

## **Tempus, aspect and mode in Mbugwe, a Bantu language of Tanzania (F34).**

### **Abstract**

Mbugwe is a minority language of Tanzania. As many other minority languages in the country it is under heavy pressure from Swahili, the national language. Already a lot of influence from Swahili is detected in the language, especially when it comes to vocabulary. Elderly speakers are concerned that the young people don't learn 'proper' Mbugwe, and that the language will die within a generation<sup>1</sup>. Therefore it is an urgent matter to document and analyze the language.

I started working on this project in January, so the project is still in the very early stages. My PHD thesis aims to give a grammatical description of the language, with particular focus on the verbal system. The main goal for the project is to establish a semantic analysis of the TAM categories in Mbugwe, and investigate how the different categories make up a coherent system. A central working hypothesis is that tense, aspect and mode represent semantic domains which consist of a relatively limited set of possible categories.<sup>2</sup> Based on this hypothesis, I will investigate to what extent the individual morphological categories in Mbugwe have semantic features which are in harmony with known and common categories in other languages. Foremost I will look at the categories already described in Bantu languages, both the closest relative Rangi/Langi, and in typological studies of TAM (such as Dahl 1985, Bybee et al. 1994).

In 1993 Maarten Mous wrote a short, grammatical sketch of Mbugwe (published 2004). He does however stress that the work is based on a short field trip, with only one main informant, and that the sketch is not exhaustive and needs further investigation. When it comes to the verbal system, he emphasizes that his analysis is tentative. His analysis still suggests a rich verbal system, which I will look at in this paper. I will also present the most interesting features of the language, and outline the plan and goal for this project.

### **References**

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Viggo and Julia Larsen, SIL personnel working in the area.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. among others Bybee et.al. (1994), Comrie (1976, 1985), Dahl (1985), og Nurse (2008)