuses on tense. According to scholars such as Nkolola (1997), Downing (2001), Miti (2001), and Mtenje (2016), the verbal structure of Bantu has the root or the radical which is the nucleus of the verb and can either have C, CVC or VVC, CVVC structures. It is, therefore, the expectation of this research that tense in Lungu and Namwanga should conform to some of the above verbal structures because Bantu languages bear little variations.

5.2 Tense in Lungu and Namwanga

Tense can be described as a word that is used to locate situations of time that have past, present and future references (Comrie, 1976). Kiso (2012) builds on the above notion of tense and shows that tense can be used to express events that happened in the past, those happening at present, or those that will happen after the time of speech. Therefore, the comparative analysis of the micro-variations of tense in Lungu and Namwanga languages focuses on expressing the present, past, future time.

5.2.1   Variations in the Present Tense in Lungu and Namwanga

The Lungu and Namwanga languages use the prefix morpheme [-ku-]. The morpheme [ku] in Cl.15 is used to express the present tense which is the equivalent of the infinitive 'to' in English language and comes after the augment [u-] (Siame, 2023). When expressing the present tense, Lungu and Namwanga languages undergo gliding in the stem which agrees with other Bantu languages such as ciNdali (Mtenje-Mkochi, 2018), ciShona (Kadenge & Simango, 2014) and, ciNsenga and ciSukwa (Mtenje, 2012). Gliding in Lungu and Namwanga involves the vowel [i] which glides to [j] and is realised as [y] as well as the vowel [u] which glides to [w] as illustrated in the examples below:

Table 1: Variations in the present tense in Lungu and Namwanga

S/N	Languages	Present tense
a.	Lungu & Namwanga	*uku**l**yata* [u-ku-li-at-a] 'to step on something'
b.	Lungu & Namwanga	*uku**z**wala* [u-ku-zu-al-a] 'to dress up'
c.	Lungu	*uku**s**heta* [u-ku-shet-a] 'to chew'
	Namwanga	*uku**s**yeta* [u-ku-si-et-a] 'to chew'

Table 1 shows that both Lungu and Namwanga languages use the prefix morpheme [-ku-] to indicate the present time. Examples (a-c) reveal that both languages express the present tense by attaching the augment [u-] to the prefix [-ku-] which eventually differentiates the tense from other forms of tense locatives. The study shows that in both languages the high front vowel [i] is realized as [y] while the back front vowel [u] is realized as [w]. It can be argued that there are no variations in the way the present tense is expressed in both Lungu and Namwanga languages.

5.2.2   Variations in the Present Progressive Verbs in Lungu and Namwanga

According to Comrie (1976), the concept of 'progressive' is described as a word that points to an imperfective expression that is not occasioned by a particular behaviour. Literature shows that progressive verbs are used together with verbs of state (Kiso, 2012). Siame (2023) observes that the present progressive tense expresses an action that is still ongoing during the time of an utterance. The above literature is consistent with other studies on the present progressive tense of Bantu languages such as Mtenje (2016). The researchers note that tense in Lungu and Namwanga languages is used to describe actions that are ongoing upto the time of speech. Therefore, Lungu and Namwanga languages express the present progressive tense using the prefix [ku-] with various augments such as [a-] 'he/she' in both Lungu and Namwanga languages, [ya-] 'they' in Lungu and [wa-] 'they' in Namwanga as shown below:

Table 2: Variations in the present progressive verbs in Lungu and Namwanga

S/N	Language	Present tense	Present progressive verbs
a.	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukuzula* [u-ku-zul-a] 'to undress'	**a***ku**zula* [a-ku-zul-a] 'She/he is undressing'
b.	Lungu	*ukuzula* [u-ku-zul-a] 'to undress'	**ya***ku**zula* [i-a-ku-zul-a] 'They are undressing'
c.	Namwanga	*ukuzula* [u-ku-zul-a] 'to undress'	**wa***ku**zula* [u-a-ku-zul-a] 'They are undressing'

Table 2 reveals that Lungu and Namwanga languages express the present progressive verbs using the prefix [ku-] that is attached to the stem of a particular verb. The second similarity is seen in example (a) where both Lungu and Namwanga languages attach an augment [a-] to [-ku-] to show that the present progressive verb expressed by a singular noun. The analysis also shows that in (b-c), Lungu undergoes gliding in the pre-prefix morpheme [ya-] and the morpheme [wa-] in the Namwanga language which are used to express the plurality of the present progressive verbs. It can further be argued that there is a similarity in the stem of the two languages that use the radical [-zul-] which is affected by gliding where the high back vowel [u] is realized as [w]. The researchers observe that there are variations in examples (b-c) where the Lungu in (b) uses the vowel [i] which glides to [y] in the pre-prefix position while in example (c), the Namwanga language uses the vowel [u] which glides to [w]. These findings show that Lungu and Namwanga languages have more similarities than variations in the present progressive tense.

5.2.3   Variations in the Past Verbs in Lungu and Namwanga

Crystal (2008) shows that past verbs are used to express 'today' and 'before today' events. In like manner, Lungu and Namwanga languages have attested to complexity when expressing the past tense. The past tense in the two languages under study is only understood by adding other linguistic elements such as adverbs to specify a particular past tense. The results show that both Lungu and Namwanga languages express both the past simple and past participle time using the suffix marker [-ile]. The examples below illustrate the past simple and past participle tenses in the Lungu and Namwanga languages:

Table 3: Variations in the past simple/participle verbs in Lungu and Namwanga

S/N	Language	Present tense	Language	Past simple/past participle (SG)	Past simple/past participle (PL)

a	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukukala* [u-ku-kal-a] 'to buy'	Lungu	*wakazile* [u-a-kaz-ile] 'He/she bought'	*yakazile* [i-a-kaz-ile] 'They bought'
			Namwanga	*wakazile* [u-a-kaz-ile] 'He/she bought'	*wakazile* [u-a-kaz-ile] 'They bought'
b	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukuzipa* [u-ku-zip-a] 'to beautiful/ handsome'	Lungu	*wazifile* [u-a-zif-ile] 'He/she was beautiful/handsome'	*yazifile* [i-a-zif-ile] 'They were beautiful/handsome'
			Namwanga	*wazifile* [u-a-zif-ile] 'He/she was beautiful/handsome'	*wazifile* [u-a-zif-ile] 'They were beautiful/handsome'
c	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukulwala* [u-ku-lu-al-a] 'to be sick'	Lungu	*walwile* [u-a-lu-ile] 'He/she was sick'	*yalwile* [i-a-lu-ile] 'They were sick'
			Namwanga	*walwile* [u-a-lu-ile] 'He/she was sick'	*walwile* [u-a-lu-ile] 'They were sick'

Table 3 shows a similarity in Lungu and Namwanga languages in (a-c) where the suffix marker [-ile] expresses both the past simple and the past participle tenses in both singular and plural expressions. In (a-c), both Lungu and Namwanga use the prefix morpheme [wa-] to indicate the singular past simple and past participle tenses. Example (a) reveals that both languages undergo a morphophonological process where the final vowel [-a] is harmonized to [-i-] before introducing the suffix marker [-ile]. Results in examples (a-c) also show that in the prefix morpheme of the Lungu and Namwanga languages, either the vowel [u] glides to [w] or the vowel [i] glides [y] in both the singular and plural forms of the tense. Examples (a-c) reveal that the variations of the two tenses can only be realised through contextualization. It can be argued that both Lungu and Namwanga languages undergo root maintenance before introducing the past tense marker [-ile]. For instance, in (a) [-kal- → -kaz-], (b) [-zip- →-zif-], and (c) [-lw- →-lw-] respectively. It can further be argued that there is consonant harmony in the roots of (a-b), where in (a) [l→z] and in (b) [p→f]. There is a micro-variation in (a-c) where Lungu uses [i] which glides to [y] while Namwanga uses the vowel [u] which glides to [w]. The other micro-variation is that Namwanga uses the same prefix morpheme [wa-] to express both the singular and plural constructions while the Lungu language expresses singularity using the prefix [wa-] and plurality using [ya-].

5.2.3.1 Variations in Today Past in Lungu and Namwanga

This type of past tense is also described as 'the hodiernal past'. Zemba (2015) argues that Today past tense is used to describe events that happened during the day of the utterance. In Lungu and Namwanga languages, the tense is marked by the object marker (OM) [mu-] and the radical (RAD) [-kom-] as shown in the example below:

Table 4: Variations in today past in Lungu and Namwanga

Lungu	*Sentence:*	**Yamukomile** *ileelo*			
	Morphemes:	*ya-*	*mu-*	*kom-*	*-ile*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
	Gloss:	**'They killed him/her** today'			
Namwanga	*Sentence:*	**Wamukomile** *ileelo*			
	Morphemes:	*wa-*	*mu-*	*kom-*	*-ile*

Sentence Markers:	SM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
Gloss:	**'They killed him/her** today'			

Table 4 shows that all other past tenses in Lungu and Namwanga languages are built on the hodiernal past. Both languages express the past today tense of singular referents using the OM [-mu-], radical [-kom-] and the perfective suffix marker [-ile]. Table 4 shows a micro-variation in the SM position where the Lungu uses [ya-] 'they' while Namwanga uses [wa-] 'they' to express the third person plural (3PL) for the same referent. In Namwanga, the 3PL [wa-] 'they' occupy the SM slot and is used interchangeably with the morpheme [wa-] 'he/she' to express the third person singular (3SG) while Lungu only uses the morpheme [wa-] as 3SG. It can be argued that Lungu expresses the plural in the OM position using the morpheme [ya-] while Namwanga uses [wa]. The two languages use the adverb of time *ileelo* 'today' to distinguish today past tense from other past tenses. Therefore, the micro-variation lies in the use of the morpheme [ya] in Lungu and [wa] in the Namwanga language when expressing the plural.

5.2.3.2 Variations in the Immediate Past Tense in Lungu and Namwanga

The immediate past tense describes the actions in the past that listeners in a particular language consider to be near the time of speech or when the speech was made (Mtenje, 2016). The immediate past tense in Lungu and Namwanga expresses activities that have happened within a short period from the time of the utterance. Lungu and Namwanga express the immediate past tense using the OM [ci-], RAD [-kom-], and the perfective suffix [-ile] as shown below:

Table 5: Variations in the immediate past tense in Lungu and Namwanga

Lungu	*Sentence:*	***Yacikomile*** *likwene*			
	Morphemes:	*ya-*	*ci-*	*kom-*	*-ile*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
	Gloss:	**'They have** just **killed it'**			
Namwanga	*Sentence:*	***Wacikomile*** *nombanye*			
	Morphemes:	*wa-*	*ci-*	*kom-*	*-ile*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
	Gloss:	**'They have** just **killed it'**			

The immediate past in the two languages is expressed using the radical [-kom-], the prefix morpheme [-ci-], perfective suffix marker [-ile], pre-prefix morpheme [wa-] and the final vowel [-e]. The Lungu and Namwanga languages express the immediate past tense using the adverbs of time like *likwene* 'just' in the Lungu and *nombanye* 'just' in Namwanga. It can be argued that both languages express the plural immediate past tense using the object marker (OM) [ci-]. The micro-variation of the two closely and genetically related languages is expressed through gliding in the SM slot in which the Lungu language uses the 3PL [ya] 'they' while Namwanga uses [wa] for the same referent. The other micro-variation is seen in the morphology of the adverbial 'just' where the Lungu language uses [*likwene*] while Namwanga uses [*nombanye*] for the same referent. Further micro-variation is that the Lungu language uses the vowel [i] which is realized as [y] in the morpheme [ya-] while Namwanga uses the vowel [u] which is realized as [w] in [wa-] to signify the same 3PL referent.

5.2.3.3 Variations in the Recent Past in Lungu and Namwanga

The recent past tense is used to express specific activities that happened before today and not long ago or so (Zemba, 2015). Based on the provided example below, the Lungu and Namwanga languages use the OM [-mu-], RAD [-kom-] and the perfective aspect [-ile] to express the recent past tense as shown below:

Table 6: Variations in the recent past tense in Lungu and Namwanga

Lungu	*Sentence:*	*Yacimukomile* likwene				
	Morphemes:	*ya-*	*ci-*	*mu-*	*kom-*	*-ile*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
	Gloss:	**'They killed him/her** recently'				
Namwanga	*Sentence:*	*Wamukomile nomanye*				
	Morphemes:	*wa-*	*Ɵ*	*mu-*	*kom-*	*-ile*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
	Gloss:	**'They/he/she killed him/her** recently'				

Lungu and Namwanga languages use different adverbs of time to express the recent past tense. For instance, Lungu uses *likwene* 'recently' while the Namwanga uses *nombanye* 'recently' to express the same adverb of time. The analysis shows that both Lungu and Namwanga languages are affected by gliding in the SM position in the 3PL slot. The study shows that there is a micro-variation in the morphology of the SM where Lungu uses the 3PL [ya-] 'they' while Namwanga uses [wa-] 'they'. It can be argued that the Lungu only applies the the 3SG morpheme [wa-] 'he/she' while the Namwanga uses [wa-] to express both the 3SG 'he/she' and the 3PL 'they'. The other micro-variation is that the Lungu language expresses the recent past tense using the tense marker (TM) morpheme [-ci-] which has an empty slot in the Namwanga language.

5.2.3.4 Variations in the Remote Past in Lungu and Namwanga

According to Comrie (1976), a remote past tense is used to indicate the perfectivity regarding a particular situation to define the past events that happened a long time. Mtenje (2016) shows that the morpheme [ka-] is used to exppress the remote past in the SuNdaLa cluster. Lungu and Namwanga languages express the remote past tense using the OM morpheme [mu-], the perfective suffix [-ile], and the time qualifier *umwacizo* 'last year' in Lungu and *umwaka wowasizile* 'last year' in Namwanga respectively as illustrated below:

Table 7: Variations in the remote past tense in Lungu and Namwanga

Lungu	*Sentence:*	*Yamukomile umwacizo*			
	Morphemes:	*ya-*	*mu-*	*kom-*	*-ile*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
	Gloss:	**'They killed him/her** last year'			
Namwanga	*Sentence:*	*Wamukomile umwaka wowasizile*			
	Morphemes:	*wa-*	*mu-*	*kom-*	*-ile*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
	Gloss:	**'They/he/she killed him/her** last year'			

In the above examples, the TM is absent in both languages. The study shows that there is a micro-variation in the adverb of time where the Lungu language uses *umwacizo* 'last year' while Namwanga uses *umwaka wowasizile* 'last year' for the same referent. It can be argued that there is gliding in the SM position of both Lungu and Namwanga languages. There is a micro-variation where Lungu language applies the morpheme [ya-] 'they' to signify only the 3PL while the Namwanga language uses [wa-] in the same slot to express either the 3PL 'they' or 3SG 'he/she' which leads to ambiguity. The other micro-variation is that Lungu uses the vowel [i] in the SM which is realized as [y] while Namwanga uses the vowel [u] realized as [w].

5.2.4 Variations in the Past Progressive Verbs in Lungu and Namwanga

The past progressive tense can be described as a time qualifier that describes past actions that are ongoing (Zemba, 2015; Mtenje, 2016). Based on the above description, Lungu and Namwanga languages express the past progressive by attaching the suffix marker [-nga] as shown below:

Table 8: Variations in the singular past progressive tense in Lungu and Namwanga

S/N	Present tense	Past progressive tense (SG)
a.	*ukukazya* [u-ku-kazi-a] 'to sell'	*wakazyanga* [u-a-ka-zi-a-nga] 'she/he was selling'
b.	*ukulya* [u-ku-li-a] 'to eat'	*walyanga* [u-a-li-a-ng-a] 'she/he was eating'
c.	*ukucina* [u-ku-cin-a] 'to dance'	*wacinanga* [*u-a-ci-na-ng-a*] 'she/he was dancing'

Based on examples in Table 8, it can be argued that the past progressive verbs are expressed by attaching the suffix marker [-nga] to the present tense in both Lungu and Namwanga languages. It can also be argued that both languages are affected by gliding in the prefix where [u]→[w] and in the radical [i] → [y].

It can further be argued that both Lungu and Namwanga express the plural past progressive verbs. The micro-variation lies in the process of pluralizing the tense where the first morpheme in the Lungu uses the vowel [i] →[y] while the Namwanga uses the vowel [u]→[w]. To form the plural past progressive tenses, both languages use the TM [-ci-] and maintain the suffix marker [-nga], but express micro-variations in the first morphemes as illustrated below:

Table 9: Variations in the plural past progressive tense in Lungu and Namwanga

Lungu	*Sentence:*	*Yacinanga*			
	Morphemes:	*i (y)a-*	*-ci-*	*-nang-*	*a*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	VR	FV
	Gloss:	'They were dancing'			
Namwanga	*Sentence*:	*Wacinanga*			
	Morphemes:	*u(w)a-*	*-ci-*	*-nang-*	*a*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	VR	FV
	Gloss:	'They were dancing'			

Results reveal that both Lungu and Namwanga languages express the past continuous or past progressive tense using the TM [-ci-]. However, there is a micro-variation in the SM where the vowel [i-] is realized as a palatal glide [y] in the morpheme [ya] 'they' in the Lungu while in Namwanga the high back vowel [u-] is realized as a bilabial glide [w] in [wa] 'they' when expressing the 3PL in the SM position. The similarity is that the OM is not obligatory in the past progressive tense in both Lungu and Namwanga languages.

The past tense markers in both Lungu and Namwanga are not fixed. This analysis is in tandem with Kiso (2012) who argues that some past tense markers in Chichewa and Cisena languages are used in more than one language and tense such as [-da-] which can be used either as the immediate past tense marker or as a remote past tense marker. In the same way, the morpheme (ci) can be used as a tense marker [TM] in different past tense forms in Lungu and Namwanga languages.

5.2.5   Expressing the Future Tense in Lungu and Namwanga

The future tense focuses on the events which are yet to come. Two categories of the future tense are presented below.

5.2.5.1   Variations in the Future Simple Tense in Lungu and Namwanga

Zemba (2015) opines that the future tense in Kunda language is expressed by attaching the tense marker [-ko] and the infinitive particle [-ku]. On the other hand, there is a micro-variation in the the future tense in the languages under evaluation. Lungu and Namwanga languages use the prefix morpheme [-la-/-li-] to express the future simple tense as illustrated below:

Table 10: Variations in the future simple tense in Lungu and Namwanga

S/N	Language	Present tense	Language	Future (Singular)	Future (plural)
a	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukukavya* [u-ku-kavi-a] 'to warm, heat something'	Lungu	*alakavya* [a-la-kavi-a] 'He/she will warm, heat something'	*yalakavya* [i-a-la- kavi-a] 'They will warm, heat something'
			Namwanga	*alivyala* [a-li-vi-al-a] 'she will give birth'	*walivyala* [u-a-li-vi-al-a] 'They will give birth'
b	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukupola* [u-ku-pol-a] 'to be healed'	Lungu	*alapola* [a-la-pol-a] 'He/she will be healed'	*yalapola* [i-a-la-pol-a] 'They will be healed'
			Namwanga	*alipola* [a-li-pol-a] 'He/she will be healed'	*walipola* [u-a-li-pol-a] 'They will be healed'
c	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukukanya* [u-ku-kani-a] 'to forbid'	Lungu	*alakanya* [a-la-kani-a] 'He/she will forbid,'	*yalakanya* [i-a-la-kani-a] 'They will forbid'
			Namwanga	*alikanya* [a-la-kani-a] 'He/she will forbid'	*walikanya* [u-a-li-kani-a] 'They will forbid'
d	Lungu & Namwanga	*ukumala* [u-ku-mal-a] 'to finish , complete'	Lungu	*alamala* [a-la-mal-a] 'He/she will finish , complete'	*yalamala* [a-la-mal-a] 'They will finish , complete'
			Namwanga	*alimala* [a-li-mal-a] 'He/she will finish, complete'	*walimala* [a-la-mal-a] 'They will finish, complete'

Table 10 shows that Lungu and Namwanga languages attest to the simple future tense like other Bantu languages. The analysis shows that both languages begin with the 3SG morpheme [a-] 'he/she' in the SM position to express the future simple tense in the singular form. The example also reveals that the 3PL [ya-] in the SM slot in Lungu and [wa-] in Namwanga are used to express the future simple tense. Examples (a-c) further show that both Lungu and Namwanga languages undergo radical maintain to express the future simple tense. The micro-variation is that Lungu uses the morpheme [-la-] while Namwanga uses the element [-li-] in both singular and plural referents of the furture simple tense. The other micro-variation is that Lungu uses the vowel [i] which glides to [y] in the SM position while Namwanga uses the vowel [u] which glides to [w] in the same position to denote the 3PL.

The results further reveal that all disjuncts in Lungu and Namwanga languages are related, but there is a micro-variation in the Tense Marker (TM) where the Lungu language uses [-la-] while the Namwanga language uses the TM [-li-] as illustrated below:

Table 11: Variations in the future simple tense marking in Lungu and Namwanga

Lungu	Sentence:	*Tulamuma*				
	Morphemes:	*tu-*	*-la-*	*-mu-*	*-m-*	*a*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	OM	VR	FV
	Gloss:	'We will beat him/her'				
Namwanga	Sentence:	*Tulimuma*				
	Morphemes:	*tu-*	*-li-*	*-mu-*	*-m-*	*a*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	OM	VR	FV
	Gloss:	'We will beat him/her'				

The analysis of Table 11 shows that Lungu uses the morpheme [-la-] while Namwanga uses the morpheme [-li-] in the TM position to express the future simple verb. The above examples show that all other slots are the same in both languages except in the TM position where there is a minimal pair. There is a micro-variation in the TM in terms of the form where the Lungu language uses the central short vowel [a] in the morpheme [-la-] while Namwanga uses the high front short vowel [i] in the morpheme [-li-].

5.2.5.2 Variations in the Future Progressive Tense in Lungu and Namwanga

The future progressive verbs are used to indicate the activities which will continually happen in the future. For instance, in Akan language, the future progressive tense is expressed using either the prefix [re-] or [ri-] (Appah, 2003). Lungu expresses the future progressive tense using the TM [-laa-] while the Namwanga uses [-liwa-] as illustrated in the examples below:

Table 12: Variations in the future progressive tense in Lungu and Namwanga

Lungu	Sentence:	*Tulaamuma*				
	Morphemes:	*tu-*	*-laa-*	*-mu-*	*-m-*	*a*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	OM	VR	FV
	Gloss:	'We will be beating him/her'				
Namwanga	Sentence:	*Tuliwamuma*				
	Morphemes:	*tu-*	*-liwa-*	*-mu-*	*-m-*	*a*
	Sentence Markers:	SM	TM	OM	VR	FV
	Gloss:	'We will be beating him/her'				

The above examples reveal that the future progressive verbs are expressed differently in the two languages. There is a micro-variation in the TM for the same referent in which Lungu language lengthens the vowel in the affix [-*laa*-] while the Namwanga language defies the principle of vowel length by introducing the morpheme [wa] to form the TM in [-*liwa*-] to express both singular and plural verbal forms. The results of this study also reveal that both Lungu and Namwanga languages express the first person plural (1PL) by using the SM [tu-] 'we'. The other micro-variation is that in the future progressive tense, the short vowel is only lengthened in the TM in the Lungu language. Therefore, the researchers argue that all the slots of the future progressive verbs are related in both languages except in the TM where Namwanga uses [-liwa-] in *tuliwamuma* 'we will be beating him/her'.

6. Conclusion

The article has compared tense in the Lungu and Namwanga languages and has established micro-variations. The paper shows that tense in both Lungu and Namwanga languages is related to other Bantu languages. The major categories of tense have been addressed in this study. Lungu and

Namwanga varieties express the present and progressive tense using the morpheme [ku] and an optional augment [a-]. It can also be concluded that both languages use the suffix marker [-ile] to express the past tenses. Furthermore, past progressive verbs in Lungu and Namwanga are expressed using the TM morpheme [-ci-] and the suffix marker morpheme [-nga]. Lungu uses the TM [-la-] while Namwanga uses [-li-] to express the future simple verbs respectively. The findings of this paper demonstrate that the two languages are genetically related as they manifest minor variations in the SM, TM and OM positions. The genetic relatedness is also attested in the classification of the two languages that belong to the same language Zone M. Therefore, the paper contributes to the body of knowledge of comparative and descriptive linguistics as well as to the linguistic theory of micro-variations.

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