

A Morphological Analysis of Tense in Mambwe Language

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Abstract

Guthrie (1948) classifies Mambwe as M15. The language is spoken in Mbala and Senga districts in Northern Province of Zambia. Nurse and Philipson (1999) have characterized Mambwe as originating from Fipa language in Southern Tanzania. The paper outlines the rules governing tense categorization and evaluates the verbal structure of tense in Mambwe language. The study employed the qualitative approach and elicitation methodology to collect data. Using descriptive and Lexical Morphology (LM) theoretical underpinnings, the article identifies the forms or categories of tense and their respective structures in Mambwe language. The study shows that tense in Mambwe language is as attested by other Bantu languages in terms of the present, past and the future tenses with their corresponding progressive counterparts.

Keywords: Analysis; descriptive; Lexical Morphology; morphological; tense.

1. Introduction

Guthrie (1948) classifies Mambwe as M15. The native speakers of Mambwe are found in Mbala and Senga districts of Northern Province in Zambia, and parts of Southern Tanzania. Mbala is surrounded by Mpulungu district where Lungu is spoken, Nakonde district where Namwanga is spoken and Mungwi, Kasama and Mporokoso districts where Bemba is spoken. Mambwe is not a regional official language (ROL) in Zambia. In the northern part of Zambia, where Mambwe is spoken, it is overshadowed by Bemba the regional official local language for initial literacy and local government. It is not just that Mambwe children are initiated in Bemba literacy; Bemba also happens to be the most spoken language in Zambia (CSO, 2010).

According to CSO (2010), the national census data shows that of 692 939 Zambians who claimed Mambwe ethnicity, 40% use Bemba and 10% Nyanja as languages of everyday communication. Although this does not necessarily indicate language shift, as speakers could either be bilingual or multilingual, it shows the effects of language contact and language zoning, in which Zambia has only seven out of more than 72 indigenous languages designated the official languages status. This paper rides on the scarcity of literature and analyses tense in Mambwe languages. Therefore, to avoid the dearth of Mambwe, this documentation on tense is necessary.

2. Literature Review

The Bantu verb is quite complex and different scholars have studied and documented various elements of the morphology of Bantu languages. Most scholarly works on verbal morphology of Bantu languages focus on descriptive and theoretical issues which include the verbal structure, subject and object marking, tense, aspect, and mood (cf. Kiso, 2012). The verbal structure of Bantu languages comprises a root or radical with prefixes and suffixes attached to it (Downing, 2001). Downing's (2001) analysis of the composition of the verbal structure of Bantu languages draws insights from Myers (1987) and Ngunga (2000) respectively. Therefore, the overall verbal structure of Bantu languages is:

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

As attested by the above scholars, the verbal structure of Mambwe language is in tandem with other Bantu languages and has two morphological domains, namely, the verbal stem and the macro stem. The verbal stem comprises the verb

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root, any verb extensions, certain Tense, Aspect and Mood (TAM), suffixes and the Final Vowel. The second entry is for the macro stem which incorporates the Subject and Object Markers, reflexive prefix, the stem and verb root extensions (cf. Nkolola, 1997; Miti, 2001; Mtenje, 2016).

Mambwe is closely related to Lungu to such an extent that the two are often described as dialects of the same language (Kashoki & Mann, 1978). For this reason, they are sometimes written as Lungu-Mambwe or Mambwe-Lungu. The two 'languages' have a shared cognate rate of 92% and are mutually intelligible (Kashoki & Mann, 1978). However, although linguists would classify the two 'languages' as dialects of one language, rather than as two separate languages, culturally, the languages represent two ethnic groups. Speakers of each of the languages can distinguish between the two as there are a number of lexical differences between them (Kashoki & Mann, 1978).

Very little is known about Mambwe language because it is less documented. Among the few documented literature are: The London Missionary Society (1962), Mambwe Folktales (Halemba, 1991), Mambwe-English (Halemba, 1994) and the English-Mambwe (Halemba, 2007) dictionaries. Halemba (2007) has a grammar supplement designed to help users of the dictionary. However, Halemba (2007) did not discuss tense and other verbal structures discussed in this paper.

Lack of documentation leads to linguistic erosion. The danger of linguistic erosion which is likely to lead to language death for non-official Zambian languages, such as Mambwe, is not just from English as is often depicted in the literature, but also from more illustrious official Zambian languages such as Bemba and Nyanja. The above argument is echoed by Brenzinger (1998) who points out that small African languages are currently still not endangered by ex-colonial languages but risk being replaced by other major African languages such as Bemba in the Zambian context which is the regional official language in Northern Province where Mambwe is spoken. Therefore, this documentation is a contribution to the linguistic knowledge of verbal morphology of Mambwe to save the language from possible death.

3. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to contribute to descriptive and documentary linguistics by analysing the morphological structure of tense in Mambwe language. The above stated aim is achieved by addressing the following objectives:

- a) To identify categories of tense in Mambwe language;
- b) To determine the rules governing tense categorization in Mambwe language; and
- c) To evaluate the verbal structure of tense in Mambwe language.

4. Theoretical Framing

This article is informed by the descriptive approach which is backed by the Lexical Morphology (LM) theory. The paper adopts a descriptive approach because descriptive study of language is a critical component of documentary linguistics which deals with languages which are less documented such as Mambwe. The descriptive approach is useful when establishing the grammar of a language. Mutch (2005) has shown that this approach uses words and sentential expressions which are then analysed for what they are. The approach deals with explanations of concepts to be documented. The descriptive approach is helpful during the description and analysis of tense in the verbal structure of Mambwe language. The analysis of the linguistic experiences is subjected to meaning based on the researcher's perception (Merriam, 1998).

The Lexical Morphology framing should be seen as an extract from the Lexical Phonology and Morphology (LPM) theory which is attested by the following scholars (Chomsky and Halle, 1968; Kiparsky, 1973; and Katamba, 1989). Lexical Morphology is chosen to back the descriptive theory because it is a theory of rules and word level derivations. The roots of Lexical Morphology go back to Kiparsky (1973), Mascaró (1976), Halle (1978), and Rubach (1981). Lexical Morphology is an extreme embodiment of Chomsky's (1970) lexicalist hypothesis because it claims that all word formation, including inflection, takes place in the lexicon. Furthermore, word formation rules (WFR) interact with a subset of phonological rules called cyclic rules. This interaction is possible, because cyclic rules, like WFRs, are placed in the lexicon, so they are called lexical rules. An important feature of this model is that other than the morpheme, it is the word that is regarded as the key unit of morphological analysis. The researcher argues that the combination of morphemes to form words in Bantu languages results into rules which govern the combination of words into bigger structures, such as, the phrase, clause and sentence which interact with tense in Mambwe language which is discussed in this article. As attested by Katamba (1989), the morphological rules are found in the lexicon where they are organised in blocks called strata which are arranged hierarchically one below the other. Therefore, this framing fits well in this paper and provides guidance on how verbs are formed and organised in Mambwe language.

5. Methodology

The paper employs the qualitative design and elicitation methodology. The qualitative descriptive design is a holistic, non-numerical, inductive, subjective and process-oriented approach which helps scholars to understand, describe and interpret phenomenon on which subsequent theories may be developed (Burns & Grove, 1997). As attested by Mutch (2005), this approach is chosen because it also enables the research findings to be reported descriptively using words and sentential expressions as used by ordinary speakers of the language. In other words, from the morphological description of Mambwe language, a linguistic theory of aspects of tense in relation to the verbal structure of the language may be developed in subsequent studies.

The data used in this paper were elicited through oral interviews involving four key informants, all of whom are mother tongue speakers of Mambwe. The key informants also worked as data verifiers. The lead author is a mother tongue speaker of Mambwe. Being a native speaker of the language, his knowledge, intuitions and introspections were critical in sourcing relevant data as well as during the descriptive analysis of tense marking in Mambwe language. This descriptive and documentary article contributes to the development of verbal morphology of the language.

6. Results and Discussion of Findings

This paper on the morphological analysis of tense in Mambwe language finds its place in the verbal stem morphological domain of the verbal structure of Bantu languages. The analysis of tense in the present article is just a fraction of the verbal structure of Mambwe language and draws insights from Nkolola (1997), Downing (2001), Miti (2001) and Mtenje (2016). The descriptive analysis of the Mambwe verbal structure in the present paper focuses on tense.

6.1 Tense in Mambwe Language

Comrie (1976) defines tense as a deictic category which is used to locate situations which are external in relation to time that usually has reference to the present moment and to other situations. Kiso (2012) adds that tense locates the situation in time, such as, expressing whether the event happened before, during or after the moment of speech. Based on the above arguments, tense can be understood as the time at which an action takes place in relation to the moment of a speech utterance. This portion discusses tense in Mambwe language with reference to the present, past, future and progressive verbs.

6.1.1. The Present Tense in Mambwe Language

Mambwe language expresses the present tense using the common prefix morpheme [-ku-] in Cl.15 which functions as an infinitive 'to' and is preceded by the augment [u-]. The language undergoes glide formation in the stem after the prefix [ku-] which is also attested in other Bantu languages such as ciNdali (Mtenje-Mkochi, 2018), ciShona (Kadenge and Simango, 2014) and, ciNsenga and ciSukwa (Mtenje, 2012) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Present tense in Mambwe language

S/N	Present tense	Realisation	Gloss
a.	<i>ukufyona</i>	[u-ku-fi-on-a]	'to blow the nose'
b.	<i>ukulwa</i>	[u-ku-lu-a]	'to fight'
c.	<i>ukuvyala</i>	[u-ku-vi-al-a]	'to give birth'
d.	<i>ukuvwa</i>	[u-ku-vu-a]	'to hear'

Table 1 shows that Mambwe language always attach the augment [u-] to the prefix [-ku-] to differentiate the present tense from other tenses such as the present continuous tense. In examples (a) and (c), the present tense is affected by gliding in the verb root where the high front vowel [i] is realised as [y] while in (b) and (d), the high back vowel [u] is realised as [w].

6.1.2. Present Progressive Tense in Mambwe Language

Comrie (1976) describes the term progressive as being synonymous to continuousness which refers to an imperfectivity description that is not occasioned by habits. On the other hand, Mtenje (2016) shows that the present progressive tense

describes an action that is taking place at the time of speech which is not completed and is still in progress. Kiso (2012) observes that cross-linguistically, progressives are usually not found with state verbs. As attested by the above scholars, the present progressive tense in Mambwe language describes actions which are happening at the time of speech and in a continuous manner. The language uses the common prefix [ku-] with varying pre-prefixes which include, [a-] ‘he/she’ and [ya-] ‘they’ to express the present progressive tense as illustrated in the Table 2.

Table 2. Present progressive tense in Mambwe

S/N	Present tense	Present progressive verbs
a.	<i>ukupita</i> [u-ku-pit-a] ‘to walk’	<i>akupita</i> [a-ku-pit-a] ‘she/he is walking’
b.	<i>ukulya</i> [u-ku-li-a] ‘to eat’	<i>yakulya</i> [i-a-ku-li-a] ‘they are eating’

Table 2 reveals that Mambwe language uses the prefix [ku-] which is attached to the stem to express the present progressive tense. Example (a) shows that the language attaches an augment [a-] to the prefix [-ku-] to indicate that the present action is performed by a singular noun in a continuous state. In examples (b), tense is affected by gliding in the pre-prefix [ya-] which is used to pluralise the present continuous tense. The analysis further reveals that in (b), Mambwe language uses the glide [y] in the pre-prefix position to express plurality of the present continuous tense.

6.1.3. The Past Tense in Mambwe Language

Crystal (2008) shows that many Bantu languages use one verbal form for ‘today’ events and for ‘before today’ events regardless of their current relevance which demonstrates the complexity of the past tense. Mambwe language uses the suffix marker [-ile] to change the verbs from present to the past simple and past participle tenses respectively. The table 3 shows the formation of the past simple and past participle tenses in Mambwe language:

Table 3. Past simple/participle tense in Mambwe

S/N	Present tense	Past simple/past participle(sg)	Past simple/past participle(pl)
a	<i>ukuvwanga</i> [u-ku-u-a ng -a] ‘to speak’	<i>wavwanzile</i> [u-a-vu-anz-ile] ‘he/she spoke’	<i>yavwanzile</i> [i-a-vu-anz-ile] ‘they spoke’
b	<i>ukulya</i> [u-ku-li-a] ‘to eat’	<i>waliile</i> [u-a-li-ile] ‘he/she ate’	<i>yaliile</i> [i-a-li-ile] ‘they ate’
c	<i>ukutama</i> [u-ku-tam-a] ‘to break’	<i>watamile</i> [u-a-tam-ile] ‘he/she broke’	<i>yatamile</i> [i-a-tam-ile] ‘they broke’

Table 3 shows that Mambwe language in examples (a-c) uses the suffix marker [-ile] to express the past simple and the past participle tenses in both singular and plural verbs. Examples (a-c) also reveal that the language uses the prefix [wa-] to express the singular past simple and past participle tenses. It can be argued that example (a) undergoes a morphophonological process in which the prenasalised velar sound /ŋg/ which is realised as [ng] in the root of the present tense changes to the prenasalised alveolar fricative sound /ŋz/ realised as [nz] in the root of the past simple and past participle tenses before introducing the suffix marker [-ile]. In (a-c), the language undergoes gliding in the prefix where either [u] is realised as [w] or [i] is realised as [y] in both the singular and plural forms of the past simple and past participle tenses. In (a-c), both the past simple and the past participle tenses have the same morphology and tenses can only be distinguished through explanations and contextualisation. Mambwe maintains the root of the present tense before introducing the past simple and past participle tense marker [-ile]. The above argument can be illustrated as follows; in example (a) [-vwang- → -vwanz-], (b) [-ly- → -li-] and (c) [-tam-] respectively. The analysis reveals that present verbs in (a-c) drop off the final vowel before taking on the suffix marker [-ile] in both singular and plural verbal forms of the past simple and past participle constructions. Further analysis of (a-c) reveals that the language undergoes gliding in the prefix [wa-] to express singularity and in [ya-] to express plurality.

a) Today Past in Mambwe Language

Today past is also referred to as ‘the hodiernal past’. Zemba (2015) argues that today past tense is used to mark events that happened earlier in the same day or sometime within the same day (today). In Mambwe language, today past tense is expressed using the Object Marker (henceforth, OM) [mu-] followed by the radical (henceforth, RAD) [-senz-] as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Today or hodiernal past in Mambwe language

Word/sentence:	<i>Yamusenzile ileelo</i>				
Disjuncts:	<i>ya-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>senz-</i>	<i>-ile</i>	
Verbal structure:	3PL	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF	
Gloss:	‘They took him/her today’				

In Mambwe language, all other past perfectives are built on the hodiernal past. The language uses the OM [-mu-] to describe singular referents in the past today and use the same radical [-senz-] and the perfective suffix marker [-ile] to express the past today. Table 4 shows that the language uses the third person plural (3PL) [ya-] ‘they’ to describe the events in today past tense while the third person singular (3SG) [wa-] ‘he/she’ is used to express verbs in the singular past today. Mambwe language uses the element [ya-] to express the OM in the plural. The addition of an adverb of time *ileelo* ‘today’ to the construction *yamusenzile* ‘they took him/her’, provides context and distinguishes the today past tense form from the remote past perfective.

b) Immediate Past Tense (Perfective) in Mambwe Language

Mtenje (2016) refers to the immediate past as actions in the past which listeners perceive as being close to the time of speech. The immediate past tense shows that something has just happened within a short time. Mambwe language uses the OM [ci-], RAD [-senz-] and the perfective suffix [-ile] to express the immediate past tense as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Immediate past tense in Mambwe language

Word/sentence:	<i>Yacisenzile likwene</i>				
Disjuncts:	<i>ya-</i>	<i>ci-</i>	<i>senz-</i>	<i>-ile</i>	
Verbal structure:	3PL	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF	
Gloss:	‘They have just taken it’				

Table 5 reveals that the language uses adverbials of time such as *likwene* ‘just’ to qualify the immediate past tense. It can be argued that when the immediate past is pluralised, Mambwe uses the element [vi-] as the object marker (OM). The language is affected by gliding in the 3PL slot where the approximant [y] in the morpheme [ya-] signifies the plural.

c) Recent Past (non- hodiernal) in Mambwe Language

Zemba (2015) shows that the recent past tense is used to mark specific events that occurred before sunrise today and as far back as a week. The recent past tense in Mambwe is expressed using the OM [-mu-], RAD [-senz-] followed by the perfective aspect [-ile] as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Recent past tense in Mambwe language

Word/sentence:	<i>Yacimusenzile likwene</i>				
Disjuncts:	<i>ya-</i>	<i>ci-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>senz-</i>	<i>-ile</i>
Verbal structure:	3PL	TM	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
Gloss:	‘They took him/her recently’				

Table 6 reveals that Mambwe language uses the adverbs of time such as *likwene* ‘recently’ to qualify the recent past tense. The analysis also shows that the language is affected by gliding in the 3PL slot where the high front vowel /i/ is realised as /y/. The study further shows that the language uses the tense marker (TM) morpheme [-ci-] to express the recent past.

d) Remote Past Perfective in Mambwe Language

Comrie (1976) describes perfectivity as a term which indicates the view of a situation as a single whole which provides the result of an action in the past. Mtenje (2016) shows that in the SuNdaLa cluster, the remote past is marked by the morpheme [ka-] which indicates an action that took place in an estimated time of two days after the moment of speech. On the other hand, the remote past perfective tense in Mambwe language is marked by the general OM morpheme [mu-], the perfective suffix [-ile] and the specific time which is expressed by the time qualifier *umwacizo* ‘last year’ as exemplified in Table 7.

Table 7. Remote past tense in Mambwe language

Word/sentence:	<i>Yamusenzile umwacizo</i>			
Disjuncts:	<i>ya-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>senz-</i>	<i>-ile</i>
Verbal structure:	3PL	OM	RAD	PERF. SUFF
Gloss:	‘They took him/her last year’			

The TM in the remote past is implied in Mambwe language and as such the use of the adverb of time *umwacizo* ‘last year’ qualifies the expression or statement to be in the remote past perfective tense. It can be argued that the addition of the adverb of time *umwacizo* ‘last year’ to the remote past perfective distinguishes this past tense from other past tenses. The example also shows that Mambwe language is affected by gliding in the 3PL slot where the high front vowel /i/ is realised as /y/.

6.1.4. The Past Progressive Tense in Mambwe Language

Zemba (2015) and Mtenje (2016) show that the past progressive tense talks about actions which happened in the past in a continuous manner. The past progressive verbs in Mambwe language are expressed by adding the suffix marker [-nga] to the stem of the present tense as exemplified in Table 8.

Table 8. The singular past progressive tense in Mambwe

S/N	Present tense	Past progressive tense (SG)
a.	<i>ukukazya</i> [u-ku-kazi-a] ‘to sell’	<i>wakaazyanga</i> [u-a-ka-zi-a-nga] ‘s/he was selling’
b.	<i>ukulya</i> [u-ku-li-a] ‘to eat’	<i>walyaanga</i> [u-a-li-a-ang-a] ‘s/he was eating’
c.	<i>ukucina</i> [u-ku-cin-a] ‘to dance’	<i>waciinanga</i> [u-a-ci-na-ang-a] ‘s/he was dancing’

The analysis of Table 8 shows that the TM in examples (a-c) attracts double vowels in order to express the past progressive tense, where [-a-] becomes [-aa-] while [-i-] becomes [-ii-]. The above finding justifies that vowel length in the TM is a determining factor for expressing the past progressive verbs besides the suffix marker [-nga] in Mambwe language. The language begins the tense with the morpheme [wa-] when referring to the singular subject in the past progressive which is usually affected by gliding where the high back vowel /u/ is realised as /w/.

On the other hand, Mambwe language expresses the plural past progressive tense in which the first morpheme uses the approximant [y]. The plural past progressive tense is expressed using the TM [-alii-] while maintaining the suffix marker [-nga] as exemplified in Table 9.

Table 9. The plural past progressive tense in Mambwe

Word/sentence:	<i>Yaliimanga</i>			
Disjuncts:	<i>i (y)-</i>	<i>-alii-</i>	<i>-mang-</i>	<i>a</i>
Verbal structure:	SM	TM	VR	FV
Gloss:	‘They were cultivating’			

Table 9 reveals that Mambwe language uses the TM [-alii-] to express the past progressive tense. The researcher argues that Mambwe language uses the SM [i-] ‘they’ to express the third person plural (3PL). The researcher also argues that the OM in Mambwe language is neither obligatory nor mandatory in the verbal structure of the past progressive tense. It can be further argued that the past tense markers in Mambwe language are not fixed, but vary from one form of tense to another.

6.1.5. The Future Tense in Mambwe Language

This part analyses the future simple and future continuous tenses in Mambwe language.

a) The Future Simple Tense in Mambwe Language

Zemba (2015) argues that the future tense in Kunda is marked morphologically with the general tense [-ko] and the infinitive particle [-ku] is attached to the verb to express the hodiernal future, the near future and the remote future perfective. On the contrary, Mambwe language forms the future simple tense by introducing the prefix morpheme [-la-/li-] before the radical as illustrated in the Table 10.

Table 10. The future simple tense in Mambwe language

S/N	Present tense	Future (Singular)	Future (plural)
a	<i>ukuvyala</i> [u-ku-vi-al-a] 'to give birth'	<i>alavyala</i> [a-la-vi-al-a] 'she will give birth'	<i>yalavyala</i> [i-a-la-vi-al-a] 'they will give birth'
b	<i>ukutama</i> [u-ku-tam-a] 'to break'	<i>alatama</i> [a-la-tam-a] 'he/she will break'	<i>yalatama</i> [i-a-la-tam-a] 'they will break'
c	<i>ukumanya</i> [u-ku-mani-a] 'to know'	<i>alamanya</i> [a-la-mani-a] 'he/she will know'	<i>yalamanya</i> [i-a-la-mani-a] 'they will know'

The examples in table 10 show that Mambwe language creates the simple future tense from the same present tenses. The language begins the future simple tense in the singular form with the 3SG morpheme [a-] 'he/she'. The examples also reveal that gliding affects pluralising the future simple tense in the 3PL slot where the morpheme [ya-] is used. It can be argued that in examples (a-c), Mambwe language maintains the radical in the present tense when expressing the future simple tense. The researcher also argues that the language inserts the morpheme [-la-] before the radical to denote the future simple time both in singular and plural referents.

The analysis shows that during future simple tense marking, the language uses the tense marker (TM) [-la-] as exemplified in Table 11.

Table 11. Future simple tense marking in Mambwe language

Word/sentence:	<i>Tulamwazwa</i>				
Disjuncts:	<i>tu-</i>	<i>-la-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>azu-</i>	<i>a</i>
Verbal structure:	SM	TM	OM	VR	FV
Gloss:	'We will help him/her'				

Table 11 shows that Mambwe language uses short vowels in the TMs in [-la-] to express the future simple tense. It can be argued that during subject marking, tense marking and object marking, the high back vowel /u/ glides to /w/ in the verb radical (VR).

b) The Future Progressive Tense in Mambwe Language

Appah (2003) shows that Akan language expresses the future progressive tense cross dialectally either using the prefix [re-] or [ri-] depending on the vowel of the verb root. Appah also argues that Akuapem forms future progressives without considering the quality of the vowel in the verb root as opposed to Asante which considers lengthening the vowel of the pronominal subject marker. Mambwe language expresses the future progressive tense using the TM [-laa-] as shown in Table 12.

Table 12. The future progressive tense in Mambwe language

Word/sentence:	<i>Tulaamwazwa</i>				
Disjuncts:	<i>tu-</i>	<i>-laa-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>-azw-</i>	<i>a</i>
Verbal structure:	SM	TM	OM	VR	FV
Gloss:	'We will be helping him/her'				

The example in Table12 reveals that Mambwe language uses vowel length to express the future progressive verbs. The language uses the affix [-laa-] to express both singular and plural forms of the future progressive verbs. The analysis also reveals that the language uses the SM [tu-] 'we' to express the first person plural (1PL). The language lengthens the short vowel [a] in the TM to [a:] in order to express the future progressive tense.

7. Conclusion

The paper has presented and analysed the morphological structure of tense in Mambwe language. The verbal structure of Mambwe language is as attested by other Bantu languages. Mambwe uses the morpheme [ku] to signal the present tense and the same morpheme [ku] functions as a prefix with an optional augment [a-] to express the present progressive verbs. On the other hand, the suffix marker [-ile] is used to express the today, immediate, recent and remote past tenses. The past progressive tense is expressed by the morpheme [-lii-] as the TM and the suffixing morpheme [-nga]. The language expresses the future simple tense using the TM [-la-]. Mambwe language expresses the future progressive

tense using the TM [-laa-] in both singular and plural forms. The language lengthens the short vowel [a] in the TM to [a:] in order to express the future progressive tense.

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