

# EXCLAMATIVES IN KIRUNDI AND KINYARWANDA\*

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## 1 Introduction

- There are many ways to express mirativity, or surprise, in language, but only a limited subset of exclamations are said to locate mirativity in their syntax. These utterances, called exclamatives, are exclamations that take a specific syntactic form to express the *sentential force* of exclaiming.
- In English, exclamatives often use wh-words or inversion.

- (1) a. What a day (it is)!  
b. How funny that is!  
c. Boy, can John eat!  
d. The things I do for you!

- Unlike in English, Kirundi exclamatives do not possess wh-words or inversion.<sup>1</sup> The same is true for Kinyarwanda which falls in a dialect continuum with Kirundi.

- (2) a. Yohāni a-nyaruka.  
John 1.AGR-go.fast  
'John goes fast.'  
b. Mbēga ukuntu Yohāni a-nyarúka!  
Q 15manner John 1.AGR-go.fast.DEP  
'How fast John goes!'

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<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations used in glosses are as follows: AGR – subject/verb agreement; DEP – dependent clause; DJ – disjoint; Q – question marker Numbers denote noun class.

- These exclamatives are distinguished from canonical matrix clauses by a constellation of properties: i) dependent clause syntax, ii) the use of a question marker, iii) the use of a manner noun, and iv) exclamative prosody.
- This first property provides evidence that these utterances are truly exclamatives with syntactically derived exclamatory sentential force.
- Interestingly, across the three speakers with whom I collaborated, only this first property was universally obligatory, suggesting that language variation/change affects the expression of such utterances.
- This presentation aims to: i) examine the grammaticalization of exclamatory force in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda (RU/RW), ii) fill a gap in the typology of exclamatives, which is both limited to and predominantly concerned with Indo-European languages, and iii) contribute to the understanding of exclamatives across Bantu languages.

### Proposal

⇒ RU/RW have both exclamations and exclamatives. Exclamatives can be both clausal and nominal, depending on the speaker, but all are derived from CPs.

⇒ Unlike in analyses of Indo-European exclamatives, these pattern more like relative clauses than interrogatives.

⇒ The source of exclamatory sentential force is a null morpheme E in C.

(3) [CP (NP) [CP E [TP Yohāni a-nyarúka ] ] ]

⇒ Variation in the form of exclamatives arises due to parametric variation in EPP features.

**Roadmap**

- §2 Exclamatives in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda: empirical data
- §3 Exclamatives in the literature: past analyses
- §4 Proposal
- §5 Summary and future research

## 2 Exclamatives in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda

- Following ?, mirative utterances fall into two categories, the second of which is a subset of the first.

- (4) **Exclamation**  
an expressive utterance with the *illocutionary* force of exclaiming
  - (5) **Exclamative**  
an exclamation that take a canonical syntactic form to express the *sentential* force of exclaiming
- There are a variety of ways to express mirativity, or surprise, in RU/RW but not all of these can be considered exclamatives, as defined above.

### 2.1 Exclamations in RU/RW

- Exclamations in RU/RW appear as nominal or clausal.
- **Nominal** exclamations consist of an optional question marker and a noun phrase which is typically modified.

- (6) a. (Mbêga) umwâna mw-izá!  
Q 1child 1-beautiful  
'What a beautiful child!' (Adjective)
- b. (Mbêga) ukwûbahuka kw-uryá muntu!  
Q 15daring 15of-1that 1person  
'The daring of that person!' (Possessive)
- c. (Mbêga) indyá uryá!  
Q 9food 2SG.AGR-eat.DEP  
'The food you eat!' (Relative clause)
- d. (Mbêga) ukuntu Yohãni a-nyarúka!  
Q 15manner John 1.AGR-go.fast.DEP  
'How fast John goes!' (Exclamative)

- **Clausal** exclamations consist of just clauses, without a noun.<sup>2</sup>

- (7) a. Yô, Yohãni a-nyaruka!  
wow John 1.AGR-go.fast  
'Wow, John goes fast!' (Interjection)
- b. Yohãni a-nyaruka câne!  
John 1.AGR-go.fast very  
'John goes very fast!' (Adverb)
- c. (Mbêga) Yohãni a-nyarúka!  
Q John 1.AGR-go.fast.DEP  
'How fast John goes!' (Exclamative)

- In the majority of these exclamations, mirativity is denoted prosodically, when the utterance has the same form as a non-expressive utterance (6), or lexically, through the addition of a mirative lexical item, such as an interjection, to an otherwise standard declarative sentence (7a) (7b).
- Utterances like (6d) and (7c) are unique in that their mirativity is *not* purely lexical.
- This is most apparent with clausal exclamatives. In these utterances, there is no *lexical* distinction from their declarative counterparts.

- (8) a. Yohãni a-nyaruka.  
John 1.AGR-go.fast  
'John goes fast.' (Declarative)
- b. Yohãni a-nyarúka!  
John 1.AGR-go.fast.DEP  
'How fast John goes!' (Exclamative)

- There is, however, a syntactic distinction: the declarative is a typical matrix clause; the exclamative is a dependent clause in insubordination.
- Because the mirativity of such an utterance appears to originate as a result of its syntactic form, I classify this subset of exclamations as exclamatives, possessing exclamatory sentential force.

### 2.2 Exclamatives in RU/RW

- An exclamative in RU/RW is composed of a dependent clause preceded optionally by a question marker and/or a noun of manner or degree and marked optionally by exclamatory prosody.

<sup>2</sup>In this last example and throughout the presentation, the question marker can appear as either *mbêga* or *mbé*. For brevity's sake, I'll just include one option in examples.

### 2.2.1 Dependent clause

- In RU/RW, there are a number of clear distinctions between matrix and dependent clauses: i) presence of dependent clause tone, ii) absence of disjoint marker, and iii) lower negation marking.
- Dependent clauses have different tonal patterns than matrix clauses. For example, with an underlyingly low tone verb, a high tone appears on the second syllable of the dependent clause verb root.

#### (9) Dependent Clause Tone

- Yohãni a-nyaruka.  
John 1.AGR-go.fast  
'John goes fast.'
- Ndâzi kó Yohãni a-nyarúka.  
I.know that John 1.AGR-go.fast.DEP  
'I know that John goes fast.'

- Dependent clauses prohibit the use of the disjoint marker *-ra-*.

#### (10) No disjoint

- Indyá zi-ra-ryôshe.  
9food 9.AGR-DJ-tastes.good  
'The food tastes good.'
- Ndâzi kó indyá zi-(\*ra)-ryôshé.  
I.know that 9food 9.AGR-DJ-tastes.good.DEP  
'I know that the food tastes good.'

- Negation in dependent clauses appears after subject-verb agreement while matrix clause negation appears before.

#### (11) Lower negation

- Umuhũngu nt-a-soma cãne.  
1boy NEG-1.AGR-read a.lot  
'The boy doesn't read a lot.'
- Ndâzi kó umuhũngu a-ta-somá cãne.  
I.know that 1boy 1.AGR-NEG-read.DEP a.lot  
'I know that the boy doesn't read a lot.'

- These same properties occur in clausal exclamatives even though clausal exclamatives are not embedded by an overt complementizer or head noun, as is the case in other dependent clause contexts.

#### (12) Comparing dependent clause properties by clause type

Clause type	Dep. Tone	Disjoint	High Neg.
Matrix	✗	✓	✓
Dependent	✓	✗	✗
Exclamative	✓	✗	✗

### 2.2.2 Question marker: *mbêga/mbé*

- Questions in RU/RW optionally include a question marker, found at the start of the sentence. They can occur with both yes/no and wh-questions.

- (Mbêga) Yohãni a-ra-nyaruka?  
Q John 1.AGR-DJ-go.fast  
'Does John go fast?'
  - (Mbêga) Yohãni a-ra-nyaruka áte?  
Q John 1.AGR-DJ-go.fast 1.how  
'How does John go fast?'
  - (Mbêga) mu-físe ikí?  
Q 2PL.AGR-do what  
'What are you (pl.) doing?'

- Question markers can also occur with exclamations, as seen above in (6) and (7). They can occur with both nominal exclamations and clausal exclamatives.

- Mbêga umwãna mw-izá!  
Q 1child 1.AGR-beautiful  
'What a beautiful child!' (Nominal Exclamation)
  - Mbêga Yohãni a-nyarúka!  
Q John 1.AGR-go.fast.DEP  
'How fast John goes!' (Clausal Exclamative)

- Interrogatives and exclamatives differ in that exclamatives display traits of dependent clauses while interrogatives do not.

#### (15) Comparing dependent clause properties by clause type (updated)

Clause type	Dep. Tone	Disjoint	High Neg.	Q
Matrix	✗	✓	✓	✗
Interrogative	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dependent	✓	✗	✗	✗
Exclamative	✓	✗	✗	✓

### 2.2.3 Nouns of manner/degree

- Exclamatives can occur with nominals of manner/degree to create apparent nominal exclamatives.

(16) Mbêga ukūntu/ingené Yohaáni a-nyarúka!  
 Q 15manner/9manner John 1.AGR-go.fast.DEP  
 ‘How fast John goes!’

- These are not *wh*-words (the *wh*-word for ‘how’ is *-te* as seen in (17)).
- Exclamatives can only be embedded as complements when nominal (17a). When embedded with a standard complementizer, the mirative reading is lost (17b).

(17) a. Ndâzi \*(ukūntu/ingené) Muco a-fūngúra cāne!  
 I.know 15manner Muco 1.AGR-eat a.lot  
 ‘I know how very much Muco eats!’  
 b. Ndâzi \*(ko) Muco a-fūngúra cāne.  
 I.know that Muco 1.AGR-eat a.lot  
 ‘I know that Muco eats a lot.’

- Pure DP exclamations cannot occur as complement clauses and retain a mirative reading. Embedded exclamatives must contain a clause.

(18) a. \*Ndâzi umwâna mwīzá!  
 I.know 1child 1beautiful  
 Cannot mean: ‘I know how very beautiful the child is!’  
 b. Ndâzi ukūntu umwâna a-rí mwīzá!  
 I.know 15manner 1child 1.AGR-be 1beautiful  
 ‘I know how very beautiful the child is!’

#### Quick recap

- ⇒ Syntactic mirativity in RU/RW is limited to exclamatives that exhibit dependent clause properties.
- ⇒ Exclamatives must be headed by a noun to retain their mirative interpretations in embedded contexts.
- ⇒ Other potential indicators of mirativity, like question markers and prosody, vary in optionality across speakers.
- ⇒ To my knowledge, clausal exclamatives are the only instance of dependent clauses being used as main clauses (insubordination) in the language.

## 3 Exclamatives in the literature

- A major question in the analysis of exclamative is where the exclamatory sentential force of an utterance comes from.

### 3.1 Clausal exclamatives and interrogatives

- On one side, accounts have argued that an utterance’s sentential force is situated in a morpheme or grammatical feature.
- A popular claim has been that exclamatory force is grammaticalized via question words, such as *how* in the English translation of (2b), repeated below.

(19) How fast John goes!

- Because both interrogatives and exclamatives express a set of propositions and not assertions, many have argued that the two clause types must share formal features (??).
- Some accounts go so far as to say that clausal exclamatives *must* possess question words because question words are the *only* element in which exclamatory force is grammaticalized (?).
- On the other side of the debate, linguists have proposed construction-oriented theories in which certain types of structures deliver exclamative readings pragmatically.
- Under this view, ? argue that there is no specific syntactic element responsible for introducing force. Instead, they posit that an exclamative is derived from a combination of elements.
- Specifically, they propose that exclamatives (in Paduan) come from the presence of a factive and a *wh*-operator. They link these elements to two widely accepted properties of exclamatives: factivity and scalarity.
- Issues for RU/RW:**
  - There is no single overt morpheme, like a *wh*-word, in RU/RW exclamatives.
  - Exclamatives and interrogatives don’t pattern the same syntactically in RU/RW. Interrogatives don’t exhibit dependent clause properties (or even necessarily trigger *wh*-movement).

### 3.2 Nominal exclamatives and relative clauses

- The study of nominal exclamatives offers several analyses that do not rely on the syntax or semantics of interrogatives to account for exclamatory force.
- ? argue that nominal exclamatives receive clause-like meanings as the result of compositional semantics involving an exclamative morpheme E in the syntactic structure of relative clauses.

(20) The things [E that he says]!

- Following this logic, they argue that nominals are only exclamatives if they include a relative clause brought about by the E morpheme.
- This claim is supported by asymmetries in the ability to behave like a proposition in an embedded context.
- In English, exclamatives embedded by predicates are pronominalized with the singular subject *it* because they have propositional meanings. This isn't possible with nominals that lack relative clauses (CPs).

(21) a. The strange things [E he says]!  
b. Those strange Italians!

(22) a. It's amazing, [the strange things [E he says]].  
b. \*It's amazing, the strange Italians.

- ? modifies this proposal to locate the E morpheme in the determiner of nominal exclamatives based on Malagasy data in which nominals without relative clauses can function as exclamatives. He argues that this is further supported by cross-linguistic restriction in the determiner that can occur with nominal exclamatives.

#### • Issues for RU/RW:

- It would be hard to motivate the placement of E in the determiner in RU/RW as some speakers can easily form exclamatives without any nominal element at the head of the utterance. To accommodate such an analysis, a null exclamative determiner would be required.

## 4 Proposal

### 4.1 The structure of RU/RW exclamatives

- I propose that exclamatory sentential force in RU/RW exclamatives is rooted in a null morpheme E (à la ?). This morpheme is a null complementizer, similar to

RU/RW's null relative complementizer (additionally, both trigger properties of dependent clauses in their complements).

(23) [<sub>CP</sub> E [<sub>TP</sub> Yohāni a-nyarúka ] ]

- One prediction of this proposal is that true exclamatives in RU/RW must be composed of a CP headed by E in order to express exclamatory force.
- This prediction is borne out: DP exclamations do not maintain their mirativity when acting as the complement of a verb like 'know' but exclamatives—which include CPs—do.

(24) a. \*Ndāzi (ukūntu) umwāna mwīzā!  
I.know 1child 15manner 1.AGR-be beautiful  
Intended: 'I know how very beautiful the child is!'  
b. Ndāzi ukūntu umwāna a-rí mwīzā!  
I.know 15manner 1child 1.AGR-be beautiful  
'I know how very beautiful the child is!'

- Additionally, exclamatives pattern like complement clauses, and not DPs, when embedded as propositions with predicates such as 'it is surprising'. In these contexts, such propositions trigger default Class 8 agreement (similar to the pronominal *it* subject in (22)). In (26) below, the head noun of the embedded exclamative is Class 13 but default Class 8 agreement is preferable in a mirative reading.

(25) [Kó nkūndá ubugari] **bi**-ra-tangaje!  
that I.like.DEP 14ugali 8.AGR-DJ-is.surprising  
'It's surprising that I like ugali!'

(26) [Ukūntu Muco a-ryá cāne] **bi/ku**-ra-tāngāje!  
13manner Muco 1.AGR-eat.DEP a.lot 8.AGR-DJ-surprise  
'It's surprising, how much Muco eats!'

- When embedding a DP exclamation in the same context, only canonical agreement (Class 1) is possible and exclamatory force is lost.

(27) Umwāna mw-īzā **a/\*bi**-ra-tāngāje!  
1child 1-beautiful 1.AGR/8.AGR-DJ-surprise  
Intended: 'It's surprising, how beautiful the child is!'  
Can only mean: 'The beautiful child is surprising.'

## 4.2 Optionality of head noun

- In some dialects, exclamatives can (and must) be headed by nouns. I propose that this restriction is caused by parametric variation in the presence of an EPP feature on E.<sup>3</sup> The result is that exclamatives derived via E<sub>[EPP]</sub> have an obligatory head noun in Spec,CP.

(28) [CP NP [CP E [TP Yohāni a-nyarúka ] ] ]

- This head noun can be a noun of manner/degree or a raised argument from the clause itself (à la relativization/focus).

(29) Mbêga indyá uryá!  
Q 9food 2SG.AGR-eat.DEP  
'The food you eat!'

- Examples like (30) militate against an alternate analysis in which *ukūntu/ingené* are overt complementizers in exclamative contexts (as suggested by a past audience member).
- If these were complementizers, we might expect them to appear with all exclamatives in the dialects in which they are obligatory for clausal exclamatives, but this is not the case. They cannot appear in any position in such exclamatives.

(30) Mbêga (\*ukūntu) indyá (\*ukūntu) uryá!  
Q 13manner 9food 13manner 2SG.AGR-eat.DEP  
'The food you eat!'

- One condition that separates exclamatives from other extraction constructions is the agreement they trigger in embedded contexts. As noted above, exclamatives in subject position can trigger default Class 8 agreement. Relative clauses cannot.

(31) a. [Indyá uryá] **bi**-ra-tangaje!  
Q 9food 2SG.AGR-eat.DEP 8-DJ-surprise  
'It's surprising, the food you eat!'  
b. [Indyá uryá] **zi**-ra-tangaje.  
Q 9food 2SG.AGR-eat.DEP 10-DJ-surprise  
'The food you eat is surprising.'  
Cannot mean: It's surprising, the food you eat!'

<sup>3</sup>This is akin to claims by ? that C in many Bantu languages has an EPP feature though in her analyses, C only has EPP features if it has uninterpretable  $\phi$ -features. In this case, it's not clear that the E morpheme has such features as C is not spelled out.

- Based on this, I propose that exclamatives differ from relative clauses in that they denote propositions and not individuals. The head noun never ends up outside of CP.<sup>4</sup> As such, the head noun cannot trigger agreement; the embedded exclamative is only interpreted as a proposition.

## 5 Summary and future research

### 5.1 Summary

⇒ Exclamatives in RU/RW do not fit into past accounts that build on interrogative morphemes/structures. Their form and interpretation lend support instead to the relativization-like strategy of exclamatory force from ?. That being said, exclamatives differ from relative clauses as well, suggesting a different type of C head.

⇒ RU/RW exclamatives are clausal in structure, requiring a CP headed by the null exclamative complementizer E.

⇒ The source of exclamatory sentential force is this null morpheme E.

(32) [CP E [TP Yohāni a-nyarúka ] ]

⇒ The dialectal availability of purely clausal exclamatives depends on whether Spec,CP must be filled. If an EPP feature is present, exclamative E must have a nominal head even though the resulting nominal exclamative denotes a proposition.

### 5.2 Areas of future research

- Dialectal variation – a larger-scale study on variation in the presence/absence of the question marker and head noun
- Data from other Bantu languages where exclamatives resemble relative clauses

(33) Rukiga (? , 19-20)  
a. Abantu bo biija.  
a-ba-ntu ba-o ba-ij-a  
AUG-2-person 2-CM 2SM.N.PST-come-FV  
'People really came (many people turned up, more than expected).'  
b. Eki twanywire gó n'amiizi.

<sup>4</sup>For instance, if relative clauses are head-external or, based on some analyses, if head nouns move out of Spec,CP (??)

e-ki tu-a-nyw-ire g-o ni a-ma-izi  
 AUG-7RM 1PL.SM-F.PST-drink-PFV 6-CM COP AUG-6-water  
 ‘We really drank water / We drank much water.’

- Data from non-Bantu languages

(34) French Canadian sportscaster (p.c. Bernhard Schwarz):

la rondelle qui glisse vers le territoire des Canadiens  
 ‘the puck which slides towards the zone of-the Canadiens’

- Insubordination – does it play a role? is this linked to the presence of the question marker?

## A Prosody

- Exclamatives are marked by a prosody in which the final syllable receives stress and a higher pitch. The penultimate syllable can seem low in comparison. item This is unique in Bantu where the penultimate syllable is systematically lengthened (and often stressed) (?).
- The contrast between declaratives (falling) and interrogatives (rising) is particularly evident when there is no tone on the final vowel. In a declarative or interrogative, this vowel is unstressed and can elide. In an exclamative, it cannot be dropped.

(35) a. Declarative: Yohăni a-nya'ruk(a). (falling)  
 b. Interrogative: Mbêga Yohăni a-nya'ruk(a)? (rising)  
 c. Mbêga Yohăni a-nyarú'ka! (final stress)

- This distinction also appears on nominal exclamatives. Note that in this example, there is even tone on the final syllable of utterance.

(36) a. Mbêga umwâna mw-î'zá!  
 q 1child 1-beautiful  
 ‘What a beautiful child!’  
 b. Hari umwâna mw-îz(á).  
 there.is 1child 1-beautiful  
 ‘There’s a beautiful child.’

## B A note on speaker variation

- Among the three speakers I’ve been working with, the optionality of various properties of exclamatives differs from person to person. This may represent dialectal variation or even active change.
- Speaker 1 (Burundian, 60s, male, rural hometown) is the most liberal, producing exclamatives with and without the question marker and with and without a manner noun.
- Speakers 2 (Burundian, 20s, female, urban) and 3 (Rwandan, 20s, female, urban) require both a question marker *and* a manner NP.
- Prosody also varied more with the two younger speakers such that utterances with other overt markers of mirativity did not require exclamatory final stress.

(37) Variation in clausal exclamatives

- Speaker 1: (Mbêga) (ukūntu) anyarúka!
- Speaker 2: \*(Mbêga) \*(ukūntu) anyarúka!
- Speaker 3: \*(Mbêga) \*(ukūntu) anyarúka!

- For nominal exclamations, all three speakers reject constructions with manner NPs but there is variability on whether the question marker is needed. The Burundian speakers found the question marker optional; the Rwandan speaker required it.

(38) Variation in nominal exclamations

- Speaker 1: (Mbêga) (\*ukūntu) umwâna mwîzá!
- Speaker 2: (Mbêga) (\*ukūntu) umwâna mwîzá!
- Speaker 3: \*(Mbêga) (\*ukūntu) umwâna mwîzá!

## C The question marker

- A clear analysis of the question marker is challenging given its optionality in interrogatives. In this section, I present several potential analyses but leave a complete proposal to future work.
- Speaker 1 uses the question marker optionally but the other speakers require it in all cases of E morpheme exclamatives.
- Outside of this context, *mbêga* only appears with questions and when it does so, it is optional. It does not appear in other dependent clause contexts.

- I propose that the question marker must be obligatorily expressed when the specifier of the exclamatory CP is occupied. This accounts for its presence in all nominally headed exclamatives in the dialects of Speakers 2 and 3.
- In ?, exclamative force is located very high in C and is derived via multiple layers of structure. The obligatory nature of the question marker in certain dialects suggests that a similarly multi-layered C domain may be at play in RU/RW with the question marker functioning as a sort of wh-operator above a nominally-headed CP.
- An alternate proposal is that the question marker is the diachronic remains of speech act embedding (like a quotative). This would explain why exclamatives seem to exhibit insubordination.
- An additional wrinkle: Speaker 3 also requires the question marker for DP exclamations. I propose that in her dialect, the question marker is a discourse particle expressing doubt/mirativity, similar to *yō* or other such interjections.
- The role of the question marker is not totally clear. It's possible it's the spell-out of a higher C head which must be expressed when Spec,CP is occupied. It could also be a discourse particle or speech act embedder.

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