

# TAM system of Wam (Kugama), an Adamawa language of Nigeria

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# Overview

- General information on Wam
- Citation form of a verb
- Basic TAM categories
- Imperative
- Basic verb classification

# General information on Wam



– *ná: wàm* ‘the Wam language’  
(KUGAMA)

- Spoken in a number of villages in Mayo-Belwa LGA and Fufore LGA of Adamawa State
- Yendang group of the Adamawa language family
- 5000 speakers (Ethnologue)

## Previous research on Wam

- First field trip conducted in Yola, the capital of Adamawa State, in January 2014 as part of research for my BA and later for my MA theses at St. Petersburg State University, Russia;
- Three field trips to Wam communities (Mayo-Belwa, Adamawa State, Nigeria) as part of my PhD project from Labex EFL (project LC2 “Areal phenomena in northern sub-Saharan Africa”) in March –June 2017, April – May 2018, and November 2018.

## General features of Wam

- 3 contrastive level tones
- Nasal vowels
- Vowel length
- Labio-velar  $\widehat{kp}$ ,  $\widehat{gb}$
- Implosives  $\text{ɓ}$ ,  $\text{ɗ}$
- SVO

## Citation form of a verb

I use **deverbal nouns** as a citation form in my dictionary. They feature more tone patterns than an imperative form of a verb. Tonal melodies in Imperative are more or less predictable from corresponding deverbal nouns, but not vice versa.

Deverbal Noun	Imperative
H-kī	→ H
M-kī	→ L
L-kī	→ L

*p̄-kī* ‘to farm, farming’

*p̄-mū* ‘Farm! (addressed to one person)’ (farm-SG.ADR);

## Basic TAM categories

- Perfective;
- Progressive;
- Future;

+ constructions with *wa*

## Progressive

Progressive is expressed through the marker *tì*, which is related to the word *tē* ‘place’:

- (1)      *Yálō*      *tì*      *gòkì*      *sóm*  
Yalo      PROG      do      work  
‘Yalo is working’/ ‘Yalo was working’  
(lit. “Yalo is/was at the place of doing work”)

Subject is expressed by a noun/NP or a set of STAMP morphs. The predicate position is occupied by a deverbal noun.



## STAMP morphs in positive progressive and locative clauses

1SG	<i>mē</i>	1PL	<i>tō</i>
2SG	<i>mō</i>	2PL	<i>nō</i>
3SG.HUM	<i>dē</i>	3PL.HUM	<i>dī</i>
3SG.NHUM	<i>ḥḍ</i>	3PL.NHUM	<i>ḥ</i>

## Progressive (continued)

(2)      *mō*    *tì*            *mòkī*  
2SG    PROG    eat  
'You are/were eating'

(3)      *mō(:)*            *mòkī*  
2SG.PROG    eat  
'You are/were eating'

# Future

Subject can be expressed by a special set of **STAMP morphs** or by a **noun/NP followed by the marker -à** in a future clause. The marker always merges with the last syllable of a preceding noun. The predicate is expressed by a deverbial noun.

(4) *Músâ(:) sōkī*  
Musa.FUT dance  
'Musa will dance' / 'Musa can dance'

(5) *à sōkī*  
1SG.FUT dance  
'I will dance' / 'I can dance'

## STAMP morphs in positive future clauses

1SG	<i>à</i>	1PL	<i>tò</i>
2SG	<i>mò</i>	2PL	<i>nò</i>
3SG.HUM	<i>dê</i>	3PL.HUM	<i>đĩ</i>
3SG.NHUM	<i>ô</i>	3PL.NHUM	<i>ò</i>

## Perfective

The **perfective** is introduced by the suffix *-ti / -ri*. The distribution of this suffix depends on the syllable it is attached to. The allomorph *-ri* is attached to heavy syllables (CVN, CVV), and *-ti* is attached to a light syllable (CV).

(6)            *dě*                    *vēē-ri*                    *wàsíkà*  
3SG.HUM    write-PFV    letter  
'S/he wrote a letter'

(7)            *á*            *kā-tí*                    *hóí*  
1SG    see-PFV    calabash  
'I saw a calabash'

(8)            *á*            *láá-sà-tī*  
1SG    haggle-RECP-PFV  
'I haggled'

## STAMP morphs in positive perfective clauses

1SG	<i>á</i>	1PL	<i>tó</i>
2SG	<i>mó</i>	2PL	<i>nó</i>
3SG.HUM	<i>dě</i>	3PL.HUM	<i>ďi</i>
3SG.NHUM	<i>ò</i>	3PL.NHUM	<i>ò</i>

## STAMP morphs in positive and negative clauses

	Progressive/ Locative	Future	Perfective	Negative
1SG	<i>mē</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>mé</i>
2SG	<i>mō</i>	<i>mò</i>	<i>mó</i>	<i>mó</i>
3SG.HUM	<i>dē</i>	<i>dê</i>	<i>dě</i>	<i>dě</i>
3SG.NHUM	<i>bò</i>	<i>bò</i>	<i>bò</i>	<i>bò</i>
1PL	<i>tō</i>	<i>tò</i>	<i>tó</i>	<i>tó</i>
2PL	<i>nō</i>	<i>nò</i>	<i>nó</i>	<i>nó</i>
3PL.HUM	<i>dī</i>	<i>dī</i>	<i>dī</i>	<i>dī</i>
3PL.NHUM	<i>ò</i>	<i>ò</i>	<i>ò</i>	<i>ò</i>

## Clausal declarative negation

Clausal declarative negation in a verbal clause is expressed by a **discontinuous negation marker** [ɲa\_a].

(9)    *á*        *lō*        *wā*        *màrī*  
1SG    sleep    ?        a lot  
‘I sleep a lot’

(10) *mé*        *ɲā*        *lō*        *màrī*        *ā*  
1SG        NEG        sleep    a lot        NEG  
‘I do not sleep a lot’



## Construction with the marker *wa*

Constructions with the marker *wa* can express **habitual**, **resultative**, and **attributive** meanings;

The marker occurs in **verbal affirmative** constructions. It is placed **clause-finally** after a verb or an object of a verb;

## Construction with the marker *wa* (continued)

Attributive meaning with **quality verbs**:

- (11)      *méérē*                      *tápū*              *wà*  
            water.DEM.PROX      be.cold              ?  
            ‘This water is cold’

change of state [**quality verb + PFV**] :

- (12)      *méérē*                      *tápù-tū*              *wà*  
            water.DEM.PROX      be.cold-PFV              ?  
            ‘This water has become cold’

## Construction with the marker *wa* (continued)

### Habitual

- (13) *dě*                      *vēē*                      *wàsíkà*                      *wà*  
3SG.HUM      write                      letter                      ?  
'S/he writes a letter(s)' (occupation in present or in past)

### Resultative

- (14) *dě*                      *vēé*                      *wàsíkà*                      *wà*  
3SG.HUM      write.COMPL      letter                      ?  
'S/he has written a letter(s)'

The distinction between Habitual and Resultative is expressed through  
**Completive**

## Construction with the marker *wa* (continued)

The marker *wa* doesn't occur in negative constructions, or when the time of event is specified:

(15)        *dě*                *māá*                                *dyé ké*    *wà*  
               3SG.HUM    **build.COMPL**                    house    ?  
               ‘S/he has built a house(s)’

(16)        *dě*                *nā*                *māā-rí*                                *dyé ké*        *à*  
               3SG.HUM    NEG    **build-PFV**                                house        NEG  
               ‘S/he has not built a house(s)’

(17)        *dě*                *māā-rí*                                *dyé ké*        *sá kī*                *bíníè*                *hà līè*  
               3SG.HUM    **build-PFV**                                house        year                one                ago  
               ‘S/he has built a house(s) one year ago’

## Imperative

In imperative constructions a verb is marked with a pronominal index *-mū* (SG) or *-nū* (PL), which agrees with addressee in number.

(18) [bàkū-mū]  
*bàkī-mū*  
help-SG.ADR  
‘Help! (addressed to one person)’

(19) [bàkū-nū]  
*bàkī-nū*  
help-PL.ADR  
‘Help! (addressed to several persons)’

## Prohibitive

The prohibitive is introduced by *sɛ̀-*, which is followed by a pronominal addressee suffix. It ends in the negative marker *à*.

(20)     *sɛ̀-mū*                      *bàkī*     *à*  
PROH-SG.ADR    help     NEG  
‘Don’t help!  
(addressed to one person)’

(21)     *sɛ̀-nū*                      *bàkī*     *à*  
PROH-PL.ADR    help     NEG  
‘Don’t help!  
(addressed to several persons)’

## Classification of verbs

I distinguish three groups of verbs on the basis of their deverbal form and imperative form

	Deverbal form	Imperative form	
1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>pō-kī</i> ‘to farm’ <i>bè-kī</i> ‘to hunt’	<i>pò-mū</i> ‘Farm!’ (farm-SG.ADR) <i>bè-mū</i> ‘Hunt!’ (hunt-SG.ADR)	the infinitive marker <i>-kī</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>bàmē</i> ‘to push’ <i>sāmē</i> ‘to pack’	<i>bàm-mū</i> ‘Push!’ (push-SG.ADR) <i>sàm-mū</i> ‘Pack!’ (pack-SG.ADR)	vowel deletion and resyllabification

## Classification of verbs (continued)

I distinguish three groups of verbs on the basis of their deverbal form and imperative form

	Deverbal form	Imperative form	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>bàkē</i> ‘to help’	<p><i>bàkī-mū</i> [bàkū-mū] ‘Help!’(help-SG.ADR)</p> <p><i>sè-mū bàkī ā</i> ‘Don’t help!’(PROH-SG help NEG)</p>	<p>vowel quality change: /ɛ/, /e/ → /i/</p>