

## THE LEXICAL SEMANTICS OF VERBS IN THE BABANKI FOOD DOMAIN<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In this paper we investigate the semantics of verbs in Babanki, a Central Ring Grassfields Bantu language of North-West Cameroon. We focus on the semantic sub-domains of food collection, processing, serving and consumption where closely related verbs describe the manner of manipulating specific nouns which occur in object position. We show that instead of installing a hypernym in certain semantic domains, hyponyms which differ with respect to the direct objects they describe are generated in a specific semantic space. Consequently, there are semantic collocations which hold between transitive verbs and their direct objects (which take the semantic role of patient), based on matching with respect to semantic parameters such as the nature of an object and the manner of manipulating it. Such intricacies present interesting and revealing semantic effects since they speak about an object by changing the verb, not the noun.

Keywords: Babanki, food domain, collection, processing, serving, consumption

### ə̀nɔ́ ɔ́tɔ́ntá vɔ́

A ɔ́fɛ̀? yɛ́nɔ́ yɛ̀s gà? byi dzísá á ví?í Kɛ̀dzòm fá mbì? ɛ̀ kwì ɔ́tɔ́? á Kàmàlún ɔ́ bɛ̀sɛ̀ byi ɔ́nɔ́ ɔ́fózávɔ́ fá tsú. Yɛ̀s gà? ɔ́ ɛ̀kúmtá byi dzísá á vɔ́ gà?à byi ɔ́pfi ɔ́fó, kɛ̀mpfɛ̀, mɛ̀gɛ̀tɛ̀, bɛ̀nɛ̀ kàzì. Yɛ̀s dzì? lá ví?í Kɛ̀dzòm ɔ́ kí? dzísá tá kɛ̀dɛ̀n ɔ́ vɛ̀wé gà?à byi ɔ́nɔ́ ɔ́fózávɔ́ fá tsú. Kɛ̀nɛ̀ á kɔ́ né lá dzísá ndí? tá kàdɛ̀n à dì? fámbú á ɔ́fózávɔ́ dì? á dzísá á dzísá, ɔ́tsévɔ́ tólè tólá, ɔ́tsévɔ́ bwá?mà bwà?má. Á bɛ̀ dí? fámbú vɔ́ nèè nɛ̀ ɔ́fózávɔ́ á dzísá kɛ̀dzà. Á nè kɛ̀nɔ́ kyíká ví?í Kɛ̀dzòm vɔ́ sá ɛ̀kɔ́s gà? byi ɔ́pfi ɔ́fó, kɛ̀mpfɛ̀, mɛ̀gɛ̀tɛ̀, bɛ̀nɛ̀ kàzì vɛ̀wé ɛ̀ lyéé lá kɛ̀fó á vɔ́ gà?à byi kɛ̀wén ká dì? álé ló.

ɔ́tyá ɔ́nɔ́: Kɛ̀dzòm, ɔ́nɔ́ ɔ́fózávɔ́, ɔ́pfi ɔ́fó, kɛ̀mpfɛ̀, mɛ̀gɛ̀tɛ̀, kàzì

## 1. Introduction

Babanki, a Central Ring Grassfields Bantu language of North-West Cameroon, refrains from installing a hypernym, i.e. a semantically more abstract superordinate / generic term in certain semantic domains; instead it exhibits co-hyponyms, i.e. related verbs in a specific semantic space which differ with respect to the direct objects they describe<sup>2</sup>. Previous work on the language includes a general grammatical description (Akumbu & Chibaka 2012), a lexicon (Akumbu 2008), studies that mainly concern analysis of lexical tone, grammatical tone, and other prosodic characteristics (Hyman 1979, Chie 2002, Akumbu 2011, 2015, 2019), and some coverage of the segmental phonology (Mutaka & Chie 2006, Akumbu 2016). Also available is a comprehensive phonological and morphological analysis of the complex tense-aspect-mood system (Akumbu, Hyman & Kießling 2020), an in-depth study of noun morphology (Hyman 1980), as well as a semantic study of the generic verbs ɔ́í ‘eat’ and ɔ́nɔ́ ‘drink’ (Akumbu & Kießling 2021). To advance studies on Babanki lexical semantics, we examine verbs in the sub-domains of food collection, processing, serving and consumption. In

<sup>1</sup> We gratefully acknowledge the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a Georg Forster Research Fellowship for Experienced Researchers granted to the first author (2019-2021) at the institution of the second author and which allowed for greater collaboration and research on this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Babanki is spoken in Babanki Tungo and Big Babanki in North-West Cameroon. The two settlements’ dialects exhibit slight phonetic, phonological, and lexical differences but are mutually intelligible. The data for this study have been gathered from Whatsapp conversations between the first author and five other native speakers. We wish to thank Vivian Ba-ah, Regina Phubon, Stanley Amuh, Cornelius Wuchu and Benjamin Nkwenti for sharing their insights of the Babanki language and culture.

particular, we identify and present closely related verbs in the food domain whose meanings differ with respect to collocations with specific nouns in object position. We show that there are semantic collocations which hold between transitive verbs and their direct objects (which take the semantic role of patient), based on matching with respect to semantic parameters such as the nature of an object and the manner of manipulating it. We begin the discussion in Section 2 by giving a general overview of the semantics of verbs in the domain of dressing, collecting water, construction of houses, and giving assistance, then proceed in Section 3 to elaborate on the relationship between closely related verbs and their direct objects in the sub-domains of food collection (3.1), processing (3.2), serving (3.3), and consumption (3.4), and end up with a conclusion in Section 4.

## 1. The semantics of verbs

There are verbs in Babanki with closely related meanings in certain domains. At first glance, the verbs might be considered to be (near) synonyms but when the objects they collocate with are examined, the difference in meaning between the verbs is revealed. As soon as the verbs are put in context, it is seen that they cannot substitute for each other and maintain the same meaning. Each verb uniquely describes the nature of an object (patient) or the manner of manipulating it. While this is salient in some domains, it is less common in others. The domains we have identified so far include food, dressing, providing water, construction of houses and giving assistance. Leaving aside the food domain (since it is the focus of §3), we list the verbs that exist in the four other domains depending on the direct object they describe.

In the domain of dressing, the following verbs describe the way the objects they collocate with are worn: **m̀̀?** ‘throw’: **k̀̀tʃ̀̀ k̀̀ ndísá** ‘shirt, blouse’, **k̀̀bà** ‘female gown’, **ndísá** ‘dress’; **wyé** ‘insert’: **k̀̀ntàbl̀̀** ‘trousers’, **k̀̀nā? k̀̀ ndísá** ‘skirt’, **g̀̀s̀́** ‘shoes’, **st̀̀k̀̀n** ‘socks’, **d̀̀l̀̀s** ‘underwear’; **kwí?** ‘tie’: **k̀̀m̀̀?t̀̀**<sup>3</sup> ‘male wrapper’, **ỳ̀ng̀̀s** ‘head scarf’; **ʃ̀̀s̀́** ‘lower’: **d̀̀l̀̀** ‘male gown’; and **tám** ‘wrap’: **l̀̀b̀̀** ‘wrapper’. The verbs reveal that dresses are worn either by throwing round the head and down through the upper torso, inserting feet or legs, tying the waist or head, and wrapping around the waist.

To talk about the manner of making **m̀̀ú** ‘water’ available, the verbs used depend on the source of the water, i.e., whether the water is fetched from a source stream or carried from a container. The verbs are **tʃ̀̀** ‘fetch water from source’<sup>4</sup>, **ɲwà?** ‘carry water from a bucket or pot’, and **b̀̀?** ‘pour water from a jug’. All three verbs describe the manner of getting water from different sources.

Concerning the construction of houses, the verbs describe the kinds of material used and the manner of construction. Thus **bwóm** ‘mould’: **ə̀̀g̀̀ə̀̀ ə̀̀ k̀̀ts̀̀?** ‘brick house’ describes the construction of brick houses while **kwí?** ‘tie’: **ə̀̀g̀̀ə̀̀ ə̀̀ t̀̀lỳ̀ə̀̀** ‘bamboo house’ describes the tying of bamboos as was done traditionally to build houses in Babanki. Finally, the collocation **ʃ̀̀?** ‘work’: **ə̀̀t̀̀** ‘hut’ is restricted to the construction of huts using sticks and bamboos.

The verbs used in the domain of giving assistance are **gyàm̀̀t̀̀** ‘help’: **ẁ̀?** ‘person’ and **tóm** ‘prop up’: **ə̀̀g̀̀ə̀̀m** ‘banana, plantain’. The distinction between the assistance given to human beings and objects is encoded in the verbs, although the causative suffix can be added to the verb **tóm** ‘prop up’ i.e. **t̀̀ms̀́** ‘support’ to also describe assistance given to a person.

In the next section, we zoom in on the food domain and explore in more detail the semantics of individual verbs in a contrastive way.

<sup>3</sup> This noun appears to be derived from **m̀̀?** ‘throw’.

<sup>4</sup> Babanki Tungo residents fetched water from streams until pipe borne water was introduced in the late 1980s in some parts of the locality. Where the taps are still functional people can also **tʃ̀̀** ‘fetch’ water from taps, otherwise they continue to depend on their natural streams.

### 3. The semantics of verbs in the Babanki food domain

The food domain is the most affected as several verbs are involved depending on whether they are referring to food collection (3.1), processing (3.2), serving (3.3) or consumption (3.4). In each instance, both the nature and manner of acting on a specific object are encoded in a single verb since there is no hypernym which abstracts from the manner of the action and simply restricts the action to its nature.

#### 3.1 Collecting food

In the sub-domain of food collection, i.e. removal of some naturally growing object, fruit or product of nature from its natural context for (later) consumption, the following seventeen verbs have been identified: **tʃúŋ** ‘dig’, **kò** ‘scratch’, **tsú?** ‘pull off’, **kwón̄tə** ‘pluck from harvested plant’, **kwòŋ** ‘pluck from life plant’, **kwà?** ‘break’, **bvà?** ‘cut’, **pfi** ‘gather’, **kəŋ** ‘search’, **tsò?** ‘trap’, **búm** ‘hunt’, **tém** ‘shoot’, **kú** ‘catch’, **là?à** ‘lure’, **ɣá?** ‘grip’, **ʃə** ‘slaughter’, and **zɛ** ‘eat’. The meaning of each verb encodes the manner of collection of specific food items. Babanki speakers need to be aware of the collection procedure in order to choose the verb that uniquely describes how an item is collected. The generic verb for collecting food is **kəŋ** ‘search’, used in contexts where the harvested item is not specified, as in (1).

- (1) a. **Búŋ yì dzù ŋ-kəŋ ɣò**  
 Bung P1 go N-search what  
 ‘What did Bung go and harvest?’
- b. **Búŋ yì dzù ŋ-kəŋ ə-fó tǎ kə-dìŋ**  
 Bung P1 go N-search 8-thing really 7-many  
 ‘Bung went and harvested several things.’

Any of the other semantically more specialised verbs can be used in these contexts with the effect that the food item and manner of collecting it are specified according to the verbs’ meaning. The visualisation in Table 1 shows the food items grouped according to the verbs they typically collocate with based on the manner of collection.

Table 1: Overview of verbs and food items collected

Verb	Food items
<b>tʃúŋ</b> ‘dig’	<b>ndòŋ ə lyimə</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kəlāŋ kə mən̄kálə</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kəzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>əlém</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>kəntsi</b> ‘cricket’, <b>ndim</b> ‘mole’, <b>mbwón̄</b> ‘maggot’
<b>kò</b> ‘scratch’	<b>ndòŋ ə mən̄kálə</b> ‘potato’, <b>kəlāŋ kə káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>bəlèŋ</b> ‘groudnuts’
<b>tsú?</b> ‘pull off’	<b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>əŋòs</b> ‘onion’, <b>gəlìk</b> ‘garlic’, <b>kəvú?</b> ‘mushroom’, <b>əkwen</b> ‘beans’, <b>ndòŋ ə mən̄kálə</b> ‘potato’, <b>kəlāŋ kə mən̄kálə</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kəlāŋ kə káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>bəlèŋ</b> ‘groudnuts’, <b>ndòŋ ə lyimə</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kəzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>əlém</b> ‘yam sp.’
<b>kwón̄tə</b> ‘pluck from harvested plant’	<b>əkwen</b> ‘beans’, <b>bəlèŋ</b> ‘groudnuts’
<b>kwòŋ</b> ‘pluck from life plant’	<b>əkwen</b> ‘beans’, <b>kəmbámáyŋ</b> ‘passion fruit’, <b>kənwì?tə</b> ‘black nightshade’, <b>ŋgwòbàŋ</b> ‘guava’, <b>ŋgwəlì?</b> ‘okra’, <b>ədzòŋ</b> ‘plum ( <i>dacryodes edulis</i> )’, <b>byə</b> ‘avocado’, <b>əbyí</b> ‘shell butter nut’, <b>lāmsə</b> ‘orange’, <b>fəŋgwòlè</b> ‘mango’, <b>fəsés</b> ‘pepper’, <b>fəŋɔ?</b> ‘garden egg, tomato’

<b>kwà?</b> ‘break’	<b>kə̀nsáŋsáŋ</b> ‘pineapple/sugarcane’, <b>àsáŋ</b> ‘maize’
<b>bvà?</b> ‘cut’	<b>ə̀ŋgə̀m</b> ‘banana, plantain’, <b>kə̀nsáŋsáŋ</b> ‘sugarcane’, <b>ɲàm</b> ‘cattle’, <b>byí</b> ‘goat’, <b>byìndzì</b> ‘sheep’, <b>ŋkwə̀ɲàm</b> ‘pig’
<b>pfi</b> ‘gather’	<b>àsáŋ</b> ‘maize’
<b>kə̀ŋ</b> ‘search’	<b>ə̀fóʒívnə̀</b> ‘food (in general), <b>kə̀zìŋ</b> ‘bitterleaf (vernonia amygdalina) <sup>5</sup> , <b>tə̀wás</b> ‘peas’, <b>mbàsə̀</b> ‘njamanjama’ <sup>6</sup>
<b>tsə̀?</b> ‘trap’	<b>kə̀tám</b> ‘trap (game)’, <b>kə̀vú?</b> ‘mushroom’
<b>búm</b> ‘hunt’	<b>ɲàm</b> ‘game’ ( <b>kə̀ɲn</b> ‘monkey’, <b>ndzù</b> ‘cane rat’, <b>fə̀tʃwí</b> ‘deer’, <b>kə̀tsìm</b> ‘baboon’)
<b>tém</b> ‘shoot’	<b>ɲàm</b> ‘game’ ( <b>kə̀ɲn</b> ‘monkey’, <b>ndzù</b> ‘cane rat’, <b>fə̀tʃwí</b> ‘deer’, <b>kə̀tsìm</b> ‘baboon’), <b>fə̀ɲín</b> ‘bird’, <b>ə̀tsú?</b> ‘partridge’
<b>kú</b> ‘catch’	<b>fə̀ɲín</b> ‘bird’, <b>ə̀tsú?</b> ‘partridge’, <b>mbvèn</b> ‘grasshopper’, <b>fə̀nʃì?</b> ‘beetle’, <b>kə̀ntsi</b> ‘cricket’, <b>ʃù</b> ‘fish’, <b>kə̀kím</b> ‘crab’
<b>là?à</b> ‘lure’	<b>ʃù</b> ‘fish’, <b>kə̀kím</b> ‘crab’
<b>yá?</b> ‘grip’	<b>mbvú</b> ‘chicken’, <b>ɲàm</b> ‘cattle’, <b>byí</b> ‘goat’, <b>byìndzì</b> ‘sheep’, <b>ŋkwə̀ɲàm</b> ‘pig’
<b>ʃə̀</b> ‘slaughter’	<b>mbvú</b> ‘chicken’, <b>ɲàm</b> ‘cattle’, <b>byí</b> ‘goat’, <b>byìndzì</b> ‘sheep’, <b>ŋkwə̀ɲàm</b> ‘pig’
<b>zì</b> ‘harvest (honey)’ < ‘eat’	<b>ə̀lyù</b> ‘honey’

The verb **tsúŋ** ‘dig’ describes the process of digging up soil in order to remove the roots of tubers such as **ndə̀ŋ ə̀ lyímə̀** ‘sweet potato’ (2a), and **ə̀lém** ‘yam sp.’ (2b) that grow deep into the soil. Animals and insects such as **ndìm** ‘mole’, **kə̀ntsi** ‘cricket’, **mbwón** ‘maggot’ can also be captured for food by digging (2c). They may be dug up using **ʃì** ‘hoe’, **ɲì** ‘cutlass’ or even **ə̀vú** ‘hands’.

- (2) a. **Búŋ yì tsùŋə̀<sup>7</sup> ndə̀ŋ ə̀ lyímə̀ nə̀ ʃì**  
 Bung P1 dig 1.potato 5.AM sweet with 9.hoe  
 ‘Bung harvested sweet potatoes with a hoe (by digging).’
- b. **Búŋ yì tsùŋ ə̀-lém à mò**  
 Bung P1 dig 6-yam for 1SG  
 ‘Bung harvested yams for me (by digging).’
- c. **Búŋ yì tsùŋ kə̀-ntsi fá kə̀-bwín**  
 Bung P1 dig 7-cricket from 7-bed  
 ‘Bung captured a cricket from the bed (by digging).’

The verb **tsúŋ** ‘dig’ can be contrasted with **kə̀** ‘scratch’, which describes the process of scraping the soil to expose and remove roots (actually stems) of plants such as potato (3a), and groundnuts (3b) that do not grow deep into the soil. The edible roots

<sup>5</sup> ‘*Vernonia amygdalina*, a member of the daisy family, is a small shrub that grows in tropical Africa’ ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vernonia\\_amygdalina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vernonia_amygdalina), accessed on November 15, 2021). It is called bitter leaf because of the bitter taste of the leaves.

<sup>6</sup> Njamanjama is a popular dark green leafy vegetable produced in Babanki Tungo in large quantities.

<sup>7</sup> The L tone on the verb is due to Low Tone Spread (LTS) from the preceding L tone. LTS dislodges the H of the verb which joins the L of a following noun prefix to form a HL falling tone, which is subsequently simplified to M, as in (2b). In the absence of a following prefix a schwa is inserted to bear the H tone, as in (2a) (Akumbu, Hyman & Kießling 2020).

of such plants can be reached by scraping the soil with hands or simply pulling the plant out of the soil and exposing the roots, in which case the verb **tsù?** ‘pull off’ is used.

- (3) a. **Búnj yì kò ndòŋ è m̀-ŋkálè**  
 Bung P1 scratch 1.potato 5.AM 6a-modern  
 ‘Bung harvested potatoes (by scratching).’
- b. **Búnj yì kò b̀l̀èŋ**  
 Bung P1 scratch 1.groundnut  
 ‘Bung harvested groundnuts (by scratching).’

It is not possible for these two verbs to replace one another in the same context. For example, **tsù?** ‘dig’ cannot be used to describe the process of harvesting potato, i.e. \***ʏ̀ è yì tsù? é ndòŋ è m̀-ŋkálè**, and **kò** ‘scratch’ cannot be used to describe the process of harvesting sweet potato, i.e. \***ʏ̀ è yì kò ndòŋ é lyimé**.

Outside the food collection sub-domain, **tsù?** ‘dig’ and **kò** ‘scratch’ are used to describe the process of getting soil out but differ only in that the former requires digging deep into the soil, sometimes using sharp instruments such as a cutlass or hoe, while the later targets only the surface and is mostly done using bare hands. The verb **kò** ‘scratch’ also describes how animals such as cats use their claws to scratch surfaces, soil or people.

The verb **tsù?** ‘pull off’ describes the process of pulling off items such as beans (4a), and groundnuts (4b) from the soil.

- (4) a. **Búnj yì tsù? à-kwén**  
 Bung P1 pull off 6-beans  
 ‘Bung harvested beans (by pulling off).’
- b. **Búnj yì tsù? b̀l̀èŋ**  
 Bung P1 pull off 1.groundnut  
 ‘Bung harvested groundnuts (by pulling off).’

Notice that some objects that are normally harvested by digging or scraping soil can also be harvested by pulling them off. For example, it is possible to say **ʏ̀ è yì tsù? é ndòŋ è m̀-ŋkálè** ‘He harvested potatoes (by pulling off)’. However, there are objects such as **kàsá** ‘cassava’, **áŋ̀s** ‘onion’ and **gálìk** ‘garlic’ that can only be harvested by pulling off rather than digging or scraping soil.

After pulling off beans or groundnuts from the soil the next thing is to **kwòŋt́** ‘pluck from harvested plant’. The verb **kwòŋt́**, therefore, describes how the pods are plucked from the plant that has already been pulled off from the soil.

- (5) a. **Búnj yì kwòŋt́ à-kwén**  
 Bung P1 pluck 6-beans  
 ‘Bung plucked beans (from a harvested plant).’
- b. **Búnj yì kwòŋt́ b̀l̀èŋ**  
 Bung P1 pluck 1.groundnut  
 ‘Bung plucked groundnuts (from a harvested plant).’

The verb **kwòŋt́** ‘pluck from harvested plant’, which is morphologically complex since it has a formal extension<sup>8</sup>, can be contrasted with **kwòŋ** ‘pluck from a life plant / tree’ which is morphologically simpler although it can take an extension, i.e. **kwòŋt́** ‘pluck many times’, **kwòŋl̀** ‘pluck from many places’, **kwòŋl̀** ‘pluck many things, pluck from

<sup>8</sup> Verbal extensions are suffixes inserted between the root and final vowel to change the lexical meaning of verbs in Bantu and related languages. Two syllable verbs in Babanki always have a CV ending. Where the verb root can stand alone the final -CV is considered to be an extension but where the two are inseparable the CV ending is interpreted as a formal extension (Akumbu 2015: 3-5).

many places.’ The verb **kwòŋ** ‘pluck from a life plant / tree’ describes the process of plucking items such as beans (6a), and avocado (6b) from a life tree / plant. In general, the tree / plant is left in place for further maturity of what is not plucked or for more to be produced.

- (6) a. **Búŋ yì kwòŋ à-kwén**  
 Bung p1 pluck 6-beans  
 ‘Bung plucked beans (from a life plant).’
- b. **Búŋ yì kwòŋ byê**  
 Bung p1 pluck 1.avocado  
 ‘Bung plucked avocado (from a life tree).’

The semantic difference between **kwòŋtá** ‘pluck from harvested plant’ and **kwòŋ** ‘pluck from a life plant / tree’ can be seen, for example, by looking at the way **àkwén** ‘beans’ are harvested. If the plant is still growing in the field some pods can be **kwòŋ** ‘plucked from the life plant’, i.e. **yè yì kwòŋ àkwén** ‘He plucked beans from a life plant’, leaving the plant to continue nourishing the rest of the pods. If all the pods mature or dry up and the whole plant is pulled off from the soil, the pods are then **kwòŋtá** ‘plucked from the harvested plant’, i.e. **yè yì kwòŋtá àkwén** ‘He plucked beans from a harvested plant’. For items such as groundnuts that can only be harvested when mature enough, only **kwòŋtá** ‘plucked from the harvested plant’ can be used, i.e. **yè yì kwòŋtá bəlèŋ** ‘He plucked groundnuts (from the harvested plant)’ not \***yè yì kwòŋ bəlèŋ**.

Outside the food collection sub-domain, **kwòŋ** ‘plucked from the life plant /tree’ is used by someone who is asked to provide more money than they can afford. They may ask: **və kwòŋ àkó fá fə̀kò? à?** ‘Is money plucked from a tree?’. Evidently, **kwòŋ** ‘plucked from the life plant / tree’ describes the process of plucking from a source that can continue to produce thereafter.

The verb **kwà?** ‘break’ describes the processes of breaking pineapples or sugarcane, and ‘maize’. The pineapple fruit and maize are broken from the plant using one’s hands, while the sugarcane stem is broken with hands or cut with a cutlass.

- (7) a. **Búŋ yì kwà? kə̀-nsáŋsáŋ**  
 Bung p1 break 7-pineapple  
 ‘Bung harvested pineapple.’
- b. **Búŋ yì kwà? ə̀-sáŋ**  
 Bung p1 break 5-maize  
 ‘Bung harvested maize.’

The verb **kwà?** ‘break’ is used outside the food domain to describe the process of breaking an object either intentionally or accidentally.

- (8) a. **Búŋ yì kwà? kə̀-tyí**  
 Bung p1 break 7-stick  
 ‘Bung broke a stick (intentionally or accidentally).’
- b. **Búŋ yì kwà? kə̀-kí**  
 Bung p1 break 7-chair  
 ‘Bung broke a chair (intentionally or accidentally).’

The verb **bvà?** ‘cut’ describes the way bananas or plantains (9a), and sugarcane are cut down using a cutlass. It is also used to describe the process of slaughtering animals for their meat e.g. goats (9b) using a knife or cutlass.

- (9) a. **Búŋ yì bvà? ə̀-ŋgəm à m̀**  
 Bung p1 cut down 5-plantain for 1SG  
 ‘Bung harvested plantain for me.’

- b. **Búŋ yì bvà? byí nè jì**  
 Bung P1 slaughter 9.goat with 9.cutlass  
 ‘Bung slaughtered a goat with a cutlass.’

Elsewhere, the verb **bvà?** ‘cut’ describes the process of cutting down trees using a cutlass or an engine saw.

The verb **pfì** ‘pick’ describes the process of picking maize for storage after they mature completely and are beginning to dry up.

- (10) a. **Búŋ yì pfì à-sáŋ à-tsèm**  
 Bung P1 pick 6-maize 6-all  
 ‘Bung picked all the maize.’
- b. **Búŋ yì pfì à-sáŋ á ŋkyè**  
 Bung P1 pick 6-maize in 9.basket  
 ‘Bung picked maize in a basket.’

If maize is still fresh and collected for immediate consumption, **kwà?** ‘break’ is used.

The verb **kəŋ** ‘search’ describes the way vegetables such as bitter leaf, and peas are picked (11). Someone spends time searching or looking closely for the healthy leaves and picking them with their hands.

- (11) a. **Búŋ yì kəŋ kə-zíŋ**  
 Bung P1 search 7-bitter leaf  
 ‘Bung harvested bitter leaf.’
- b. **Búŋ yì kəŋ tē-wás**  
 Bung P1 search 13-pea  
 ‘Bung harvested peas.’

Outside the food domain, the verb **kəŋ** ‘search’ is used to describe the act of searching or looking for something or someone that cannot be readily found.

The verb **tsò?** ‘trap’ derives from **tsò?** ‘jump’ to describe the way someone moves early in the morning through grass covered by wet morning dew to visit a trap (12a) or find mushrooms (12b).

- (12) a. **Búŋ yì dzù é-tsò? kə-tám ké wén**  
 Bung P1 go INF-jump 7-trap 7.AM 3SG  
 ‘Bung went to visit his trap.’
- b. **Búŋ yì dzù é-tsò? kə-vú?**  
 Bung P1 go INF-jump 7-mushroom  
 ‘Bung went to pick mushrooms.’

The verb describes how a person literally jumps over the grass to escape the wet dew.

Regarding the capturing of animals and birds for food, the following verbs describe the manner of capturing the objects identified. The verb **búm** ‘hunt’ describes the process of capturing all kinds of game, including **kàyn** ‘monkey’, **ndzù** ‘cane rat’, **fətswí** ‘deer’, and **kətsim** ‘baboon’ using **əzì?** ‘gun’ or **əyóŋ** ‘spear’, while the **tém** ‘shoot’ covers game but extends to **fəjín** ‘bird’ and **ətsú?** ‘partridge’. The verb **kú** ‘pick’ is used for those birds and insects that can be captured with bare hands, e.g. **fəjín** ‘bird’, **ətsú?** ‘partridge’, **mbvèn** ‘grasshopper’, **fəŋjì?** ‘beetle’, **kəntsì** ‘cricket’, **ʃù** ‘fish’, **kəkím** ‘crab’. The verb **là?à** ‘lure’ is used for **kəkím** ‘crab’, and **ʃù** ‘fish’ when they are captured using a bait. The verbs portray different ways of capturing animals, birds and insects, including catching tiny ones, hunting or shooting larger ones, and luring some with baits. The verb **ya?** ‘grip’ is used for the process of getting hold of the animals reared by the Babanki people for food, i.e. **mbvú** ‘chicken’, **jàm** ‘cattle’,

**byí** ‘goat’, **byìndzì** ‘sheep’, and **ɲkwǎ̀nàm** ‘pig’.<sup>9</sup> If an animal or bird is slaughtered with a knife the verb **ʃá** ‘slaughter (with a knife)’ is used, but if a cutlass is used then the appropriate verb is **bvà?** ‘cut (with a cutlass)’.

A special verb in the food collection sub-domain is **zì** ‘eat’ whose basic meaning seems to be expanded by metonymy in collocation with **àlyù** ‘honey’ to render the meaning ‘collect honey’ (13a-b). As seen in (13c) the act of eating honey is described by the verb **lò** ‘eat by licking’.

- (13) a. **Búŋ yì zì ā-lyù ǹntʃwì**  
 Bung P1 eat 5-honey afternoon  
 ‘Bung harvested honey in the afternoon.’
- b. **Búŋ ó kó yì zì ā-lyù**  
 Bung DJ NEG P1 eat 5-honey  
 ‘Bung didn’t harvest honey.’
- c. **Búŋ yì lò ā-lyù ǹntʃwì**  
 Bung P1 lick 5-honey afternoon  
 ‘Bung ate honey in the afternoon.’

This verb is used because when collecting honey, it is possible for the person collecting or anyone present to eat it directly.

### 3.2 Processing food

After collecting food items, they are processed for cooking or direct consumption and the verbs that describe the preparation process are **ɣáyŋ** ‘prepare’, **zìm** ‘peel’, **kóm** ‘scrape’, **kí** ‘shell’, **ʃwàyn** ‘husk’, **bàs** ‘cut open’, **tín** ‘cut’, **bvà?** ‘cut down, slaughter’, **ʃá** ‘slice’, **tétá** ‘select’, **bvù** ‘grind’, **sàŋ** ‘dry’, **kó?** ‘chop’, **pfè** ‘cook’, **lám** ‘stir’, **tʃú?** ‘pound’, **pfè** ‘cook’, **káŋ** ‘fry’, and **ɲù?** ‘roast’. The verbs **ɣáyŋ** ‘prepare food’ and **pfè** ‘cook’ are the generic verbs for preparing food, since they are used when the item to be prepared is not specified, as in (14).

- (14) a. **dzù ɣáyŋ ā-fóʒívá**  
 Bung prepare 8-food  
 ‘Go and prepare food!’
- b. **dzù pfè à-fóʒívá**  
 Bung cook 8-food  
 ‘Go and cook food!’

The manner of preparing specific food items is encoded in each of the verbs listed above. For Babanki speakers to use the appropriate verb, they need to know the exact way the objects are processed. In Table 2, the food items are grouped according to the verbs they typically collocate with based on the manner of processing.

<sup>9</sup> The Babanki people generally rear animals for commercial or ritualistic purposes, not for food. Chickens are used in nearly all ceremonies, including especially death rituals. Even though all households have chickens these are mostly eaten only during special occasions, e.g. a visit. Eggs are also a delicacy, eaten only occasionally. Goats, sheep, and pigs are less common than chickens but found in several households. Cattles were mostly kept by the Fulani but a few Babanki people also rear them now-a-days.



Table 2: Overview of verbs and food items processed

Verb <sup>10</sup>	Food items
yáyn 'prepare'	əfóʒívə 'food (in general)
zím 'peel'	àkwén 'beans', kàsá 'cassava', əngòm 'banana, plantain', kəʒú? 'yam sp.', əlém 'yam sp.', ndòŋ ə məŋkálə 'potato', ndòŋ ə lyímə 'sweet potato', kəlāŋ ké məŋkálə 'cocoyam', kəlāŋ ké káká 'taro', gálík 'garlic', fəŋgwòlè 'mango'
kóm 'scrape'	ndòŋ ə məŋkálə 'potato', ndòŋ ə lyímə 'sweet potato', kəlāŋ ké məŋkálə 'cocoyam', kəlāŋ ké káká 'taro', fəŋgwòlè 'mango', dzíndzà 'ginger'
kí 'shell'	bəlèŋ 'groudnuts', əŋgəʒsə 'egusi' <sup>11</sup>
ʒwàyn 'husk'	əsán 'maize'
bàs 'cut open'	əbí 'kolanut', byə 'avocado', əbú? 'pumpkin'
tín 'cut'	ɲàm 'meat' or ʒù 'fish'
bvə? 'cut down, slaughter'	əngòm 'banana, plantain', ɲàm 'cattle', byí 'goat', byíndzì 'sheep', ŋkwəɲàm 'pig'
ʒə 'slice'	ɲàm 'meat', ʒù 'fish', mbàsə 'vegetable', kəʒín 'bitterleaf (vernonia amygdalina)', təwás 'peas', ŋgwòlè? 'okra', kəvú? 'mushroom', fəŋɔ? 'garden egg, tomato', áŋəs 'onion', dzíndzà 'ginger', gálík 'garlic'
tétə 'select'	ʒù 'fish', àkwén 'beans', àkwén ə məŋkálə 'rice', bəlèŋ 'peanuts', əŋgəʒsə 'egusi', mbàsə 'vegetable', kəʒín 'bitterleaf (vernonia amygdalina)', təwás 'peas'
bvù 'grind'	əsán 'maize', bəlèŋ 'peanuts', əŋgəʒsə 'egusi', ŋgwòlè? 'okra', fəŋɔ? 'garden egg, tomato', áŋəs 'onion', fəsés 'pepper', gálík 'garlic', dzíndzà 'ginger'
sàŋ 'dry'	ɲàm 'meat', ʒù 'fish', fəŋín 'bird', ətsú? 'partridge', təwás 'peas', ŋgwòlè? 'okra', kəvú? 'mushroom', fəsés 'pepper', àkwén 'beans', bəlèŋ 'groudnuts', əŋgəʒsə 'egusi', əsán 'maize', kəbó (ndòŋ ə lyímə) 'sweet potato'
kɔ? 'chop'	mbvə 'chicken', byí 'goat'
lám 'stir'	kəbáyn 'fufu' <sup>12</sup> , gàrí 'garri' <sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Remarkably absent from this table is the verb ʒú? 'boil' which is used in Babanki when talking about boiling water. If food is cooked by boiling, it is described using the verb pfe 'cook'.

<sup>11</sup> Egusi is the Cameroon Pidgin English name of the seeds of pumpkins, one of the *cucurbitaceous* plants (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egusi>, accessed on November 15, 2021). After drying and grinding the seeds are used as a major ingredient in various soups, as well as for making egusi pudding.

<sup>12</sup> Fufu is the most popular staple food among the Babanki made from corn flour. After grinding dried maize, water is boiled and the flour cooked and stirred in the water to obtain a semi solid paste which is shaped into loaves using a calabash bowl and eaten with a vegetable, sauce or soup.

<sup>13</sup> Garri is made from cassava, by grinding, squeezing out water from the paste and then frying to obtain flour. The flour can be cooked in boiled water to obtain a solid paste which is shaped into loaves using a calabash bowl and eaten with a vegetable, sauce or soup.

<b>tʃú?</b> ‘pound’	<b>kəlāŋ</b> ‘achu’ <sup>14</sup> , <b>àkwén</b> ‘beans’
<b>pfè</b> ‘cook’	<b>àkwén</b> ‘beans’, <b>àkwén ó mēŋkálè</b> ‘rice’, <b>əsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>əŋgòm</b> ‘plantain’, <b>kəzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ələm</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ndòŋ ə mēŋkálè</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndòŋ ó lyímó</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kəlāŋ ké mēŋkálè</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kəlāŋ ké káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>əbú?</b> ‘pumpkin’, <b>ŋàm</b> ‘meat’, <b>ʃù</b> ‘fish’, <b>mbàsə</b> ‘vegetable, soup, sauce’, <b>kəzín</b> ‘bitterleaf (vernonia amygdalina), <b>təwás</b> ‘peas’, <b>ŋgwòlò?</b> ‘okra’, <b>kəvú?</b> ‘mushroom’, <b>bəlèŋ</b> ‘groudnuts’, <b>əŋgə?sə</b> ‘egusi’, <b>fəŋó?</b> ‘garden egg, tomato’, <b>áŋòs</b> ‘onion’, <b>dzín dzà</b> ‘ginger’, <b>gálik</b> ‘garlic’, <b>ətsú?</b> ‘partridge’, <b>ŋàm</b> ‘game’, <b>mbvú</b> ‘chicken’, <b>byí</b> ‘goat’, <b>byíndzì</b> ‘sheep’, <b>ŋkwəŋàm</b> ‘pig’
<b>káŋ</b> ‘fry’	<b>əsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>ŋàm</b> ‘meat’, <b>ʃù</b> ‘fish’, <b>əŋgòm</b> ‘plantain’, <b>fəŋó?</b> ‘tomato’, <b>áŋòs</b> ‘onion’, <b>ndòŋ ə mēŋkálè</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndòŋ ó lyímó</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>fəŋín</b> ‘bird’, <b>mbvèn</b> ‘grasshopper’, <b>fəŋʃí?</b> ‘beetle’, <b>kəntsì</b> ‘cricket’ <sup>15</sup> , <b>ʃù</b> ‘fish’, <b>kəkím</b> ‘crab’
<b>ŋə?</b> ‘roast’	<b>əsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>əŋgòm</b> ‘plantain’, <b>kəzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ələm</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ndòŋ ə mēŋkálè</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndòŋ ó lyímó</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kəlāŋ ké mēŋkálè</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kəlāŋ ké káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>mbvú</b> ‘chicken’, <b>byíndzì</b> ‘sheep’, <b>ŋkwəŋàm</b> ‘pig’, <b>ŋàm</b> ‘meat’, <b>fəŋín</b> ‘bird’, <b>mbvèn</b> ‘grasshopper’, <b>fəŋʃí?</b> ‘beetle’, <b>kəntsì</b> ‘cricket’, <b>ʃù</b> ‘fish’, <b>kəkím</b> ‘crab’

The verb **zím** ‘peel’ describes the process of peeling off the skin of items such as cassava (15a), garlic (15b), and mangoes (15c). Apart from ripe mangoes that can be peeled with teeth the items in this set are peeled either with a knife or bare hands.

- (15) a. **Búŋ yì zím kàsá**  
 Bung P1 peel 1.cassava  
 ‘Bung peeled cassava.’
- b. **Búŋ yì zím gálik nè kə-vú ké**  
 Bung P1 peel 1.garlic with 7-hand 19  
 ‘Bung peeled garlic with his hand.’
- c. **Búŋ yì zím fə-ŋgwòlè à wàyn**  
 Bung P1 peel 19-mango for 1.child  
 ‘Bung peeled a mango for a child.’<sup>16</sup>

Only cassava is peeled when raw; the rest of the tubers involved are peeled after they have been cooked. When they are raw the verb **kóm** ‘scrape’ is used. It describes how the skin of items such as raw potato (16a), ginger (16b), and mangoes (16c) are scraped off, usually by running a knife continually from one end to another.

- (16) a. **Búŋ yì kòmə ndòŋ ə mē-ŋkálè**  
 Bung P1 scrape 1.potato 5.AM 6a-modern  
 ‘Bung peeled potatoes (by scraping).’

<sup>14</sup> Achu is obtained by cooking, peeling and pounding cocoyams to obtain a paste. It is generally eaten with ‘yellow soup’ or ‘achu soup’, made with a fusion of meat or fish, palm oil, limestone and a variety of spices (referred to as ‘achu spices’ and sold together).

<sup>15</sup> Crickets and beetles are roasted in ashes and eaten directly or deep fried in palm oil, while grasshoppers can be eaten raw or fried without oil before eating.

<sup>16</sup> A properly ripe mango can be peeled by hand. This can be done when a knife is not available or when one intends to give the mango to a child and does not want to use their teeth to peel it.

- b. **Búŋ yì kòm dzíndzà nè fə̀nì fə̀**  
 Bung P1 scrape 1.ginger with 19-knife 19  
 ‘Bung peeled ginger with a knife (by scraping).’
- c. **Búŋ yì kòm fə̀-ŋgwòlè zé**  
 Bung P1 scrape 19-mango when  
 ‘When did Bung peel a mango (by scraping)?’

While **zìm** ‘peel’ describes the removal of the skin of objects that can easily be taken off even by hand, **kóm** ‘scrape’ describes the process for objects whose skin is hard to remove and an instrument such as a knife is obligatorily used. Outside the food processing sub-domain, objects peeled with hands are also distinguished from those peeled with instruments, e.g. by the verbs **zìm** ‘peel’ and **kóm** ‘scrape’ respectively, e.g. **zìmó dzəm ə̀ fə̀kò?** ‘peel the bark of a tree’ vs. **kóm kəmìŋ** ‘scrape off dirt’. The verb **kóm** ‘scrape’ also describes the use of **fə̀bèbè** ‘razor blade’ to shave hair completely from parts of the human body. It also describes the use of a razor blade, knife, or cutlass to remove hair from animal skin.

Another verb that describes the process of removing the skin of objects is **kí** ‘shell’. It reveals how groundnuts (17a), and egusi (17b) are taken out of their shells, that is, by breaking the shell open either with a hard object, fingers or teeth.

- (17) a. **Búŋ yì kì bə̀lən ə̀ m-pfí?**  
 Bung P1 shell 1.groundnut CONJ N-chew  
 ‘Bung shelled groundnuts and ate.’
- b. **Búŋ yì kì ə̀ŋgə̀?-sə̀ nə̀ntʃwì**  
 Bung P1 shell egusi-10 afternoon  
 ‘Bung shelled egusi in the afternoon.’

Compared to **zìm** ‘peel’ and **kóm** ‘scrape’ which also describe the process of removing the skin of objects, **kí** ‘shell’ specifically encodes the fact that the shell is broken to remove the grain. The other meaning of **kí** ‘know’ might be related to ‘shell’ in that during the shelling process the agent develops a closer relationship with the peanuts or egusi as they press them between their fingers or bite with their teeth to break the shell and pull out the grain. This kind of polysemy appears to be specific to Babanki as other Central Ring languages such as Men and Oku differentiate between the two verbs, i.e. Men **kā?** ‘shell’ vs. **kē** ‘know’, and Kom **kī** ‘shell’ vs. **kyā** ‘know’.

On the other hand, the removal of the layered shell of an object like maize is encoded by **ʃwàyn** ‘husk’ (18), which describes the opening and removal of the leafy outer covering of the maize.

- (18) **Búŋ yì ʃwàyn ə̀-sáŋ**  
 Bung P1 husk 5-maize  
 ‘Bung husked maize.’

The verb **bàs** ‘cut open’ describes the way kolanuts (19a), avocados (19b), and pumpkins (19c) are cut open for consumption or cooking. While the avocado is opened with a knife or even hands and eaten directly, the pumpkin is cut with a cutlass and cooked. The verb **bàs** ‘cut open’ is used to describe both the process of cutting open the outer skin of the kolanut and the act of pressing the inner nut inside the palm to break it into edible pieces.

- (19) a. **Búŋ yì bàs ə̀-bí**  
 Bung P1 cut open 5-kolanut  
 ‘Bung cut open a kolanut.’
- b. **Búŋ yì bàs byə̀**  
 Bung P1 cut open 1.avocado  
 ‘Bung cut open an avocado.’

- c. **Búŋ yì bàs à-bú?**  
 Bung P1 cut open 5-pumpkin  
 'Bung cut open a pumpkin.'

While **bàs** 'cut open' describes the preparation process for immediate cooking or eating, the closely related verb **bvà?** 'cut down' describes harvesting of **àŋgòm** 'banana, plantain', or slaughtering **ŋàm** 'cattle', **byí** 'goat', **byìndzì** 'sheep', **ŋkwǎŋàm** 'pig' for storage, sale, or immediate cooking (20a-b). The verb **tín** 'cut' refers to cutting a piece of meat (20c) or fish (20d) using a knife. While the meat could be fresh or dried, the fish must be fresh. The verb that describes the processing of dried fish is **tétó** 'select' presented below.

- (20) a. **Búŋ yì bvà? à-ŋgòm á bóŋgèŋ**  
 Bung P1 cut down 5-plantain in morning  
 'Bung harvested plantain in the morning.'
- b. **Búŋ yì bvà? byí nèntŋwì**  
 Bung P1 slaughter 9.goat afternoon  
 'Bung slaughtered a goat in the afternoon.'
- c. **Búŋ yì tìn kǎ-ŋí kǎ ŋàm**  
 Bung P1 cut 7-place 7.AM 9.meat  
 'Bung cut a piece of meat.'
- d. **Búŋ yì tìn ŋǎ nǎ fǎ-ŋì fǎ**  
 Bung P1 cut 9.fish with 19-knife 19  
 'Bung cut fish with a knife.'

Several objects need to be sliced or cut into little pieces before they are cooked. The verb **ŋǎ** 'slice' describes how items such as bitter leaf (21a), okra (21b), or onions (21c) are sliced.

- (21) a. **Búŋ yì ŋǎ kǎ-ŋíŋ nǎ fǎ-ŋì fǎ**  
 Bung P1 slice 7-bitter leaf with 19-knife 19  
 'Bung sliced bitter leaf with a knife.'
- b. **Búŋ yì ŋǎ ŋgwǎlǎ? zé**  
 Bung P1 slice 6-okra when  
 'When did Bung slice okra?'
- c. **Búŋ yì ŋǎ áŋǎs é n-dí**  
 Bung P1 slice 1.onion CONJ N-cry  
 'Bung sliced an onion and cried.'

This verb **ŋǎ** 'slice' is also used with meat and fish, but only when they are fresh. If these objects are dried, the verb **tín** 'cut' is used for meat and **tétó** 'select' for fish. Outside the food processing sub-domain, **ŋǎ** 'slice' rather than **tín** 'cut' is used to describe the act of hurting oneself with a knife, such as when slicing onion or tomatoes.

To cook items such as beans (22a), rice (22b), and vegetables (22c) they must first of all be checked to separate any dirt from them. In the case of dried fish (22d), the bones are taken out before cooking. This process of looking for dirt and selecting or taking out bones is described by the verb **tétó** 'select'.

- (22) a. **Búŋ yì tétó à-kwén é m-pfé**  
 Bung P1 select 6-beans CONJ N-cook  
 'Bung selected dirt from beans and cooked (the beans).'
- b. **Búŋ yì tétó à-kwén é mǎ-ŋkálǎ**  
 Bung P1 select 6-beans 6.AM 6a-modern  
 'Bung selected dirt from rice.'

- c. **Búnj yì tètá mbàsè mímbú bá?lè**  
 Bung P1 select 1.vegetable before sell  
 ‘Bung selected dirt from the vegetable before selling it.’
- d. **Búnj yì tètá ʃú-só mímbú pfè**  
 Bung P1 select fish-10 before cook  
 ‘Bung took out the bones from the fish before cooking it.’

Outside the food processing sub-domain, **tètá** ‘select’ is used to describe any process that involves the selection of both animate and inanimate objects, e.g. **tètá ví?í** ‘select people’, **tètá gú’só** ‘select shoes’.

The verb **bvù** ‘grind’ describes the process of grinding items such as maize (23a), pepper (23b), and ginger (23c), or any other spices that can be added to a soup. Grinding is done using **ətí** ‘grinding stone’ although a few people in parts of the village that have electricity own blenders now-a-days.

- (23) a. **Búnj yì bvù à-sáŋ á ə-tí**  
 Bung P1 grind 6-maize on 5-grinding stone  
 ‘Bung ground maize on a grinding stone.’
- b. **Búnj yì bvù fə-sés nè gálík**  
 Bung P1 grind 19-pepper CONJ 1.garlic  
 ‘Bung ground pepper and garlic.’
- c. **Búnj yì bvù dzíndzà à mò**  
 Bung P1 grind 1.ginger for 1SG  
 ‘Bung ground ginger for me.’

Outside the food processing sub-domain, **bvù** ‘grind’ is used to describe the grinding of all kinds of objects including people, such as when crushed in a car accident.

Processed items are either cooked (**pfè**), fried (**káj**), stirred (**lám**), chopped (**kó?**), pounded (**tʃú?**), roasted (**ɲè?** ‘roast’), or dried (**sàŋ** ‘dry’). Most food items in Table 2 above can be cooked in a **ntàn** ‘pot’ or fried in either a **kəkáj** ‘frying pan’ or pot. A fruit such as **əŋgəm** ‘banana, plantain’ can be cooked or fried. In addition, **fəɲín** ‘bird’, **mbvèn** ‘grasshopper’, **fəɲʃí?** ‘beetle’, **kəntsì** ‘cricket’, **kəkím** ‘crab’ are only fried or roasted but not cooked. Only **kəbáyn** ‘fufu’ and **gàrí** ‘garri’ can be obtained by stirring corn flour or garri into a paste while **əlàn** ‘cocoyams’ and **əkwen** ‘beans’ can be pounded, after cooking, to also obtain a paste. Roasting is done in three ways, i.e. by (1) exposing items such as **mbvú** ‘chicken’, **byí** ‘goat’, **byíndzì** ‘sheep’, and **ɲkwəɲàm** ‘pig’ to flames, (2) exposing items such as **əsáŋ** ‘maize’, **ɲàm** ‘meat’, **fəɲín** ‘bird’, **mbvèn** ‘grasshopper’, **fəɲʃí?** ‘beetle’, **ʃù** ‘fish’, and **kəkím** ‘crab’ to life charcoal, and (3) inserting items such as **kàsá** ‘cassava’, **əŋgəm** ‘plantain’, **kəzú?** ‘yam sp.’, **əlém** ‘yam sp.’, **ndəŋ ə mənəkálə** ‘potato’, **ndəŋ ə lyímə** ‘sweet potato’, **kəlāŋ ké mənəkálə** ‘cocoyam’, and **kəlāŋ ké káká** ‘taro’ in wood ashes. After roasting, the chicken is chopped into little pieces and mixed in palm oil and salt before serving. Among the items that are dried, **ndəŋ ə lyímə** ‘sweet potato’ (also called **kəbó** when dried), **bələŋ** ‘groundnuts’, and **ʃù** ‘fish’ can be eaten without cooking whereas the rest need to be cooked.

### 3.3 Serving food

The verbs that describe the process of serving food when it is ready for consumption are **kəs** ‘take off’, **tʃù** ‘remove (from pot)’, **ʃisə** ‘remove (from fire)’, **kíf** ‘make loaves’, **wyé** ‘serve’, **kú** ‘give’, and **gə** ‘share’, visualised in Table 3 with their corresponding food items.

Table 3: Overview of serving verbs and food items

Verb	Food items
<b>kòs</b> ‘take off (a container with food from the fire)’	<b>àkwén</b> ‘beans’, <b>èsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>kèzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>èlém</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ndòh è mènkalè</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndòh é lyimó</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kèlāh ká mènkalè</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kèlāh ká káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>èbú?</b> ‘pumpkin’, <b>mbàsè</b> ‘vegetable, soup, sauce’, <b>kèzín</b> ‘bitterleaf (vernonia amygdalina), <b>tèwás</b> ‘peas’, <b>ngwòlò?</b> ‘okra’, <b>kènú?</b> ‘mushroom’, <b>bèlèh</b> ‘groundnuts’, <b>èngè?sè</b> ‘egusi’, <b>fèhò?</b> ‘garden egg’, <b>jàm</b> ‘meat’, <b>jà</b> ‘fish’, <b>ètsú?</b> ‘partridge’, <b>mbvú</b> ‘chicken’, <b>byí</b> ‘goat’, <b>byìndzì</b> ‘sheep’, <b>ηkwùrà</b> ‘pig’, <b>èngò</b> ‘banana (unripe), plantain’, <b>fèhò?</b> ‘garden egg’, <b>fèhín</b> ‘bird’, <b>mbvèn</b> ‘grasshopper’, <b>fèhí?</b> ‘beetle’, <b>kèntsi</b> ‘cricket’, <b>kèkím</b> ‘crab’
<b>tjà</b> ‘remove (from pot)’	<b>èsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>èngò</b> ‘plantain’, <b>kèzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>èlém</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ndòh è mènkalè</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndòh é lyimó</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kèlāh ká mènkalè</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kèlāh ká káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>èbú?</b> ‘pumpkin’, <b>bèlèh</b> ‘groudnuts’, <b>èngè?sè</b> ‘egusi’, <b>èngò</b> ‘banana (unripe), plantain’
<b>jàsè</b> ‘remove (from fire)’	<b>èsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>èngò</b> ‘plantain’, <b>kèzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>èlém</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ndòh è mènkalè</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndòh é lyimó</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kèlāh ká mènkalè</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kèlāh ká káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>mbvú</b> ‘chicken’, <b>byìndzì</b> ‘sheep’, <b>ηkwùrà</b> ‘pig’, <b>jàm</b> ‘meat’, <b>fèhín</b> ‘bird’, <b>mbvèn</b> ‘grasshopper’, <b>fèhí?</b> ‘beetle’, <b>kèntsi</b> ‘cricket’, <b>jà</b> ‘fish’, <b>kèkím</b> ‘crab’
<b>kíf</b> ‘make loaves’	<b>kèbáy</b> ‘fufu’, <b>gàrí</b> ‘garri’, <b>kèlàn</b> ‘achu’
<b>wyé</b> ‘put’	all
<b>kú</b> ‘give’	all
<b>gè</b> ‘share’	all

The verb **kòs** ‘take off’ is used for items that are cooked, e.g. cassava (24a), or fried, e.g. crabs (24b), as it describes the act of taking off the pot or frying pan from the fire when the item is ready for consumption.

- (24) a. **Búnj yì kòs kàsá zé**  
 Bung P1 take off 1.cassava when  
 ‘When did Bung take off the cassava?’
- b. **Búnj é kòsè lí è-kím vyí**  
 Bung DJ take off P0 8-crab DEM  
 ‘Bung has taken off the crabs.’

If on the other hand, the focus is on removing the cooked item from the pot, not taking off the pot from the fire, the verb **tjà** ‘remove (from pot)’ is used. Items such as maize (25a) or groundnuts (25b) may be taken out of the pot when ready while leaving the pot on the fire.

- (25) a. **Búnj yì tjà à-sán η-kye ā-tsénó yó**  
 Bung P1 remove 6-maize N-leave 6-some 6  
 ‘Bung removed only some of the maize (from the pot).’

- b. **Búŋ é tʃúè lí bǎlèŋ nɔʔè è-tsèm**  
 Bung DJ remove P0 1.groundnut really 5-all  
 ‘Bung removed all the groundnut (from the pot).’

The process of taking out items from the fire after roasting, e.g. maize (26a) and cricket (26b) is described by the verb **ʃisè** ‘remove (from fire)’.

- (26) a. **Búŋ yì ʃisè è-sáŋ ŋ-kú à mò**  
 Bung P1 remove 5-maize N-give to 1SG  
 ‘Bung removed maize (from the fire) and gave me.’
- b. **Búŋ é ʃisè kè-ntsì nè kè-tí kó**  
 Bung DJ remove 7-cricket with 7-stick 7  
 ‘Bung removed the cricket (from the fire) with a stick.’

For items that are shaped into loaves and served, e.g. fufu (27a), garri (27b), the verb **kíf** ‘make loaves’ is used.

- (27) a. **Búŋ yì kíf kē-báyn à mò**  
 Bung P1 make loaf 5-maize for 1SG  
 ‘Bung made fufu loaves for me.’
- b. **Búŋ é kíf-é gàrí**  
 Bung DJ make loaf-PROG 1.garri  
 ‘Bung is making garri loaves.’

For all food items the verbs **wyé** ‘serve’, **kú** ‘give’, and **gè** ‘share’ can be used to describe the process of handing over or distributing the food.

### 3.4 Consuming food

The discussion in this section is based on Akumbu & Kießling (2021) which illustrates that consuming food can be expressed in Babanki by the verbs **ʒí** ‘eat’, **pfíʔ** ‘eat by chewing’, **ló** ‘eat by licking’, **bwóló** ‘eat noisily’, **mì** ‘swallow’, **ʃwón** ‘suck’, and **lím** ‘bite’. The verb **ʒí** ‘eat’ is the generic verb for the ingestion of food, as reflected in its default usage in contexts where neither the object nor its texture nor the manner of eating is specified, as in (28).

- (28) a. **Búŋ yì ʒì ɣō láyn á**  
 Bung P1 eat what today Q  
 ‘What did Bung eat today?’
- b. **Búŋ é yî ʒì nántô**  
 Bung DJ P1 eat much  
 ‘Bung ate much.’

Any of the other, semantically more specialized, verbs can be used in these contexts with the effect that the texture of the food and the manner of eating it are specified according to the verbs’ meaning.

Each of the consumption verbs listed above reflects the texture of the object consumed, i.e. hard or soft, depending on whether it is raw, properly or partially cooked, or fried, as well as encodes the specific manner of eating or drinking. An overview of the distinctions is visualized in Table 4 where the food items are grouped according to the verbs that typically collocate with them specifying their texture and the way they are consumed.

Table 4: Overview of consumption verbs and food items

Verb	Food items
<b>ʒí</b> ‘eat’	<b>kèbáyɔn</b> ‘fufu’, <b>gàrí</b> ‘garri’, <b>ndù</b> ‘koki’ <sup>17</sup> , <b>kəlàn</b> ‘achu’, <b>àkwén</b> ‘beans’, <b>àkwén é mənɔkálə</b> ‘rice’, <b>kəlān kə mənɔkálə</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kəlān kə káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>ndən ə mənɔkálə</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndən é lyimə</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>əbú?</b> ‘pumpkin’, <b>kəzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>əlém</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>mbàsə</b> ‘vegetable’, <b>kəzín</b> ‘bitterleaf (vernonia amygdalina)’, <b>təwás</b> ‘peas’, <b>əngəm</b> ‘banana, plantain’, <b>mbú?</b> ‘peanut pudding’
<b>pfí?</b> ‘eat by chewing’	<b>ɲàm</b> ‘meat’, <b>ʒú</b> ‘fish’, <b>bələn</b> ‘peanuts’, <b>əngə?sə</b> ‘egusi’, <b>əsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>fəngwələ</b> ‘mango’, <b>ngwəbən</b> ‘guava’, <b>kənsánsán</b> ‘pineapple, sugar cane’ <sup>18</sup> , <b>əbí</b> ‘kolanut’, <b>mbvən</b> ‘grasshopper’, <b>kəntsi</b> ‘cricket’, <b>fənʒi?</b> ‘beetle’
<b>ló</b> ‘eat by licking’	<b>lāmsə</b> ‘orange’ <sup>19</sup> , <b>kəmbámbáyɔn</b> ‘passion fruit’, <b>byə</b> ‘avocado’, <b>kənwi?tə</b> ‘black nightshade’, <b>ədzən</b> ‘plum (dactyodes edulis)’ <sup>20</sup> , <b>əbyí</b> ‘shell butter nuts’, <b>əlyú</b> ‘honey’, <b>mbàsə</b> ‘soup, sauce’, <b>kəzín</b> ‘bitterleaf (vernonia amygdalina)’, <b>təwás</b> ‘peas’, <b>ngwələ?</b> ‘okra’, <b>kəvú?</b> ‘mushroom’, <b>fəsés</b> ‘pepper’, <b>fəmbván</b> ‘salt’, <b>fəɲó?</b> ‘tomato, garden egg’, <b>áɲəs</b> ‘onion’, <b>gálik</b> ‘garlic’, <b>mənʒi?</b> ‘oil’, <b>gàrí</b> ‘garri (soaked in water)’
<b>bwóló</b> ‘eat noisily’	<b>əsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>fəngwələ</b> ‘mango’, <b>ngwəbən</b> ‘guava’, <b>əbí</b> ‘kolanut’, <b>ndən é lyimə</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>mbəngmbəɲ</b> ‘bonbon’
<b>mí?</b> ‘eat dry’	<b>gàrí</b> ‘garri (without soaking in water)’, <b>tákwá</b> ‘longish peanut and corn paste’, <b>kəmí?</b> ‘globular peanut and corn paste’ <sup>21</sup>
<b>ʒwən</b> ‘suck’	<b>lāmsə</b> ‘orange’, <b>kəmbámbáyɔn</b> ‘passion fruit’, <b>kənsánsán</b> ‘pineapple, sugar cane’ <sup>22</sup> , <b>kənwi?tə</b> ‘black nightshade’, <b>ədzən</b> ‘plum (dactyodes edulis)’, <b>əbyí</b> ‘shell butter nuts’, <b>mbəngmbəɲ</b> ‘bonbon’
<b>lím</b> ‘bite’	<b>fəɲó?</b> ‘garden egg’, <b>ɲàm</b> ‘meat’, <b>ʒú</b> ‘fish’, <b>fəngwələ</b> ‘mango’, <b>əsán</b> ‘maize’, <b>kəlān kə mənɔkálə</b> ‘cocoyam’, <b>kəlān kə káká</b> ‘taro’, <b>ndən ə mənɔkálə</b> ‘potato’, <b>ndən é lyimə</b> ‘sweet potato’, <b>kàsá</b> ‘cassava’, <b>əbú?</b> ‘pumpkin’, <b>kəzú?</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>əlém</b> ‘yam sp.’, <b>ngwəbən</b> ‘guava’, <b>kənsánsán</b> ‘pineapple’, <b>əngəm</b> ‘banana, plantain’

The verb **ʒí** encodes the meaning ‘eat’ but falls short of being a hypernym because it is used specifically when the food eaten has a soft texture and is easy to break down

<sup>17</sup> Koki is made from maize. Fresh maize is ground and mixed with cocoyam leaves, palm oil, and salt. The mixture is then tied up into plantain leaves and cooked. When ready it can be eaten with sweet potatoes, cassava, or plantains.

<sup>18</sup> In order to eat sugarcane in Cameroon, the skin is first peeled off using one’s teeth or a knife before breaking the softer inner part into little pieces which are then chewed to produce the juice that is swallowed.

<sup>19</sup> To consume oranges in Cameroon a small lid can be cut away and the juice is sucked out. It is also common for the skin to be peeled off using finger nails or a knife and then breaking little pieces to eat.

<sup>20</sup> *Dactyodes edulis* is native to Africa, sometimes called *safou* (in Cameroon), **atanga** (in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon), and **ube** (in Nigeria). ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dactyodes\\_edulis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dactyodes_edulis), accessed on November 15, 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Both **tákwá** and **kəmí?** are made from fried ground maize and peanuts. To obtain **tákwá**, more peanut paste is used and the mixture is shaped into little longish sizes and deep fried in oil. For **kəmí?**, more maize flour is required and the mixture is shaped within the palm into roundish sizes and eaten without further processing.

<sup>22</sup> Babanki people extend the use of the verb **ʒwən** ‘suck’ to describe the manner of eating both pineapples and sugarcane.



even for babies and older people who may lack strong teeth. When sufficiently cooked, some food items are soft enough to be easily tackled by an act of ʒí ‘eat’, e.g. beans (29a), and sweet potato (29b).

- (29) a. **Búnj yì ʒì ā-kwén á bóŋgəŋ**  
 Bung P1 eat 6-beans in tomorrow  
 ‘Bung ate beans in the morning.’
- b. **Búnj yì ʒì ndōŋ é lyímó**  
 Bung P1 eat 1.potato 1.AM be(come) sweet  
 ‘Bung ate sweet potato.’

The verb **pfí?** ‘eat by chewing’ rather describes the act of using a little more effort to masticate items such as meat (30a), maize (30b), and others listed in Table 4 above. This is due to their relatively hard texture even when these items are cooked or fried.

- (30) a. **Búnj yì pfí? nàm á bóŋgəŋ**  
 Bung P1 chew 9.meat in tomorrow  
 ‘Bung ate meat in the morning (by chewing).’
- b. **Búnj yì pfí? tà è-sán**  
 Bung P1 chew only 5-maize  
 ‘Bung ate only maize (by chewing).’

The semantic distinction between ʒí ‘eat’ and **pfí?** ‘eat by chewing’ can express the difference in the texture of the consumed object, i.e. whether the object is raw or cooked. This is seen when **pfí?** ‘eat by chewing’ rather than ʒí ‘eat’ is used to describe the eating of food items when they are not properly cooked, are eaten raw or unripe, e.g. **kəlāŋ kó məŋkálə** ‘cocoyam’, **kəlāŋ kó káká** ‘taro’, **ndōŋ è məŋkálə** ‘potato’, **ndōŋ é lyímó** ‘sweet potato’, **kàsá** ‘cassava’, **kəʒú?** ‘yam sp.’, **əlém** ‘yam sp.’, **mbàsə** ‘vegetable’, **ŋgwöbàŋ** ‘guava’ and **əŋgəŋ** ‘banana, plantain’. Thus, the selection of the verb **pfí?** ‘eat by chewing’ in (31) rather than ʒí ‘eat’ as in (29) indicates that the consumed items, i.e. beans (31a) and sweet potato (31b), are not properly cooked or even raw<sup>23</sup> rather than well cooked as entailed when used in collocation with ʒí ‘eat’ in (29).

- (31) a. **Búnj yì pfí? ā-kwén á bóŋgəŋ**  
 Bung P1 chew 6-beans in tomorrow  
 ‘Bung ate beans in the morning (by chewing).’
- b. **Búnj yì pfí? ndōŋ é lyímó**  
 Bung P1 chew 1.potato 1.AM be(come) sweet  
 ‘Bung ate sweet potato (by chewing).’

In other cases, the manner of eating certain objects can be expressed only by a single verb. For example, the way fufu is eaten can only be encoded by ʒí ‘eat’ because there is only one way to cook it, that is, the corn flour must be stirred thoroughly in boiled water to produce a paste that is made into loaves and then eaten with a vegetable or soup. The way of eating meat, fish, peanuts, maize, mango, pineapple/sugarcane can only be described by **pfí?** ‘eat by chewing’ since they do not become completely soft even after cooking (where applicable) and still require some effort to masticate. Only when peanuts are ground for producing **mbú?** ‘peanut pudding’, the result is soft enough to render the application of the verb ʒí ‘eat’ acceptable.

The manner of consuming food items that are liquid or soft is encoded by **ló** ‘lick (using tongue)’, as illustrated in (32). Some fruits such as **lāmsə** ‘orange’, **kəmbámbáyn** ‘passion fruit’, **kənwi?tə** ‘black nightshade’, **ədʒəŋ** ‘plum (*dacryodes edulis*)’, **əbyí** ‘shell butter nuts’, and **byə** ‘avocado’ become soft or contain a high

<sup>23</sup> Babanki people do eat raw **ndōŋ é lyímó** ‘sweet potato’, but not raw **ndōŋ è məŋkálə** ‘potato’.

amount of juice when ripe, which justifies the conceptualisation of their consumption as licking. This is also true of various kinds of vegetables such as *kèzín* ‘bitterleaf’, *tèwás* ‘peas’, *ngwòlò?* ‘okra’, *kènú?* ‘mushroom’, *fèsés* ‘pepper’, *fàpò?* ‘garden egg, tomato’, *ápòs* ‘onion’, and *gálik* ‘garlic’ which become soft when cooked. Other items actually come in liquid form, e.g. *mbàsè* ‘soup, sauce’, *mènzí?* ‘oil’, and *èlyù* ‘honey’, but are not consumed by drinking, but rather in small quantities, i.e. by licking or by sips. *Fèmbván* ‘salt’ comes in granular form, but can be consumed by licking in small quantities by dissolving either in liquid food or by saliva, just like *mbòhmbòh* ‘bonbon’.

- (32) a. **Bún yì lò byē láyn**  
 Bung P1 lick 1.avocado today  
 ‘Bung ate avocado today.’
- b. **Bún yì lò fē-sés nè ngwòlò?**  
 Bung P1 lick 19-pepper with 1.okra  
 ‘Bung ate pepper and okra.’
- c. **Bún yì lò fē-mbván nàntô**  
 Bung P1 lick 19-salt much  
 ‘Bung ate much salt.’

Apart from objects that are mostly liquid, i.e. *lâmsè* ‘orange’, *èlyù* ‘honey’, *mbàsè* ‘soup, sauce’, *mènzí?* ‘oil’, the rest of the objects in this category, e.g. avocado (33a) and pepper (33b) can also be chewed when not well-cooked, properly ripe or even raw.

- (33) a. **Bún yì pfi? byē láyn**  
 Bung P1 chew 1.avocado today  
 ‘Bung ate avocado today (by chewing).’
- b. **Bún yì pfi? fē-sés nè ngwòlò?**  
 Bung P1 chew 19-pepper with 1.okra  
 ‘He ate pepper and okra (by chewing the pepper).’

The verb *lò* ‘eat by licking’ can also be used if someone eats any type of food extremely fast, e.g. fufu (34a). It is also used if someone finishes up the side dish, i.e. the soup or vegetable, before the carbohydrate, which could be cocoyam or fufu (34b), an act which is reprehensible and blameworthy. The other verb that also refers to the act of licking, i.e. *líŋ* ‘lick (using fingers)’ describes the act of cleaning up a plate with fingers and licking them (34c).

- (34) a. **Bún yì lò kē-báyn é n-lū**  
 Bung P1 lick 7-fufu CONJ N-leave  
 ‘Bung hurriedly ate the fufu and left.’
- b. **Bún yì lò mbàsè n-kyé kē-báyn**  
 Bung P1 lick 1.soup N-allow 7-fufu  
 ‘Bung finished up the soup and left the fufu.’
- c. **Bún yì zí é n-líŋ kē-káŋ**  
 Bung P1 eat CONJ N-lick 7-plate  
 ‘Bung ate and then licked the plate.’

The verb *bwóló* ‘eat noisily, crunch’ encodes the manner in which objects that have a hard texture are eaten, e.g. *èsáŋ* ‘maize’, *féngwòlè* ‘mango’, *ngwòbàn* ‘guava’, *èbí* ‘kolanut’, *ndòŋ é lyímá* ‘sweet potato’, and *mbòhmbòh* ‘bonbon’. Apart from kolanuts and sweets, the rest of the items listed above can be eaten noisily only under certain conditions, e.g. maize should be dried and fried (35b) and sweet potato should be raw or not properly cooked (36b) for *bwóló* ‘eat noisily, crunch’ to be applicable.

- (35) a. **Búnj yì pfè ē-sáŋ é m-pfí?**  
 Bung P1 boil 5-maize CONJ N-chew  
 ‘Bung boiled maize and ate it.’
- b. **Búnj yì kàŋ ē-sáŋ é m-bwóló**  
 Bung P1 fry 5-maize CONJ N-crunch  
 ‘Bung fried maize and crunched it.’
- (36) a. **Búnj yì pfè ndòŋ é n-ǒí**  
 Bung P1 boil 1-sweet potato CONJ N-eat  
 ‘Bung boiled sweet potato and ate it.’
- b. **Búnj yì pfí? ndòŋ ē-kú**  
 Bung P1 chew 1.sweet potato 1-raw  
 ‘Bung ate raw sweet potato.’
- c. **Búnj yì bwóló ndòŋ ē-kú**  
 Bung P1 crunch 1.sweet potato 1-raw  
 ‘Bung crunched raw sweet potato.’

As seen in Table 4 above, maize, mango, guava, kolanut, and sweet potato primarily collocate with **pfí?** ‘eat by chewing’. The application of **bwóló** ‘eat noisily, crunch’ instead of **pfí?** ‘eat by chewing’ in (35b) and (36c) highlights an unusually hard texture and an extraordinary amount of noise that accompanies the consumption, due to the hard texture of the object.

The verb **mì** ‘swallow’ describes possible ways of eating, since it can refer to the eating of food without chewing properly (37a), or eating rapidly without taking time to masticate (37b).

- (37) a. **Búnj yì mì à-kwén mí-í**  
 Bung P1 swallow 6-beans swallow-SFX<sup>24</sup>  
 ‘Bung swallowed the beans.’
- b. **Búnj yì mì ndòŋ é n-lú**  
 Bung P1 swallow 1.potato CONJ N-leave  
 ‘Bung swallowed the potato and left.’

The verb is also used to reprimand a greedy person who wishes to eat more food than is available. In this case, the person expected to provide the food can give an ironic encouragement to the greedy person to swallow any object, as in (38).

- (38) a. **mì-í Búnj**  
 swallow-IMP Bung  
 ‘Swallow Bung!’
- b. **mì-í ɲgù?**  
 swallow-IMP 9.stone  
 ‘Swallow a stone!’

The verb **mì?** ‘eat dry’ describes the process of eating garri without soaking it in water or without cooking it (39a). It also describes the eating of **tákwá** ‘longish peanut and maize paste’ (39b), as well as **kè̀mì?** ‘globular maize and peanut paste’ (39c). It is even evident that the noun **kè̀mì?** is derived from the verb **mì?**.

<sup>24</sup> This suffix has been glossed simply as SFX for lack of a satisfying functional label since its presence is solely to specify the context of the occurrence of the repeated verb.

- (39) a. **Búnj yì m̀ì? g̀arí ǹèntf̀wì**  
 Bung P1 eat dry 1.garri afternoon  
 ‘Bung ate garri without soaking it in water.’
- b. **Búnj yì m̀ì? t̀ákwá ǹèntf̀ú?ú**  
 Bung P1 eat dry 1.longish peanut and maize paste evening  
 ‘Bung ate the longish peanut and maize paste in the evening.’
- c. **Búnj yì m̀ì? k̀è-m̀ì? l̀áyn**  
 Bung P1 eat dry 7-globular maize and peanut paste today  
 ‘Bung ate the globular maize and peanut paste today.’

The verb **f̀wónj** ‘suck’ is used to talk about the consumption of food items like fruits that are liquid in nature when properly ripe, e.g. mango or items that need sucking in the mouth before swallowing, e.g. sweets, as in (40a-b).

- (40) a. **Búnj yì f̀ẁònj f̀é-ŋgẁòl̀è**  
 Bung P1 suck 19-mango  
 ‘Bung sucked a mango.’
- b. **Búnj é f̀ẁònj-é mb̀òŋmb̀óŋ**  
 Bung DJ suck-PROG 1.bonbon  
 ‘Bung is sucking a bonbon.’

**F̀éŋgẁòl̀è** ‘mango’ normally collocates with **p̀f̀í? ‘eat by chewing’**, and if it becomes soft and someone uses their mouth to peel and eat it, then only **f̀wónj** ‘suck’ is used. As will be seen below, to break off a little piece of an unripe mango with the teeth before chewing is denoted with the verb **l̀ím** ‘bite’. **Mb̀òŋmb̀óŋ** ‘bonbon’ collocates with **l̀ó** ‘eat by licking’ whereas **f̀éŋgẁòl̀è** ‘mango’ does not since **l̀ó** ‘eat by licking’ usually applies to items which can be dissolved by saliva. Regarding other kinds of fruits such as oranges, passion fruit, and black nightshade, it is not clear what kind of contrast ensures that only **l̀ó** ‘eat by licking’, not **f̀wónj** ‘eat by sucking’ is applicable with them.

The act of sucking does not only apply to human agents but also to non-human animates such as mosquitoes (41a), and ticks (41b).

- (41) a. **f̀è-mb̀úm f̀é n-f̀ẁònj Búnj ɣ̀è kẁá?á**  
 19-mosquito DJ N-suck Bung 3SG be(come) ill  
 ‘A mosquito sucked Bung (’s blood) and he fell ill.’
- b. **k̀è-k̀úf k̀é f̀wónj lí m̀è-nlýúy fá ē-ẁèn è j̀àm**  
 7-tick DJ suck P0 6a-blood from 5-body 5.AM 1.animal  
 ‘A tick has sucked an animal’s blood.’

This meaning can be construed as an extension from the meaning of a person consuming something. Stinging and biting by insects are as concrete as humans biting food (Newman & Aberra 2009), implying that this meaning is not particularly figurative. Therefore, the ‘eat’ verbs listed above can have nonhuman animate agents, e.g. **z̀í** ‘eat’ is used when dogs, cats, or pigs eat solid food such as fufu; **p̀f̀í?** ‘eat by chewing’ describes how cattle and goats eat grass, or how dogs and cats eat meat; and **l̀ó** ‘eat by licking’ is used when dogs and cats eat liquid food.

The verb **l̀ím** ‘bite’ is used when a hard object needs to be broken down to little pieces before chewing using the teeth, as in the case of mangoes (42a) and meat (42b). Objects in this category also include **f̀èŋ? ‘garden egg**, **k̀èl̀āŋ k̀é m̀əŋk̀ál̀è ‘cocoyam’**, **k̀èl̀āŋ k̀é k̀áká ‘taro’**, **nd̀òŋ è m̀əŋk̀ál̀è ‘potato’**, **nd̀òŋ é lỳímé ‘sweet potato’**, **k̀àsá ‘cassava’**, **èb̀ú? ‘pumpkin’**, **k̀èz̀ú? ‘yam sp.’**, **èl̀ém ‘yam sp.’**, **èŋg̀òm ‘banana, plantain’**, **f̀ù ‘fish’**, **ès̀án ‘maize’**, **ŋgẁòb̀àn ‘guava’**, **k̀èns̀áns̀án ‘pineapple/sugarcane’**, as listed in Table 4 above.

- (42) a. **Búŋ yì ìm fə-ŋgwòlè é ŋ-kú wāyn**  
 Bung P1 bite 19-mango CONJ N-give 1.child  
 'Bung bit a mango and shared it with a child.'
- b. **Búŋ yì ìm ñàm è wāyn**  
 Bung P1 bite 9.meat 9.AM 1.child  
 'Bung took a bite of a child's meat.'

As with sucking, the act of biting does not only apply to human agents but also to non-human animates, e.g. mosquito (43a), and ticks (43b).

- (43) a. **fə-mbúm fə n-ìm Búŋ yè kwá?á**  
 19-mosquito DJ N-bite Bung 3SG be(come) ill  
 'A mosquito bit Bung and he fell ill.'
- b. **kə-kúf kə ìm lí jàm**  
 7-tick DJ bite P0 1.animal  
 'A tick has bitten an animal.'

#### 4. Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in this study that Babanki exhibits different verbs that are more specialized in meaning than any superordinate form in the sub-domains of food collection, preparation, serving, and consumption. Since there is no hypernym which abstracts from the manner of the action and simply restricts the action to its nature, both the nature and manner of acting on a specific object are encoded in a single verb. Therefore, the hyponyms, i.e. verbs with specific meanings that are selected reflect the texture of the consumed objects, and/or the manner of manipulating them. In all, forty-nine verbs have been identified in the four sub-domains, with seventeen in food collection, eighteen in food preparation, seven in food serving, and seven others in food consumption.

The use of different verbs in the food domain, based on the direct objects concerned, is not unique to Babanki but rather common in languages of the world. An exploration of the dictionaries of the closely related Central Ring languages Kom (Jones 2001) and Men (Mua 2018) reveals the existence of multiple cognate forms with the Babanki verbs in the sub-domains of food collection, preparation, and consumption. In the Kom food collection sub-domain, the verbs **kfi** 'harvest, e.g. maize', **tʃɔ?** 'harvest by uprooting', **tɪm** 'dig up', **kɔɛ** 'pick, pluck, e.g. fruit, coffee', **kɪŋ** 'search', e.g. vegetable, **sə?** 'uproot', **bəs** 'cut into halves', **tʃu?** 'pound, e.g. cocoyam', **kɔm** 'peel, e.g. cocoyams', and **yum** 'peel, e.g. cocoyams' have been identified. In the food preparation sub-domain, the verbs **yāyn** 'prepare food', **kpè** 'cook', **tʃəm** 'grind, e.g. egusi', **ká?** 'chop, e.g. chicken', **kāŋ** 'fry', **jò?** 'roast, e.g. chicken', **lām** 'cook fufu', **yū?** 'boil', and **yèbtɪ** 'make crunching sound while chewing food, e.g. raw cassava, carrots, raw sweet potatoes'. Regarding food consumption, the verbs **yɪ** 'eat', **kfi** 'eat, to grind with teeth, e.g. solid foods such as meat, ground nuts, kernels, kola nuts', **tʃəm** 'chew', **lɔ** 'lick, eat', **tūŋ əfó ɪtʃfi** 'eat, put something in the mouth', **lūm** 'bite', and **mù?** 'take or eat something dry in powdery form, without mixing with water, e.g. powdered milk' are listed in the dictionary.

In the Men food collection sub-domain, the verbs **kwì** 'harvest, e.g. maize', **tʃɔ?** 'harvest by uprooting', **fù?** 'dig up, e.g. groundnuts', **kɔyn** 'pick, pluck, e.g. beans', **kyim** 'break, e.g. sugarcane', **kyiŋ** 'search', e.g. vegetable', **sɔ** 'uproot', **kiə** 'cut off', **tsu?** 'pound, e.g. cocoyam', **tʃəm** 'grind, e.g. egusi', **ká?** 'chop, e.g. chicken', and **kɔm** 'peel, e.g. cocoyams' exist. In the food preparation sub-domain, the verbs **yāyn** 'prepare food', **kā?** 'crack, shell', **jò?** 'roast, e.g. chicken', **kāŋ** 'fry', **ndām** 'cook fufu', **fɔyn** 'boil', and **n<sup>w</sup>ù** 'prepare sauce with limestone' have been found. As for food consumption, the verbs **zɪ** 'eat', **kɔŋ** 'lick', **k<sup>w</sup>ɪl** 'chew', e.g. sugarcane, **ndōm** 'bite', **mbis** 'to eat soft nuts', **mù?** 'eat something that is in the form of flour without mixing it in water', **yās** 'eat without complement', **ndómtɛ** 'eat with complement (e.g.

fufu with vegetables) are listed in the dictionary.

Beyond Grassfields Bantu, studies have also shown that the food consumption sub-domain is characterized by various lexical items. Bonvini (2008: 270) illustrates the existence of several verbs in the universal physical experience of food absorption in various Niger-Congo languages, i.e. Kasem (Gur): **dí** ‘to eat, ingest (food), feed someone’, **dəlim** ‘to lick’, **dùn** ‘to bite, sting, crunch, chew’ **mù** ‘to suck (by putting in the mouth)’, **fùrì** ‘to absorb’, **li** ‘to swallow’, **ñò** ‘to drink’; Moore (Gur): **dí** ‘to eat (for things that cannot be chewed)’, **lélem** ‘to lick’, **dumi** ‘to bite, sting’, **kaghlé** ‘to crunch’, **wábé** ‘to chew’, **fōoghé** ‘to absorb’, **mōghé** ‘to suck’, **vélé** ‘to swallow’, **nyü** ‘to drink’; Fongbe (Kwa): **dù** ‘to eat, to chew, crunch, gnaw, bite, to absorb’, **dùdó** ‘to lick, take something with the fingers to eat it’, **mì** ‘to swallow’, **nù** ‘to drink’; Fulani (Atlantic): **nyaam-** ‘to ingest (food), eat, to consume, feed on’, **lad’aade** (?) ‘to lick one’s hand and fingers after having eaten’, **ɲat-** ‘to bite, seize between one’s teeth’, **yak-** ‘to eat in fits and starts, by chewing or by pecking’, **moɖ-** ‘to swallow, gobble up’, **yar-** ‘to drink, quench one’s thirst’; Duala (Bantu-A 20): **dá** ‘to eat’, **ńángwa** ‘to lick’, **lába** ‘to bite, sting’, **miña** ‘to swallow, gobble up’, **ńó** ‘to drink’; Kirundi (Bantu-D 60): **-ryá/-rí** ‘to eat, feed someone, take food, bite’, **-kámya** ‘to absorb’, **-mira** ‘to swallow’, **-nywá, -nyó-** ‘to drink’; Kikongo (Bantu-H 10): **dia** ‘to eat’, **venda** ‘to lick’, **bukuta** ‘to crunch’, **mina** ‘to swallow’, **nua** ‘to drink, imbibe, absorb’.

The manipulations of the verbs and their direct objects reflect the world view of the Babanki people. Each speaker needs to understand not only the way the people act on each object but also its nature in order to choose the appropriate verbs to collocate with the objects. This study of the semantics of verbs opens the way to penetrate and understand aspects of the Babanki culture through its language. The study also sounds the warning against the danger of translation and supports the necessity of founding semantic definitions on language data only (Bonvini 2008: 286).

## Abbreviations

<sup>u</sup> = downstep, 1SG = first person singular, 3SG = third person singular, 1...19 = noun classes, AM = associative marker, CONJ = conjunction, DEM = demonstrative, DJ = disjoint, H = high tone, IMP = imperative, INF = infinitive, L = low tone, M = mid tone, N = nasal, P0 = immediate past tense, P1 = hodiernal past tense, PROG = progressive, Q = question, SFX = suffix.

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