

# Exclamatives in Kirundi

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## 1 Introduction

- Unlike in English, Kirundi exclamatives (1b) do not possess wh-words or inversion.
- Instead, they are distinguished by i) dependent (or subordinate) clause syntax, ii) the use of a question marker, iii) the use of a manner noun, and iv) exclamative prosody.

- (1) a. Yohāni a-nyaruka.  
 John 1-go.fast  
 'John goes fast.'
- b. Mbêga ukūntu Yohāni a-nyarúka↑!  
 Q John 1-go.fast<sup>H,DEP</sup>  
 'How fast John goes!'

- The use of an up arrow marks prosodic stress on the final syllable.
- This presentation examines the grammaticalization of exclamatives in Kirundi and situates it within the literature, which is both limited and predominantly concerned with Indo-European languages.
- Because Kirundi does not conform to most past theories, its study provides an opportunity to fill a gap in the typology of exclamatives and, more specifically, contribute to the understanding of such clause types within the Bantu language family.
- **Current proposal:** Exclamative force comes from a null exclamative morpheme E located high in C. It operates like relativization or focus and (probably) requires a head noun (denoting manner) in spec,CP

(2) [<sub>DP</sub> ukūntu [<sub>CP</sub> E [<sub>TP</sub> Yohāni a-nyarúka ] ] ]

## 2 Empirical data

- Properties of Kirundi exclamatives:
  1. Non-lexical mirativity
  2. Dependent clause syntax
  3. Use of question marker (optional?)
  4. Alternate Prosody
  5. Use of nominal of manner (optional?)

### 2.1 Non-lexical mirativity

- There are several ways to express mirativity, or surprise, in Kirundi.
- Exclamatives, as seen in (3c) and described in this presentation, are the only way that uses syntactic and not lexical means to do so. There is no lexical distinction between declaratives and their exclamative counterparts.

- (3) Yohāni a-nyaruka.  
 John 1-go.fast  
 'John goes fast. (Matrix)
- a. Yō, Yohāni a-nyaruka!  
 wow John 1-go.fast  
 'Wow, John goes fast!' (Interjection)
- b. Yohāni a-nyaruka cāne!  
 John 1-go.fast very  
 'John goes very fast!' (Adverb)
- c. (Mbêga/Mbé) Yohāni a-nyarúka!  
 Q John 1-go.fast<sup>H,DEP</sup>  
 'How fast John goes!' (Exclamative)

- Kirundi also has exclamatives that lack verbs. Note that (4c) is a relativized object.

- (4) a. Mbêga umwâna mw-ĩzá!  
Q 1child 1-beautiful  
'What a beautiful child!'
- b. Mbêga ukwûbahuka kw-uruyá muntu!  
Q 1daring 15of-1that 1person  
'The daring of that person!'
- c. Mbêga indyá uryá!  
Q 9food 2s-eat<sup>H.DEF</sup>  
'The food you eat!'

## 2.2 Dependent clause syntax

- In Kirundi, there are a number of clear distinctions between matrix and dependent class syntax: i) tone, ii) conjoint/disjoint, and iii) negation.
- Dependent clauses exhibit a high tone on the second syllable of the verb root.

### (5) Dependent Clause Tone

- a. Yoháni a-nyarúka.  
John 1-go.fast  
'John goes fast.'
- b. Ndâzi kó Yoháni a-nyarúka.  
I.know COMP John 1-go.fast<sup>H.DEF</sup>  
'I know that John goes fast.'

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

### (6) No disjoint

- a. Indyá zi-ra-ryôshe.  
9food 9-DJ-tastes.good  
'The food tastes good.'
- b. Ndâzi kó indyá zi-(\*ra)-ryôshé.  
I.know COMP 9food 9-DJ-tastes.good<sup>H.DEF</sup>  
'I know that the food tastes good.'

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

### (7) Lower negation

- a. Umuhũngu nti-a-soma câne.  
1boy NEG-1-read a.lot  
'The boy doesn't read a lot.'

- b. Ndâzi kó umuhũngu a-ta-somá câne.  
I.know COMP 1boy 1-NEG-read<sup>H.DEF</sup> a.lot  
'I know that the boy doesn't read a lot.'

- These same properties occur in exclamatives, despite their not being in standard dependent clause contexts.

- (8) a. Tone  
✓Yoháni a-nyarúka!  
✗Yoháni a-nyaruka!
- b. Disjoint  
✓Yoháni a-nyarúka!  
✗Yoháni a-ra-nyarúka!
- c. *-ta-* negation  
✓Yoháni a-ta-nyarúka!  
✗Yoháni nti-a-nyarúka!

## 2.3 Question marker: *mbêga/mbé*

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

- (9) a. Mbêga Yoháni a-ra-nyaruka?  
Q John 1-DJ-go.fast  
'Does John go fast?'
- b. Mbêga Yoháni a-ra-nyaruka áte?  
Q John 1-DJ-go.fast 1.how  
'How does John go fast?'
- c. Mbêga mu-fise ikí?  
Q 2P-do what  
'What are you (pl.) doing?'

- Questions cannot have dependent syntax just as exclamatives cannot have main clause syntax.

- (10) a. Question = matrix  
✗Mbêga Yoháni a-nyarúka?  
✓Mbêga Yoháni a-nyaruka?
- b. Exclamative = subordinate  
✗Mbêga Yoháni a-nyaruka!  
✓Mbêga Yoháni a-nyarúka!

## 2.4 Prosody

- Exclamatives are marked by a unique prosody in which the final syllable receives stress and a higher pitch. The penultimate syllable can seem low in comparison. This is unique in Bantu where the penultimate syllable is systematically lengthened (and often stressed) (Hyman 2009).
- This contrasts with declaratives (falling) and interrogatives (rising) where the final vowel is unstressed and can even elide completely.

- (11) a. Mbêga Yohăni a-nyarúka↑! (Exclamative)  
 b. Yohăni a-nyaruk(a)\↓. (Declarative)  
 c. Mbêga Yohăni a-nyaruk(a)↗? (Interrogative)

- This distinction also appears on nominal exclamatives.

- (12) a. Mbêga umwâna mw-îzâ↑!  
 q 1child 1-beautiful  
 ‘What a beautiful child!’  
 b. Hari umwâna mw-îz(â)\↓.  
 there.is 1child 1-beautiful  
 ‘There’s a beautiful child.’

## 2.5 Embedding exclamatives

- Exclamatives can be selected by nominals of manner/degree to create nominal exclamatives, like the ‘beautiful child’ example (12a) above.

- (13) a. Mbêga ukũntu Yohaáni anyarúka!  
 b. Mbêga ingené Yohaáni anyarúka!

- ukũntu* and *ingené* both mean ‘manner’ or ‘how’. They are not wh-words (the wh-word for ‘how’ is *-te* as seen in (14)).
- Nouns like these are required for exclamatives to occur in subordination to a matrix clause (14a). Without them, the mirative reading is lost (14b).

- (14) a. Ndâzi \*(ukũntu/ingené) Muco a-fũngúra câne.  
 I.know 15manner Muco 1SM-eat a.lot  
 ‘I know how much Muco eats.’  
 b. Ndâzi \*(ko) Muco a-fũngúra câne.  
 I.know COMP Muco 1SM-eat a.lot  
 ‘I know that Muco eats so much.’

- When N-Adj constructions occur with a manner NP, they require a different structure (akin to clausal exclamatives).

- (15) Ndâzi ukũntu umwâna a-rí mwîzá.  
 I.know 15manner child 1-be beautiful  
 ‘I know how beautiful the child is.’

## 2.6 Speaker variation

- Among the three speakers I’ve been working with, there is a stark difference in the acceptability of full insubordination in exclamatives.
- Speaker 1 readily produces insubordinate exclamatives with and without a question marker.

- (16) Speaker 1: older, male, rural  
 a. Mbêga Yohaáni anyarúka!  
 b. Yohaáni anyarúka!

- Speakers 2 and 3 require a question marker *and* a manner NP.

- (17) Speaker 2/3: younger, female, urban  
 a. \*(Mbêga) Yohaáni anyarúka!  
 b. Mbêga ukũntu Yohaáni anyarúka!  
 c. Mbêga ingené Yohaáni anyarúka!

- Another note: speaker 2 didn’t always apply the final syllable prosody, suggesting it may operate independently from syntactic exclamative structures.
- For nominal exclamatives, all three speakers reject constructions with manner NPs but there is variability on whether the question marker is needed.

- (18) a. (Mbêga) umwâna mwîza! (Speaker 1/2)  
 b. \*(Mbêga) umwâna mwîza! (Speakers 3)

## 2.7 Takeaways

- Exclamatives must have subordinate syntax.
- Exclamatives can optionally appear with question markers.
- Exclamatives can be insubordinate or headed by an NP.
- Clausal and nominal exclamatives likely have different structures(?). Only clausal exclamatives can be embedded.

### 3 Quick lit review

#### 3.1 Exclamatives

- Some definitions
  - Exclamations: ‘expressive utterances that have the *illocutionary force* of exclaiming, regardless of their form’ (Potsdam 2011, 660); ‘express a speaker’s emotive attitude towards a certain state of affairs that is not in accordance with his or her expectations’ (D’Avis 2002, 26)
  - Exclamatives: ‘exclamations that additionally take a certain canonical syntactic form’ (Potsdam 2011, 660); *sentential force* of exclaiming; factivity and scalarity

#### 3.2 Structure of clausal exclamatives

- A major question in the analysis of exclamatives is where the exclamatory sentential force comes from.
- On one side, accounts have argued that a sentence’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 (1b).
- 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 (Sadock and Zwicky 1985; Michaelis 2001).
- 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 (Collins 2005).
- However, clearly this does not work for Kirundi (or many Bantu languages) in which question words do not appear in exclamatives (though, of note, question markers can!).
- On the other side of the debate, linguists have proposed construction-oriented theories in which certain types of structures deliver exclamative readings pragmatically.
- For instance, Zanuttini and Portner (2003) 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 their two key properties of an exclamative: factivity and the denotation of a set of alternative propositions (with semantics of ‘widening’) i.e. scalarity.

#### 3.3 Structure of nominal exclamatives

- In English, ‘The things he eats!’; ‘The nerve of that man!’
- Four main approaches:
  1. Constructionalist (Michaelis and Lambrecht 1996b) – Metonymic NP; Abstract Exclamative
  2. Ellipsis (Michaelis and Lambrecht 1996a) – ‘I can’t believe the nerve of that man!’
  3. Relative clause E (Portner and Zanuttini 2004; P&Z from now on) – null exclamative morpheme E
    - (19) The things [E that he says]!
  4. Determiner E (Potsdam 2011) – E morpheme resides within the nominal itself, specifically within a restricted subset of determiners
    - (20) The things in his closet!

### 4 Analysis

- Questions to answer:
  1. Are Kirundi exclamatives clausal, nominal, or both?
  2. Where is the sentential force coming from?
  3. Is the question marker doing anything?

#### 4.1 Clause type of Kirundi exclamatives

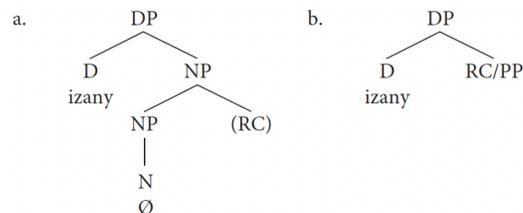
- With speakers 2 and 3, it seems clear that exclamatives can only be nominal because there must always be an overt head noun (*ukūntu/umwāna*).
- This is in line with analyses such as Potsdam 2011 on Malagasy and, more weakly, on cross-linguistic evidence that clausal exclamatives often include *wh*-phrases while nominal exclamatives do not.

- For speaker 1, it is less obvious what clause type we're looking at. Because a noun is not required, exclamatives look like in subordinate CPs when they include a verb (though they are still nominal when they lack a verb). » Is this in subordination or a null nominal?
- It is hard to distinguish clausal vs. nominal because all verbal exclamatives have dependent clause syntax which is the same in complement clauses (clausal) and relative clauses (nominal).
- More data from speaker 1 is needed on the acceptability of manner nouns in exclamatives. If he is able to include manner nouns, this may point more strongly towards a claim that all exclamatives in the language are nominal.
- **Current claim:** for many speakers, exclamatives can only be nominal; for a subset of speakers, exclamatives may vary between nominal and clausal, pending more data.

## 4.2 Source of sentential force

- Assuming a nominal structure, there are only a few places sentential force can be situated: determiner (Potsdam 2011) or relativization (P&Z).
- In the case of Kirundi, we can easily throw out the determiner approach because our nominal exclamatives have full head nouns. There is nothing to distinguish the function or distribution of the determiner here (the augment vowel) from its normal iteration.
- This is different from Potsdam's 2011 Malagasy constructions in which only certain determiners can occur in exclamatives and there are no head nouns.

(21) Structure of Malagasy nominal exclamatives (Potsdam 2011, 675)



- The relative clause approach fits Kirundi much better; though it differs from the Indo-European examples used by P&Z in an interesting way. In their examples, it is always one of the arguments of the clause that is relativized.

(22) a. The strange things that he says!

b. The silly questions these students ask!

- However, in Kirundi, the head of the relative clauses is a separate noun (*ukūntu/ingené*) with a full clause (lacking traces) as the relative.
- Interestingly, this is also how focus is shown in Kirundi.
- **Current claim:** I argue that sentential force rests in the structure that joins together these head nouns and the following clauses, akin to relative clause of manner/degree (the amount that he eats, the way that she runs) or focus on manner (it's the amount he eats!).
- This null E morpheme can account for both the nominal exclamatives and those from speaker 1. In fact, Speaker 1's 'headless' examples provide further evidence that the force is situated in this C head and not in a nominal/determiner element.
- An implication of this analysis is that constructions like *mbêga umwâna mwîzá* are not actually exclamatives with syntactic force, just exclamations (with exclamative prosody).
- This aligns with the fact that only exclamations with dependent clause syntax can be embedded by matrix verbs (some claim that this is a fundamental property of true exclamatives).

- (23) a. Ukūntu Muco a-ryá cāne bi-ra-tāngāje.  
 13manner Muco 1-eat<sup>H.DEP</sup> a.lot 13-DJ-surprise  
 'How much Muco eats is surprising.'
- b. \*Umwâna mw-îzá bi-ra-tāngāje.  
 1child 1-beautiful 13-DJ-surprise  
 Intended: 'How beautiful the child is is surprising.'

- Additional evidence: verbless exclamations require a verb to appear with a manner noun.

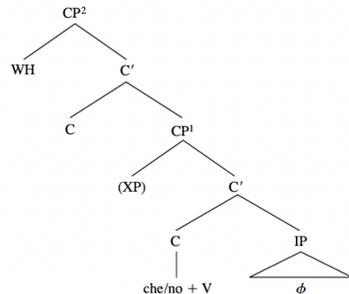
- (24) a. Mbêga ukūntu umwâna a-rí mw-îzá!  
 Q 15manner 1child 1-be 1-beautiful  
 'How beautiful the child is!'
- b. Ukūntu umwâna a-rí mw-îzá bi-ra-tāngāje.  
 13manner 1child 1-be 1-beautiful 13-DJ-surprise  
 'How beautiful the child is is surprising.'

## 4.3 The role of the question marker

- Speaker 1 uses the question marker optionally but the other speakers require it in all cases.

- If the question marker is obligatory, what does it tell us about the exclamative it appears with?
- Outside of this context, *mbêga* only appears with questions and when it does so, it is optional. It does not appear in embedded contexts.
- Some analyses of exclamatives place exclamative force very high in C (above questions).

(25) Structure of Italian Exclamatives (Zanuttini and Portner 2003, 61)



- *Mbêga* in higher C is required to spell out when the lower exclamative C has something in its spec (the manner noun)?
- When it appears obligatorily with non-relativized DPs, these DPs are also part of some bigger CP structure. Would this mean that adjectives in Kirundi are relative clauses?
- Alternately, because the question marker also appears in verbless exclamations, it is possible it has no place in the syntax and is only contributing pragmatically to interpretation (just as in questions).

#### 4.4 Summary

- All true exclamatives in Kirundi may be nominal with the exclamative force located in a null E morpheme akin to relativization/focus.
- This means that exclamations without a verb and therefore without dependent clause focus lack exclamative force in their syntax. However, a sense of mirativity can still be expressed, for instance, via prosody and the use of the question marker.
- Relatedly, the use of alternate prosody and the question marker may be signs of an exclamation but not necessarily an exclamative. This would mean that they operate independently from the syntax (functioning more pragmatically?).

## 5 Open questions

- The effect of scalar adverbs on the semantics

- (26) a. Mbêga uküntu Muco a-ryá câne!  
 Q 13manner Muco 1-eat very  
 ‘How much Muco eats!’  
 b. Mbêga uküntu Muco a-ryá!  
 Q 13manner Muco 1-eat  
 ‘How Muco eats! (e.g. badly, quickly, etc.)’

- Source of factivity and scalarity: factivity – manner NP; scalarity – E morpheme.
- Could the manner NPs be complementizers? They trigger default agreement (24b). This would make these exclamatives be clausal, not nominal!
- Insubordination - does it play a role?

‘the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses’ (Evans 2007, 367)

insubordinate constructions express interpersonal meanings that ‘almost invariably go together with exclamative illocutionary force’ (linden and de Velde 2014, 228)

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