

# THE CONJOINT/DISJOINT ALTERNATION IN BABANKI

*Pius W. Akumbu*

LLACAN (CNRS – INALCO – EPHE)  
pius.akumbu@cnr.fr

**Abstract:** The conjoint (CJ)/disjoint (DJ) alternation, extensively documented in Narrow Bantu (see van der Wal & Hyman 2017 and references cited therein), Adamawa (Elders 2006), Benue-Kwa (Manfredi 2005), Nilo-Saharan (Joswig 2015), Gur (Fiedler 2017) has been reported in Bantoid only in Aghem and Ejagham (Anderson 1979, Watters 1979, Hyman & Watters 1984). Akumbu, Hyman & Kießling (2020) identify a much more extensive case, where the CJ/DJ contrast characterizes the affirmative perfective of all past, present and future tenses in Babanki, a Grassfields Bantu language of North-West Cameroon. Based on data I have compiled as a native speaker, in collaboration with four other native speakers, this study outlines the characteristics and conditions surrounding the choice of one form over the other in specific contexts. This detailed study reveals that the CJ form encodes term focus since Babanki lacks a dedicated focus marker of the sort documented in closely related Aghem (Hyman 2010) and Isu (Kießling 2010) while the DJ form is used contrastively with truth value focus and when the truth value is part of the assertion (i.e. not presupposed).

**Key words:** conjoint, disjoint, Babanki, Grassfields Bantu, focus

## 1. Introduction

This paper seeks to extend the study of the conjoint (CJ) and disjoint (DJ) alternation from narrow Bantu to Grassfields Bantu by providing a more fine-grained description of the contrast in Babanki, a Central Ring Grassfields Bantu language of North-West Cameroon. As van der Wal (2017: 55) points out,

the conjoint/disjoint alternation is an alternation between verb forms that are formally distinguishable, that are associated with an information-structural difference in the interpretation of verb and/or following element and of which one form is not allowed in sentence-final position.

Over the last three decades, the CJ/DJ contrast has been extensively documented in Narrow Bantu (see the papers in van der Wal & Hyman 2017 and references cited therein). Outside of Bantu the alternation has been reported by name only in a few languages, i.e. Doyayo (Adamawa, Elders 2006), Igbo (Benue-Kwa, Manfredi 2005), Majang (Nilo-Saharan, Joswig 2015), and Yom (Gur, Fiedler 2017). In Bantoid, comparable alternations, although not directly referred to as the CJ/DJ distinction, have been reported in Aghem and Ejagham (Anderson 1979; Watters 1979; Hyman & Watters 1984). A much more extensive case has been recently reported in Babanki, where the CJ/DJ contrast characterizes the affirmative perfective of all past, present and future tenses (Akumbu et al. 2020). As seen in the forms of the yesterday past tense (P2) in (1) the Babanki conjoint form cannot appear sentence-finally in main clause affirmatives (1b), while the disjoint form can occur both medially (1c) and finally (1d).

- (1) a. CJ *Búŋ t̄̀ l̄̀m k̄̀-áyŋ*  
 Bung P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu.’
- b. CJ \**Búŋ t̄̀ l̄̀m*  
 Bung P2 cook  
 \*‘Bung cooked.’
- c. DJ *Búŋ á t̄̀ l̄̀m k̄̀-áyŋ*  
 Bung DJ P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu.’
- d. DJ *Búŋ á t̄̀ l̄̀m*  
 Bung DJ P2 cook  
 ‘Bung cooked.’

The conjoint form indicates a close relation between the verb and the following element while the disjoint form indicates a looser relation. Such a distinction is not found in the corresponding progressive or negative forms. The present study outlines the properties of the alternation and attempts to find out whether it is determined by constituency or by focus. Akumbu et al. (2020) document the morphological marking of the CJ/DJ alternation but do not explore its characteristics and the conditions surrounding the choice of one form over the other in specific contexts. These and other issues surrounding the use of the Babanki CJ/DJ alternation are taken up in this study. This study is based on data I have compiled as a native speaker, in collaboration with four other native speakers.<sup>1</sup> To proceed, relevant preliminary aspects of Babanki grammar are presented in §2, properties of the CJ/DJ contrast outlined in §3, the relationship between the alternation and information structure discussed in §4 and a conclusion is provided in §5.

## 2. Relevant preliminaries of Babanki grammar

Babanki is a member of the Ring subgroup of Grassfields Bantu, related to Kom, Men and Oku in Central Ring, Aghem and Isu in West Ring, Lamnso? in East Ring, Bamessing and Bamunka in South Ring, among others. Previous works on the language include a general grammatical description (Akumbu & Chibaka 2012), a lexicon (Akumbu 2008), several studies investigating the tone system (Hyman 1979; Chie 2002; Akumbu 2011; 2015; 2019), and some coverage of the segmental phonology (Mutaka & Chie 2006; Chie 2014; Akumbu 2016). Also available is a comprehensive phonological and morphological analysis of the complex tense-aspect-mood system (Akumbu et al. 2020), as well as an in-depth study of noun morphology (Hyman 1980; Akumbu & Kießling 2022).

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<sup>1</sup> More elaborate sets of the data can be found in the appendices in Akumbu et al. (2020). Special thanks to Vivian Ba-ah, Regina Phubong, Cornelius Wuchu, and Stanley Amuh for sharing their knowledge of Babanki.

Babanki is a s(AUX)VO language, where the object, whether nominal or pronominal follows the verb. The language distinguishes four present/past and three future tenses, referred to as P0–P3 and F1–F3. The preverbal segmental tense auxiliaries which are held constant across the perfective and progressive aspects as well as in the corresponding negatives are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

**Babanki tense distinctions** (Akumbu et al. 2020: 4)

Tense	aux	Approximate time period
P0	˘	present, a few minutes ago
P1	yì	today
P2	tà	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

As indicated, all tenses are marked by a L tone segmental auxiliary except the P0, where the verb is preceded by a floating L tone. P3 also requires a nasal prefix on the verb. The underlying tones indicated in Table 1 may both trigger and undergo tone changes in context and hence appear differently from what is shown.

### 3. Properties of the Babanki CJ/DJ alternation

As mentioned, there is a distinction between CJ and DJ forms in all seven tenses in the affirmative of the perfective aspect. Since the alternation is found only in Main Clause Affirmative (MCA) the analysis of MCA perfective tense marking is schematized in Table 2, where ... refers to the position of the verb stem. The tonal marking is intended

to be underlying, e.g. P1<sub>DJ</sub> /*ǎ yì*/ and P2<sub>DJ</sub> /*ǎ tǎ*/, which are however realized [*ǎ yí*] and [*ǎ tǎ*] by <sub>H</sub> tone spreading.

Table 2

**Conjoint and disjoint tense marking** (Akumbu et al. 2020: 5)

Tense	Conjoint	Disjoint
p0	` ...	ǎ ... ` lí
p1	yì ...	ǎ yì ...
p2	tǎ ...	ǎ tǎ ...
p3	ǎ <i>N</i> ... (ǎ)	ǎ <i>N</i> ... ` lí
F1	à ...	ǎ à ... ´
F2	nè ...	ǎ nè ... ´
F3	lù ...	ǎ lù ... ´

As seen, the disjoint forms all involve an auxiliary *ǎ* glossed as <sub>DJ</sub> in examples. Building on the parameters of the <sub>CJ</sub>/<sub>DJ</sub> contrast reported in Bantu (van der Wal & Hyman 2017) the properties of the alternation in Babanki are outlined in the following subsections, globally under the four areas identified by van der Wal (2017: 18), i.e. “distribution, form, tenses, and interpretation.”

### 3.1. Distribution of the <sub>CJ</sub>/<sub>DJ</sub> forms

The first point to consider about the distribution of the two forms is sentence-finality. In languages with this contrast, the <sub>CJ</sub> verb form can never occur sentence-finally in an affirmative main clause, as in Samba G23 (Riedel 2009), Ha JD66 (Harjula 2004), Simakonde P23 (Manus 2007), and Xhosa S41 (Du Plessis & Visser 1992: 93). As shown in (1), the Babanki verb cannot occur at the end of a <sub>MCA</sub> sentence with <sub>CJ</sub> marking (there must be something following the verb) whereas it can occur medially or at the end of a <sub>MCA</sub> sentence with <sub>DJ</sub> marking.

An argument or an adjunct is capable of following the verb to make it non-final in the CJ form. Any argument such as a direct object or an adjunct, e.g. an adjectival phrase (2a), a prepositional phrase (2b), an adverbial (2c), or a locative adjunct (2d) can follow the verb.

- (2) a. *Búŋ t̀ l̀m k̄-fí k̄*  
 Bung P2 cook 7-new 7  
 ‘Bung cooked a new one.’
- b. *Búŋ t̀ l̀m ǹ ð-kóŋ é*  
 Bung P2 cook with 5-pestle 5  
 ‘Bung cooked with a pestle.’
- c. *Búŋ t̀ l̀m nántô*  
 Bung P2 cook ADV  
 ‘Bung cooked too much.’
- d. *Búŋ t̀ l̀m á ð-ŋg̀ŋ*  
 Bung P2 cook LOC 5-house  
 ‘Bung cooked in the house.’

Compared to the Babanki CJ form where the verb must be followed by some element within the same clause, the verb is final in its clause in DJ forms, as illustrated in (1) and further illustrated in (3a), although it could be followed by complements (3b–c).

- (3) a. *Búŋ é yí l̀m*  
 Bung DJ P1 cook  
 ‘Bung cooked.’
- b. *Búŋ é yí l̀m k̄-báŋn*  
 Bung DJ P1 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu.’
- c. *Búŋ é yí l̀m áŋk̀àŋn*  
 Bung DJ P1 cook ADV  
 ‘Bung cooked well.’

As seen in (3b–c), an argument or adjunct may follow the DJ form to specify or provide additional information. The behavior of the CJ and DJ forms aligns with what obtains in other languages where this distinction is found. As demonstrated, the CJ form must be followed by some element in the same constituent preventing it from occurring sentence-finally while the DJ form is final in its constituent, with the possibility of a complement occurring after the verb.

### 3.2. Formal properties of the CJ/DJ distinction

In languages with the CJ/DJ distinction the alternating verb forms may be distinguished morphologically by a segmental prefix or suffix, by tonal morphemes, or by phonological phrase boundaries (van der Wal 2017: 28). Babanki DJ forms are more segmentally marked than the CJ forms. As was seen in Table 2, the DJ forms all involve a H tone schwa that precedes the TAM auxiliary. In addition to the H tone schwa, the present/perfect tense (P0) and distant past (P3) have a postposed marker /<sup>h</sup>lí/. Compare the P3 CJ forms in (4a) and the distant future (F3) forms in (5a) with their corresponding DJ forms in (4b) and (5b) respectively.

- (4) a. *Búŋ*    *ə*    *n-lám*    *kā-báyŋ*  
 Bung    P3    N-cook    7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ*    *ɔ́*    *n-lám*    *ʰlí*    *kā-báyŋ*  
 Bung    DJ.P3    N-cook    PFV    7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu.’
- (5) a. *Búŋ*    *lù*    *lám*    *kā-báyŋ*  
 Bung    F3    cook    7-fufu  
 ‘Bung will cook the fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ*    *ɔ́*    *lí*    *ʰlám*    *kā-báyŋ*  
 Bung    DJ    F3    cook    7-fufu  
 ‘Bung will cook the fufu.’

Apart from the  $H$  tone schwa that occurs after the subject in DJ forms and the postposed / $\acute{L}$ /, there is an additional floating  $H$  between the verb and the object in future DJ forms. While the  $M$  tone on the prefix of *kā-báyn* ‘fufu’ in (4a) and (5a) is triggered by a general  $HL$  simplification rule (Hyman 1979; Akumbu 2019), that of (5b) has a different source. This  $M$  tone here reveals that future DJ forms have a floating  $H$  between the verb and the object which behaves like the  $H$  of the verb after it is set afloat. The hodiernal (F2) and F3 forms involving  $L$  tone verbs such as /*kùm*/ ‘touch’ and /*lè*/ ‘lose’ in (6) show that it cannot be the root tone of the  $H$  verb that spreads to the noun prefix in (4) and (5).

- (6) a. *Búŋ*    *á*            *né*        *kùm*    *kā-báyn*  
          Bung    DJ            F2        touch    7-fufu  
          ‘Bung will touch the fufu.’
- b.        *Búŋ*    *á*            *lú*        *lè*        *kā-báyn*  
          Bung    DJ            F3        lose      7-fufu  
          ‘Bung will lose the fufu.’

The raising of the prefix  $L$  to  $M$  when preceded by  $L$  tone verbs shows that there is an extra floating  $H$  after the DJ verb which is assigned to the following prefix *kà-*, thereby producing an intermediate  $HL$  falling tone which then simplifies to  $M$ .<sup>2</sup>

Having more extensive morphological marking on the DJ forms rather than on the CJ forms is in line with what obtains in other languages with the CJ/DJ alternation. As noted by van der Wal (2017: 29), “there appears to be a general pattern that the DJ form is always marked in some way, whereas the CJ form may be unmarked.”

### 3.3. Tenses which exhibit the CJ/DJ distinction

Typically, languages show a restriction on the number of tenses that have the CJ/DJ contrast (van der Wal 2017: 33). Babanki presents a more

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of tonal alternations in the verb system, see Akumbu et al. (2020).



thoroughgoing situation with the alternation present in the affirmative perfective of all past, present and future tenses. Since the past tenses have been illustrated in (1)–(4) and the future tenses in (5)–(6), we present the CJ/DJ distinction in the one remaining tense, the P0, in (7) and (8).

- (7) a. *Búŋ lām k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung has cooked the fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ á lām †lí k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung DJ cook PFV 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung has cooked the fufu.’
- (8) a. *Búŋ kùm k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung touch 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung has touched the fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ á kúmà lí k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung DJ touch PFV 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung has touched the fufu.’

The DJ forms in (7b) and (8b) are distinguished from the CJ forms in (7a) and (8a) by the presence of the H tone schwa that occurs after the subject and the postposed /<sup>h</sup>lí/. An extra schwa mora in (8b) avoids the creation of a HL falling tone on verb roots after the H of DJ *á* spreads and dislodges the L.

As demonstrated in Akumbu et al. (2020: 9–11) the CJ/DJ alternation observed in the affirmative perfective is not found in the corresponding progressive (imperfective) and negative tenses. In the progressive the one form per tense is marked by a nasal prefix, except in the P0, and a /L/ schwa suffix on the verb. Nevertheless, where present, the homophonous pre-auxiliary H tone schwa is glossed as DJ. In the examples that follow, the object is in brackets showing that the verb can be sentence-final in progressive forms.

- (9) a. *Búŋ lām-á (k̄-báyŋ)*  
 Bung COOK-PROG 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung is cooking (the fufu).’

- b. *Búŋ* *yĩ* *n-lám-ə* (*kə-báyn*)  
 Bung P1 N-cook-PROG 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung was cooking (the fufu).’
- c. *Búŋ* *tǎ* *ŋ-kùm-ə* (*kə-báyn*)  
 Bung P2 N-touch-PROG 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung was touching (the fufu).’
- (10) a. *Búŋ* *á* *ŋ-kùm-ə* (*kə-báyn*)  
 Bung F1 N-touch-PROG 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung will be touching the fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ* *ə* *né* *n-lám-ə* (*kə-báyn*)  
 Bung DJ F2 N-cook-PROG 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung will be cooking (the fufu).’
- c. *Búŋ* *ə* *lú* *ŋ-kùm-ə* (*kə-báyn*)  
 Bung DJ F3 N-touch-PROG 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung will be touching (the fufu).’

The input tense markers are the same as those given in Table 1. As seen in (9) and (10), the past tenses show the same segmental marking as the CJ forms in main clause affirmatives, while the future tenses unexpectedly have the same /ə/ preceding the tense auxiliary (except in F1 where it is deleted before /a/) as in the DJ forms in main clause affirmatives. Additional tonal differences are also involved. Except in the P3, the past tenses have a H tone following the tense auxiliary which produces a rising tone in the case of P1 and P2: /yĩ/ → [yĩ̃], /tǎ/ → [tǎ̃]. The same H tone accounts for the tonal differences between the P0 CJ and the corresponding progressive (11).

- (11) a. /*Búŋ* ` *lám* *kəbáyn*/ → *Búŋ* *lám* *kəbáyn*  
 ‘Bung has cooked the fufu.’
- b. /*Búŋ* ´ *lám-ə* *kəbáyn*/ → *Búŋ* *lámə* *kəbáyn*  
 ‘Bung is cooking the fufu.’  
 (Akumbu et al. (2020: 10)

In (11a), a  $L$  tonal morpheme precedes the verb in the  $P0$   $CJ$  which links to the verb, dislodging and setting its  $H$  afloat. Subsequently, the floating  $H$  docks onto the following  $/k\grave{\alpha}-/$  noun prefix to form a  $HL$  contour tone which then simplifies to  $M$ . In contrast, in (11b) a  $H$  tonal morpheme precedes the verb in the  $P0$  progressive, and the verb is realized  $H-H$  with its schwa suffix. The  $/k\grave{\alpha}-/$  noun prefix is, therefore, not affected. The *preverbal*  $H$  tone effects in the future progressives seem to correlate with the *postverbal*  $H$  tones of the futures in the  $DJ$  paradigm. So on purely formal grounds one might think that the progressive future forms retain periphrastic traits in that the tense markers (two of which,  $F2$  *nè* and  $F3$  *lù*, have been identified as originating in erstwhile verbs (Akumbu et al. 2020)) are inflected for the  $DJ$ , whereas the verb itself is segmentally marked for the progressive by the marker combination  $N- \dots -\grave{\alpha}$ .

As mentioned, the  $CJ/DJ$  contrast is not found in the negative. Negative indicative verb forms all involve the markers  $\acute{\alpha}$  *kó`* preceding the tense auxiliaries and it might be tempting to identify the omnipresent schwa as the same  $\acute{\alpha}$  observed in  $DJ$  forms, as in the following  $P2$  and  $F2$  perfective forms which lack the  $CJ/DJ$  distinction.

- (12) a. *Búŋ*     $\acute{\alpha}$     *kó*    *tà*    *làŋ*    *kā-báŋ*  
 Bung     $DJ$      $NEG$      $P2$     cook    7-fufu  
 ‘Bung did not cook the fufu.’
- b.    *Búŋ*     $\acute{\alpha}$     *kó*    *né*    *kùm*    *kā-báŋ*  
 Bung     $DJ$      $NEG$      $F2$     touch    7-fufu  
 ‘Bung will not touch the fufu.’

Likewise, negative progressive forms have the  $\acute{\alpha}$  observed in  $DJ$  forms and do not make any distinction between the  $CJ$  and  $DJ$  either (13).

- (13) a. *Búŋ*     $\acute{\alpha}$     *kó*    *tǎ*    *n-lám-á*    *kā-báŋ*  
 Bung     $DJ$      $NEG$      $P2$      $N-COOK-PROG$     7-fufu  
 ‘Bung was not cooking the fufu.’

- b. *Búŋ á kó né ŋ-kùm-à kà-báyn*  
 Bung DJ NEG F2 N-touch-PROG 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung will not be touching the fufu.’

It is, therefore, evident that the Babanki CJ/DJ alternation is restricted to affirmative perfective tenses and that progressive and negative forms lack such a distinction, as summarized in the following table.

Table 3

Conjoint and disjoint tense marking (Akumbu et al. 2020: 6)

	indicative affirmative			indicative negative	
	CJ	DJ	PROG	PERF	PROG
p0	`	á	`	á kó `	á kó `
p1	yì	á yĩ	yĩ	á kó yì	á kó yĩ
p2	tè	á tê	tě	á kó tè	á kó tě
p3	à	á	à	á kó `	á kó
F1	à	á `	á	á kó `	á kó
F2	nè	á né `	á né	á kó	á kó <sup>+</sup> né
F3	lù	á lú `	á lú	á kó <sup>+</sup> lú `	á kó <sup>+</sup> lú

### 3.4. Interpretation of the CJ/DJ contrast

It is quite “difficult to establish the precise difference in semantic or discursive interpretation between the CJ and the DJ verb forms” (van der Wal 2017: 39). However, to fully establish the existence of the CJ/DJ contrast in a language the meaning and proper contexts of use of each form should be identified. The Babanki DJ form is used contrastively with truth value focus (i.e. when truth value is part of the assertion), as in (14b) where the fact that Bung did indeed cook the fufu contrasts or counters the false claim in (14a) that he did not.

- (14) a. *Búŋ á kó t̄ làm k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung DJ NEG P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung did not cook the fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ á t̄ làm k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung DJ P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung DID cook the fufu.’

This suggest that truth value focus is expressed by using the DJ form. On the other hand, the CJ form is used when the truth value is presupposed, such as in answer to a question (15) or when focus is on another element of the utterance (i.e. term focus), such as the object (16).

- (15) a. *à t̄ t̄f̄ ã*  
 ES P2 pass what  
 ‘What happened?’
- b. *Búŋ t̄ làm k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu.’
- (16)a. *Búŋ t̄ làm ã*  
 Bung P2 cook what  
 ‘What did Bung cook?’
- b. *Búŋ t̄ làm k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the FUFU.’

The CJ can also be contrastive, as when specifying the object that was acted upon (17a) or the action that was undertaken (17b).

- (17) a. *Búŋ t̄ làm k̄-báyŋ*  
 Bung P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the FUFU (... not yams).’
- b. *Búŋ t̄ f̄ã á k̄-kí*  
 Bung P2 fall on 7-chair  
 ‘Bung FELL on the chair (... not sat on it).’

Babanki also follows the familiar pattern of the Immediate After the Verb (IAV) position being dedicated to expressing focus in some CJ/DJ languages (Watters 1979; van der Wal 2017), as illustrated in the following examples with the subject, i.e. Bung.

- (18) a. *Búŋ t̃̀ l̃̀m k̃̀-báyn*  
 Bung p2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked fufu.’
- b. *à t̃̀ l̃̀m Búŋ*  
 ES p2 cook Bung  
 ‘It is Bung who cooked.’
- c. *à t̃̀ l̃̀m Búŋ à l̃̀m k̃̀-báyn*  
 ES p2 cook Bung CSC cook 7-fufu  
 ‘It is Bung who cooked the fufu.’

The subject is shifted from preverbal position to IAV for the sake of focusing and only the CJ form is used. If an object is specified, as in (18b), then the verb must be repeated. This happens not only in declaratives (18a) but also in questions (19a) and negatives (19b).

- (19) a. *à t̃̀ l̃̀m ndá à l̃̀m k̃̀-báyn á*  
 ES p2 cook who CSC cook 7-fufu Q  
 ‘Who cooked the fufu?’
- b. *á kó t̃̀ l̃̀m Búŋ à l̃̀m k̃̀-báyn*  
 ES NEG p2 cook Bung CSC cook 7-fufu  
 ‘It is not Bung who cooked the fufu.’

More will be said about verb repetition in §4 where I discuss the relationship between the CJ/DJ alternation and information structure.

#### 4. Babanki CJ/DJ contrast and information structure

As hinted at above in §3.4, the CJ form appears to encode term focus since Babanki lacks a dedicated focus marker of the sort documented

in closely related West Ring languages. This is different from what is found, for example, with *nò* in Aghem (Hyman 2010) and *ɲwɔ̃* in Isu (Kießling 2010) which serve as contrastive focus markers alongside other focus strategies. As a matter of fact, as shown in (18) above and further illustrated in (20), the CJ form is used for term focus, i.e. to focus on a subject which answers the question ‘who cooked the fufu?’, as in (20b), an object which answers the question ‘what did Bung cook today?’, as in (20c), or an adverb which answers the question ‘when did Bung cook the fufu?’, as in (20d).

- (20) a. *Búŋ yì lām k̄-báyŋ láyŋ*  
 Bung P1 cook 7-fufu today  
 ‘Bung cooked fufu today.’
- b. *à yì lām Búŋ á n-lám k̄-báyŋ láyŋ*  
 ES P1 cook Bung CSC N-cook<sup>3</sup> 7-fufu today  
 ‘It is BUNG who cooked fufu today.’
- c. *à ði? k̄-báyŋ á Búŋ yì lām láyŋ*  
 ES COP 7-fufu REL Bung P1 cook today  
 ‘It is FUFU that Bung cooked today.’
- d. *à ði? láyŋ á Búŋ yì lām k̄-báyŋ*  
 ES COP today REL Bung P1 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘It is TODAY that Bung cooked the fufu.’

As seen in (20b), the focused subject moves to IAV, leaving behind the dummy subject *à*. In (20c–d) the copula *ði?* is required to put the object and adverb in focus and this must also be expressed in a relative clause. This means that subject relatives do not require the copula while object and adverb relatives do. One thing that sets Babanki apart from closely related Aghem is that not all focused elements occur in the IAV position. As seen in (20c–d) the object and adverb do not occur in the IAV position when focused. Secondly, the morphology of the object

<sup>3</sup> The nasal prefix is probably part of the consecutive marker that attaches to the verb root.

does not change, since the noun occurs with its prefix in all contexts, unlike in Aghem where the nominal prefix is deleted when the object is out of focus, i.e. not focused.

In consecutive constructions where the truth value is presupposed, the CJ form is used in both past and future tenses, as in the answers to the questions in (21) and (22).

- (21) a. *Búŋ t̀ ǹ ɣ̀ z̄yn á*  
 Bung P2 do what yesterday Q  
 ‘What did Bung do yesterday?’
- b. *Búŋ t̀ l̄m (k̄-báyn) ð z̄í*  
 Bung P2 cook 7-fufu CSC eat  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu and ate.’
- (22) a. *Búŋ ǹ ǹ álé l̄yn á*  
 Bung F2 do what yesterday Q  
 ‘How will Bung survive today?’
- b. *Búŋ ǹ l̄m (k̄-báyn) ð z̄í*  
 Bung F2 cook 7-fufu CSC eat  
 ‘Bung will have to cook the fufu and eat.’

As indicated in (20c–d) and further exemplified in (23), the CJ form is used in copula constructions (23a) and with relative clauses (23b), if the clausal modifier is focused.

- (23) a. *Búŋ t̄ n-dí? á ã-ŋg̀*  
 Bung P2 N-COP in 5-house  
 ‘Bung was at home.’
- b. *m̀ t̀ l̄m k̄-báyn á Búŋ ỳ z̄í l̄yn*  
 1SG P2 cook 7-fufu REL Bung P1 eat today  
 ‘I cooked the fufu that Bung ate today.’

The use of the CJ form in conditional clauses (24), provides additional evidence that the CJ form indeed encodes focus of the embedded clausal modifiers.



- (24) a. *tʃò lá Búŋ nè vì kò mà làm k̄ā-báyŋ*  
 pass till Bung F2 come NEG 1SG.F1 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Until Bung comes, I will not cook the fufu.’
- b. *sátsèn Búŋ nè vì mà làm k̄ā-báyŋ*  
 COND Bung F2 come 1SG.F1 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘If Bung comes, I will cook the fufu.’
- c. *kòŋ Búŋ nè vì kò mà làm k̄ā-báyŋ*  
 like Bung F2 come NEG 1SG.F1 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Even if Bung comes, I will not cook the fufu.’
- d. *Búŋ tà vì tà vì-í mà lám k̄ā-báyŋ*  
 Bung P2 come soon come-SFX 1SG cook 7-fufu  
 ‘As soon as Bung came, I cooked the fufu.’
- e. *Búŋ tà dzù tè dzú-ú mà b̄ò làm k̄ā-báyŋ*  
 Bung P2 go even go-SFX 1SG still cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Even though Bung went, I still cooked the fufu.’

Another interesting point, illustrated in (25), is that focus of the verb is achieved by repeating the verb, and having a schwa suffix on the second verb, rather than a consecutive marker, as in (20b) above.

- (25) a. *Búŋ yì làm k̄ā-báyŋ lám-ó*  
 Bung P1 cook 7-fufu cook-SFX  
 ‘Bung COOKED fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ yì f̄əŋ f̄əŋ-ó*  
 Bung P1 fall fall-SFX  
 ‘Bung FELL.’

Verb doubling for encoding predicate-centered focus has been reported in a subset of Bantu languages that apparently do not have the conjoint/disjoint verb alternation i.e. languages of zones A, B, E, F, H, and K (Morimoto 2017). Morimoto (2017: 171) suggests that since “verb doubling and the disjoint form are used for the same pragmatic purposes (i.e. encoding predicate-centered focus), we might

speculate that they exist complementarily across Bantu languages”. In Babanki where verb doubling and the DJ form are in use, it seems that both encode predicate-centered focus while verb doubling is less restrictive, also found in term focus when the focused element is in IAV position, as in (20b) above. Further research is needed to better understand and characterize the relationship between verb doubling, the DJ form and truth value focus.

As was mentioned in §3.4 above, the DJ form is used contrastively with truth value focus or when the truth value is part of the assertion (i.e. not presupposed). This is shown in copula constructions (26a–b), WH-questions (27a–b), *only*-clauses (28a–b), and consecutive constructions (29a–b).

- (26) a. *Búŋ á kó né n-<sup>+</sup>dí? á ā-ŋgəŋ*  
 Bung DJ NEG F1 N-COP in 5-house  
 ‘Bung will not be at home.’
- b. *Búŋ á né n-<sup>+</sup>dí? á ā-ŋgəŋ*  
 Bung DJ F1 N-COP in 5-house  
 ‘Bung WILL be at home.’
- (27) a. *Búŋ á né <sup>+</sup>lám kā-báyn zé*  
 Bung DJ F2 cook 7-fufu when  
 ‘When WILL Bung cook the fufu?’
- b. *Búŋ á né bvù ā-sáj fé*  
 Bung DJ F2 grind 6-corn when  
 ‘Where WILL Bung grind the corn?’
- (28) a. *Búŋ á né <sup>+</sup>lám kā-báyn nà kàsá*  
 Bung DJ F2 cook 7-fufu and 1.cassava  
 ‘Bung will cook the fufu and the cassava.’
- b. *Búŋ á né <sup>+</sup>lám tà kā-báyn*  
 Bung DJ F2 cook only 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung WILL cook only the fufu?’
- (29) a. *Búŋ á né <sup>+</sup>lám (kā-báyn) á zé*  
 Bung DJ F2 cook 7-fufu CSC eat  
 ‘Bung will have to cook the fufu and eat.’

- b. *Búŋ á t̃ à làm (k̃á-báyŋ) à ʒí*  
 Bung<sub>DJ</sub> P2 cook 7-fufu CSC eat  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu and ate.’

In (28b), *k̃ábáyŋ* ‘fufu’ gets focus interpretation by default since *t̃à* ‘only’ has scope over the object, but not over the tense or the verb. This means that a Babanki sentence can have two foci, one on the truth value and another on some other element such as the object. The discussion in this section shows that “indeed, the meaning and inferences conveyed and the proper contexts for use of the *CJ/DJ* contrasts are complicated and hence difficult to describe and establish” (van der Wal 2017: 39).

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented evidence for the *CJ/DJ* alternation in Babanki. The properties of the contrast, i.e. distribution, form, tenses, and interpretation support the existence of the *CJ/DJ* alternation in this Grassfields Bantu language. To illustrate the relationship between the alternation and information structure, I have shown that the *CJ* form is used for term focus while the *DJ* form is used contrastively with truth value focus or when truth value is part of an assertion (i.e. not presupposed). While this alternation has been widely documented in Narrow Bantu languages it has only been mentioned sporadically outside of Narrow Bantu, including in closely related Aghem which has a more elaborate focus marking system than Babanki. Akumbu et al. (2020) have noted, without further elaboration, that the *CJ/DJ* alternation is also found in Kom, another Central Ring Grassfields Bantu language, where it is equally marked by different forms, as in the general past *Ngóŋ tí jùm mēnywín* (*CJ*) vs. *Ngóŋ tí mēn jùm mēnywín* (*DJ*) ‘Ngong drove away the birds’.

The Babanki *CJ/DJ* contrast may be thought of as the thematic/categorical distinction made in some languages (Sasse 1987; 2006; Schwarz 2010). In such languages, the categorical judgement has two successive acts:

naming an entity and making a statement about it while thethetic type is logically unstructured, serving the expression of an event or a state or situation. The categorial judgement is pragmatically less marked than the unstructuredthetic organization and applies in several communicative situations. These specifications suggest that the Babanki DJ form might correspond to the categorial judgement while the CJ form corresponds to thethetic judgement. However, as demonstrated earlier and again in the following examples, the distinction between the two forms rather depends, to a large extent, on focus.

- (30) a. *Búŋ á t̂ làm k̄-báyn*  
 Bung DJ P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung DID cook the fufu.’
- b. *Búŋ t̂ làm k̄-báyn*  
 Bung P2 cook 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung cooked the fufu.’

The DJ form in (30a) states the truth value of the assertion that Bung actually cooked the fufu, e.g. in response to an assertion that he did not while the CJ form in (30b) is used when the truth value is presupposed, as in response to a question such as ‘what happened?’. This kind of distinction is commonly made across languages with the CJ/DJ contrast rather than in those with the categorial/thetic distinction. This is further supported by the fact that in languages that make thethetic/categorial distinction weather verbs which typically do not comment on a topic but just report a specific state or event use thethetic encoding (Schwarz 2010). In Babanki this is not the case as the CJ/DJ contrast is also expressed in weather states or events.

- (31) a. *à-ŋí á t̂ vì z̄yn*  
 3-rain DJ P2 come yesterday  
 ‘It rained yesterday.’
- b. *à-ŋí t̂ vì z̄yn*  
 3-rain P2 come yesterday  
 ‘It rained yesterday.’

As in (29), the distinction between the two statements is that truth value is part of the assertion in (30a) whereas it is presupposed in the (30b).

Since this is the first detailed study of the *CJ/DJ* contrast in Grassfields Bantu, the relationship between the *CJ/DJ* alternation and information structure needs to be examined more closely in Babanki and other Grassfields languages which, unfortunately, have not yet been studied for these phenomena. This requires the collection of various texts since it is difficult to elicit data on the *CJ/DJ* contrast and information structure.

### Abbreviations

↓ – downstep	LOC – locative
1...19 – noun classes	M – mid tone
1SG – first person singular	MCA – main clause affirmative
2SG – second person singular	N – nasal
3PL – third person plural	NEG – negation
ADV – adverb	O – object
AUX – auxiliary	P0 – present/perfect tense
CJ – conjoint	P1 – immediate past tense
COND – conditional	P2 – hodiernal past tense
COP – copula	P3 – distant past tense
CSC – consecutive	PFV – perfective
DJ – disjoint	PROG – progressive
ES – expletive subject	Q – question marker
F1 – immediate future tense	REL – relativiser
F2 – hodiernal future tense	S – subject
F3 – distant future tense	SFX – suffix
H – high tone	V – vowel
L – low tone	

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