

From the “trapped language” to the hybridized language: An educational dilemma in teaching Kinyarwanda

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Abstract

Kinyarwanda - the language of Rwanda - appears to be one of the world's most complex and possibly richest, but increasingly endangered by foreign influences. The language complex features are particularly associated with the multiplicity of its morphemes and their agglutination to form its words (or sentences), as well as its extra-ordinary lexical variability and expressivity. Conversely, its richness seems to be increasingly overshadowed by a culture of language simplification and hybridization that affect key aspects of the language, which might be stemming from cultural crossbreeding that the Rwandan society has been undergoing for some years. The diversity of languages spoken by Rwandese who returned to their homeland after many years of exile in other linguistic cultures for example, colors, influences or hybridizes the standard Kinyarwanda. The present article argues therefore, that hybridization of the language has educational implications, and educators are often confronted by many unanswered questions that may include: “What is the standard Kinyarwanda?”, “To what extent can the foreign influences and related dilemma be tolerated during the learning and teaching process?” and, “How can educators deal with these?” The article attempts to explore the basis of these key questions, and basing on the findings of research conducted in the field of education including non-formal education, it sounds a wakeup call to all teacher trainers, especially those of Kigali Institute of Education, to reflect on their profession and their roles in shaping the future generation of the country - Rwanda.

Résumé

Le kinyarwanda - langue du Rwanda – semble être l'une des langues les plus complexes et certainement les plus riches au monde, mais de plus en plus mise en danger par les influences étrangères. Ses traits complexes sont en particulier liés tout autant à la multiplicité de ses morphèmes et à leur agglutination pour former les mots (ou les phrases), qu'à ses extraordinaires variabilité et expressivité lexicales. Inversement, cette richesse semble être de plus en plus éclipsée par la culture de la simplification et de l'hybridation de la langue, qui peut découler du métissage culturel auquel la société rwandaise est soumise depuis quelques années. Les diverses langues parlées par les Rwandais qui ont regagné le bercail après plusieurs années d'exil dans d'autres cultures linguistiques, par exemple, colorent, influencent ou hybrident le kinyarwanda standard. Le présent article soutient ainsi l'idée que l'hybridation de la langue a des implications éducationnelles, et les éducateurs sont souvent confrontés à plusieurs questions, qui restent sans réponses, du type: “Qu'est-ce que le kinyarwanda standard?”, “Jusqu'à quel niveau les influences étrangères et le dilemme qui en résulte peuvent-ils être tolérés pendant le processus d'enseignement-apprentissage?” et “Comment les éducateurs peuvent-ils les traiter?” Cet article tente d'analyser le bien-fondé de ces questions-clés et, sur base des résultats de cette recherche menée dans le domaine de l'éducation -incluant l'éducation non formelle, elle se veut être un cri d'alarme en direction des formateurs d'enseignants, spécialement ceux de Kigali Institute of Education, pour qu'ils réfléchissent sur leur profession et sur leur rôle dans le modelage de la future génération de leur pays, le Rwanda.

Key words: Kinyarwanda, simplification, hybridization, tolerance, education

Introduction

Rwanda has one language that is used all over the country (Rosendal, 2010: 77). It is called Kinyarwanda and it is spoken by 99.4% of the whole population estimated to 10,718,379 inhabitants (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2010). Though there are some other autochthonous languages (Kiga, Havu, Shi, Kirundi, etc), it remains the first language of nearly all Rwandans. It is a Bantu language spoken also in border regions of neighboring countries (Uganda, DRC, Tanzania and Burundi). It belongs to "J zone" of Bantu languages, also called "interlacustrine zone" identified by Meeussen (Philippon & Van der Veen: 28). In 1984, the number of speakers was estimated to 18 million by Muñakazi (1984: 2), including those who speak languages close to Kinyarwanda (Kirundi, Giha, Kinyabwishya) but bearing different glossonyms. Today, some estimations talk of 20 million (Mahmood: 2002).

For the last two decades, the Kinyarwanda has been exposed to many languages and naturally these influenced it. These are languages spoken by groups of Rwandese who joined their homeland after exile and had domesticated the languages of the hosting countries, but also European languages, mainly English and French. There is also the negative impact of mixed languages based programmes on *The Voice of America (VOA)* where Kinyarwanda and Kirundi are used concomitantly or concurrently. This creates a situation where the distinctions between the two languages are minimal: no one can know which is which.

Research question

The research question departs from the worry about the developing simplification and hybridization of the Kinyarwanda language. Indeed, the multilingualism which characterizes the post-genocide Rwanda has very often led to a diglossic situation. This refers to a situation where two languages or language varieties exist side by side and each is used for different purposes (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1989). Usually, one is a more standard variety called "High variety" or "H-variety" (used in government, the media, education, and for religious services). The other one is a non-prestige variety called "Low-variety" or "L-variety" (used in the family, with friends, when shopping, etc.). In turn, this has created in many cases a linguistic imbroglio. The contamination is so fast and it affects all social strata and both spoken and written language.

Usually, each language has its own genius or uniqueness. For instance, in Ewe (Ghana, Togo and Benin), the concept of "to be" is expressed by five verbs (Celle, 2006: 6). Each language has also its own structure (Hagège, 1984). Though there is no clear-cut distinction between different types (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1989), we can refer to Schleicher's classification (1861), passing over in silence the sub-types proposed by Stendhal (1860), Mistelli (1893), Finck (1909) (Hagège, 1984: 5-6).

The first type is composed of "agglutinating languages" (also called "synthetic" languages) where various affixes may be added to the stem of a word to add to its meaning or to show its grammatical function (Kinyarwanda,

Finnish, Kiswahili, etc.). Jouannet (1987: 12) shows the “semiologic richness and complexity” of Kinyarwanda, illustrated by its verbal structure which agglutinates so many grammatical morphemes to construct the verbal form: 1. verbal prefix + 2. tense mark + 3. (conjunctive/disjunctive) + 4. (infix(es) + 5. radical/stem + 6. (suffix(es)) + 7. ending. (conjunctive vs disjunctive referring to presence vs absence of an object).

Example₁: *barahâyimûterurira* → 1.ba + 2.∅ + 3.ra + 4.hâ+ yî + mu + 5.têrur + 6.ir + 7.a

“ils l’y soulèvent pour lui” (i.e they lift it up for him there)

Example₂: *Nyiranzaamurerericÿimâanayamûmpeereye* (humoristic nickname for young girls)

nyira + n + za + a + mu + rer + ir + a + i + ki + ô + i + n + mâana + a + a + mu + n + hâ + ir + ir + ye

This led to the provocative title of Coupez’s article (Jouannet, Ed.,1983: 21-31) “Le rwandais, langue piégée” (literally “Kinyarwanda, a trapped language”) referring to the accumulation mechanism on which the extra-ordinary lexical variability and expressivity are built (Cadiou, Ed.,1985: 25-28).

The second type is composed of “inflecting languages” (English, French, etc.) in which the form of a word changes to show a change in meaning or grammatical function. For example in English, mice = mouse + plural; came = come + past.

The third type refers to “isolating languages” (also called “analytic languages”, Chinese, Vietnamese, Sudanese languages, etc.) in which word forms do not change, and grammatical functions are shown by word order and the use of function words. They tend to use monosyllables. In Mandarin Chinese we have: *tā + pāng* = 3sg + fat “He/she is fat” (Li & Thompson: 143).

We know also that some languages use accent or stress (e.g. French, English) while others use tones (e.g. Kinyarwanda, Chinese, etc.). Specifically, Bantu languages use noun classes which go by pairs marked by nominal prefixes indicating the singular and the plural (e.g. classes 1/2, *mu/ba*, like *u-mu-gabo/a-ba-gabo* “man/men”).

One could certainly accuse us to get off our role as a linguist - descriptive and only descriptive (how a language is actually spoken and/or written), never prescriptive (rules about how it ought to be spoken or written). But, without lapsing into sentimentalism and purism and recognizing the principle that a language can evolve, we can also say that, if we are not careful, Kinyarwanda could become a kind of holdall of all the languages newly introduced in Rwanda after 1994 to that extent that it could lexically and syntactically be emptied out of its substance. Currently, we observe so many transformations which affect the language at different levels. It appears in the corpus we have collected from different sources and taken from both oral and written language.

Methodology

The simplification and hybridization phenomena which are influencing Kinyarwanda are multifaceted. Indeed, so many processes are involved and they affect all aspects of the language. Thus, we have made a survey and gathered information from different types of sources, but mainly from the media. In this regard, we have read the following newspapers as a sample: *Imvaho Nshya*, *Umuco*, *Umuseso*, *Igihe*, *Ingenzi*. We have also watched or

listened to different programmes on *Television Rwandaise* (TVR) and two radios (*Radio-Rwanda* and *the Voice of America*). We have also scrutinized examination scripts and drafts of research projects of Kinyarwanda students in order to have a comparative effect. Of course, we could not avoid hearing people talking.

Results and Analysis

After having gathered factual materials, I have classified and analyzed them, after which I have listed some of the main types of transformations which appear repeatedly in our corpus:

Phonology

Kinyarwanda phonological structure does not allow the sequence of two vowels, i.e. V_1V_2 , where $V_1 \neq V_2$. Today, we can hear such a structure. For instance, in a publicity of TIGO (telecommunication company) on *Radio-Rwanda*, all day we hear ...*uganê umueêjenti wâacu* "consult our agent/dealer". Normally, this context should provoke the appearance of a semi-vowel "w", for euphonic purposes, as follows: u-mu-eêjenti (augment - class prefix - stem/radical) > umweêjenti (like in u-mu-âana "child" > umwâana). This has erroneously inspired the last born of Kigali's newspapers -*Igihe*- which entitled one of its columns "Giraijambo" (one word, literally "Have the Word", i.e. "Forum for Readers") instead of Gira ≠ Ijambo (or, rather, Girijambo if we take it as a proper noun).

Lexic

As we know, the vocabulary of a given language does not enrich itself only by adopting new words (borrowing, derivation or composition), new forms (reduction or alteration), new uses (change of category or re-categorization), but also new meanings (Grevisse, 1986, § 207-209). The latter uses different processes, such as:

a. Generalization (also called "analogy", "overgeneralization", "over-extension" or "over-regularization"): a process common in both first- and second-language learning, in which a learner extends the use of a grammatical rule or linguistic item beyond its accepted uses, generally by making words or structures follow a more regular pattern (a general rule or principle from the observation of particular examples). For example, a child may use *ball* to refer to all round objects, or use *mans* instead of *men* for the plural of *man*. Indeed, for him, the concept of plural is formed by adding *s* to words. In French, some people pronounce [katrzâfâ] for quatre *enfants* "four children" instead of [katrâfâ] just by applying erroneously the pattern of *trois enfants* "three children" which is pronounced [trwazâfâ]. When we refer to the case of the effect of one language on the learning of another, we talk of "language transfer", "communicative interference", "interlanguage". Two types may occur. Negative transfer, also known as "interference", is the use of a native-language pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language. For example, a French learner of English may produce the incorrect sentence *I am here since Monday* instead of *I have been here since Monday*, because of the transfer of the French pattern *Je suis ici depuis lundi* ("I am here since Monday"). Positive transfer is transfer which makes learning easier, and may occur when both the native language and the target language have the same form. For example, both French and English have the same word *table*, which can have the same meaning in both languages (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1989). These are some examples:

- *kûubaka* “to build”: currently, this verb can command different direct objects such as *inzu* “house”, *amahôro* “peace”, *ubumwê* “unity”, *ubushobozi* “capacity”, *amatêekâ* “history”, *ubumenyi* “knowledge”, *sistemu* “system”...and has become a kind of all-purpose verb. We should expect different types of verbs (*gutêeza imbere, gushyîrahô*...) depending on the nature of the object (concrete/material, abstract...).
- *guhêereza*: initially, it is used for material or concrete (direct) object with the literal meaning “to hold out something to someone”; e.g. *guhêereza umwâana umugaati* “to hold out a piece of bread to a child”. Currently, it can be used also for abstract (direct) objects, e.g. *guhêereza (umuuntu) akazi, imigisha* “to give someone a job, blessings...”, especially in Banyamulenge community whose variety constitutes itself an linguistic entity (dialect called “vira₂” by Polak-Bynon: 1975). Then we can hear *Yamuheereje akazi* “He has given him a job” *instead of Yamuhaaye akazi; Imâana ibahêereze imigisha* “May God give you blessings”, i.e. “May God bless you”, instead of *Imâana ibahê imigisha*. In fact, the ordinary meaning (*guhêereza ikiintu umuuntu* “to hold out something to someone”) seems to have entirely disappeared in some people’s vocabulary. We know of course the absolute use of the verb whereby no object is expressed: *Yagiye guhêereza* “He/she went to serve mass”. We observe the same phenomenon with the verb *gutwâara* which normally means “to carry or to bring something”, or “to take” (except when it is used in a literary meaning, i.e “to administer a territory”). In both cases, the verb is used dominantly, or even exclusively, then supplanting *kujyaana* which is more common. We can hear *Baagiye kumûtwaara kwaa mugaanga* instead of ...*kumujiyaana*...
- *kwâangiza* which gives *kwâangiza imaâli* literally “to destroy money or funds” (*Radio-Rwanda, News, 17 Ap. 2011*) which is derived from *kwâangiiza umutûungo* literally “to damage or to destroy a property”. This kind of shift in meaning (sometimes due to ignorance) sounds of course awkward and forced. It means rather “to waste, to squander money” like in the sentence *Nii ukuvûga kô murî miliyaari 301 (60% byaa bije yôose), amafaraanga angâna na miliyaari esheeshâtu n’igicê yaângijwe*, literally “it means that from 301 billion (60% of the whole budget), six billions and a half have been destroyed” (*Umuseso, N° 346, 26-30 March 2009, p. 6: “Imari ya Leta : Miliyari 6 zaburiwe irengero”*) or *Mu bigô n’inzêego zaa Leeta zôose zaâgenzuuwe, amafaraanga yaângijwe murî ubu buryô agera kurî milîyooni 137...Usiîbye kwâangiiza amafaraanga ya rubaanda...* literally “in all public institutions which have been audited, money destroyed this way is equivalent to 137 millions...Besides the fact of destroying public funds...” (*Umuseso, N° 346, 26-30 March 2009, p. 10: “Mitali yarigishije ibikoresho byo mu biro ?”*). This applies also to the sentence *Nyâmarâ, igitêekerezo gisaangiwe na bêenshi, ...ayo mafaraanga aba yaângirikira ubusâ kûukô ibizâava mu matôora bibâ biîzwi*, “nevertheless, the idea is shared by many people,...that money is destroyed uselessly because the outcomes/results of elections are already known” (*Umuseso, N° 344, 19-22 March 2009, “FPR, Ingabire Victoire mu myiteguro ya 2010”, p. 3*). This idea is relayed by radios. Example: *kwâangiiza imaâli ya Leeta...ruswâ yaangiiza iteerambere ry’igihûgu...*(*Radio- Rwanda, News, 17Ap. 2011*), “to destroy public funds...corruption destroys the national development”. In those cases,

guseesaqura, *gukôreesha nâabî* or *gupfûusha ubusâ imaâli/umutûungo* (“to squander/waste funds”) or *kudîindiza iteerambere* (“to put a brake on development”) should be more appropriate.

- *Kuzaamuura indîrimbo* “to turn up a song” (*Radio-Rwanda*, Music varieties, Sunday, 2:00 pm): we often hear Ngiye *kubazaamuurira indîrimbo ya...* “I am going to turn up a song of singer X for you”, by analogy with *kuzaamuura ijwî* “to turn up a sound” while people normally use *gushyîrahô (indîrimbo)* “put up (a song)”, though this refers to something very recent (introduction of radios). In fact, all those processes refer to the Zipf’s “least effort law” (Pottier, 1973: 541): In life, motivation is derived from the necessity of satisfying one’s needs because there is a need for one’s energy conservation which characterizes humanity in all aspects.

b. *Use of the suffix-hô* to express the idea of a short time or a brief (temporary) action. For example, *Aciyehô* “He goes for a very short time”; *Nkuboonyehô* “I have seen you a little” or “I had come to see you for a short time” (i.e. we shall meet again).

c. *Propensity for religiously colored vocabulary*: for instance, the neutral word *igisôbanuro* “explanation” is systematically replaced by *ubusôbanuro* which refers to some churches. In fact, they share a certain identifying vocabulary where we expected more common and neutral words or expressions. We can also hear *Njyeewê nd ikuvûga ubusôbaanuro bwaa...* (VOA, 16 Feb. 2012, interview Dr Nason Munyandamutsa, Neuro-psychiatric Centre, Ndera, Kigali); literally “Me, I am giving the definition or explanation of ...”, *Ubusobanuro bw’amashyaka yiswe Pawa...* “The definition of parties called Pawa...” (*Igihe*, 3(6), 06-16 April 2012, p. 2) or *Umuwâandimwê waanbye yavuyemô umwûuka* or *yaasiinziye* literally “the air/breath has quit my brother/sister (he/she has died)” instead of ...*yaapfûuye*.

Morphosyntax

In this area, we observe a curious reverse of the least effort law, mostly characterized by the redundancy phenomenon in different aspects:

a. *Conjunctive (verbal) form, i.e. presence* of a direct object: we observe the introduction of a new structure. For instance, in the sentence *Ibiintu byô wazânyê...* “The things (that) you brought...”, *Abaantu bô twaaboonyê...* “the persons (that) we saw...”, the anteposed (direct) objects “*byô*” or “*bô*” are redundant or useless for two reasons: they bring no added semantic value and they are already rendered by the appropriate tone according to Kinyarwanda verbal structure (see above). This fashion is apparently borrowed from Kiswahili: *Vitu ambavyo umeleta...*, *Watu ambao tumeona...* Note that Kiswahili syntactic structure allow even the use of a more complex construction by adding two infixes: *Vitu ambavyo umevyovileta...* (vyo + vi), *Watu ambao tumeowaona* (o + wa). It might be also a reproduction of the English form “that” or the French one “que” (*Les choses que nous disons...*) used as objects.

b. *Misuse of the presentative structure*: we hear all day on radios (e.g. Sebalinda, “Amakuru ki mu binyamakuru”, 10 Feb. 2009, VOA), the sentence *Ni kuri iyi nkurû turaangîrijehô amakurû y’uûyu mugôrooba* (“it is on this note that we

conclude/close our journal this evening”). Yet, the form *-hô* reproduces uselessly *ni kurî*. This is a calque (or loan translation) of the English structure *It is on this information that we conclude our journal* or French *C'est sur cette information que nous clôturons notre journal*. We should say *Iyi nkurû ni yô turaangîrjehô amakurû yâacu...*

c. *Tendency to shift to direct speech from indirect speech*: that kind of anacoluthon (breaking of syntactic construction) has become a scourge. The result is just ungrammatical but also very heavy, clumsy or awkward sentences, without any additional meaning. For example, the sentence *Icyaa mbere ni ukureeba ese...* (*Radio-Rwanda*) “The first thing is to see do we...” is unacceptable but it could be agreeable if “ese” was preceded by an usual introductory word like “*uti*”. These are other examples:

- *...nkaba nkûbaza, Nyakûubahwa Perêzida wa Repubulikâ, nii ikî waakorâ...* “Then I am asking you, Mr President of the Republic, it is what you can do...” (Monthly press conference, 2nd Feb. 2012: question on corruption of “Inâama Njyâanâama” in districts). We should say *...icyô waakorâ...< i + ki + ô: augment + class prefix + precessive pronoun*.
- *Ukaqira utê? Uka... “What do you do? You...”; Tukamutegeka kugira gûte? Kutwiishyura “What do we request (of) him? To reimburse us”; Ntaabwo boôngeyeye kugira gûte? Kutwiishyura “They stopped to do what? To reimburse us”...* This is a verbal mannerism (or tic) in fashion today which simply brings heaviness. If we remove the direct speech part (underlined), the sentences remain the same, with no loss of meaning.
- *Tuzaashaaka buryô kî twiicârana* “We shall see which way to sit together (and talk or discuss)”. The sentence should be re-organized as follows: *Tuzaashaaka ukô twiicârana ...*
- *Iyigândimî nii ukwiîga murî rusaânge inkômooko y’îindîmi...tukiibaza impaâmvu abaantu bavugâ bâtururtse hê?* “Linguistics means a general study of the origin of languages... then we ask ourselves why people they talk of come from where?”. Surprisingly, it is a sentence produced by a student in a exam of “Kinyarwanda Language and Linguistics”! This is the height of absurdity! Specifically, the structure O + V is systematically replaced by V + *Interrogative* + O, be it in oral or in written speech, and this has become a fashion. Example: *Mutubwiîre nka guverinoma mwaaba mûfite iziîhe ngaâmba?* “Tell us as a government you have which plans?” (Monthly press conference, 2 Feb. 2012: question on risk of closing some private secondary schools challenged by public 9 years basic education) instead of *Mutubwiîre nka guverinoma ingaâmba mwaabâ mûfite* “Tell us as a government which plans you have”.

d. *Use of children’s language*: we have observed a very curious phenomenon where mature speakers use immature constructions. For example, it is surprising to hear a sentence like *Twiishiimiye kubêereka kô turashoboye* (Interview of a contester in “Primus, Guma Guma Super Star”, TVR, 11 Feb. 2012) instead of *...kô dushobôye*. Let us observe the following unusual sentences from mature speakers:

- *Ba urêtse, ndabigsetsa mu kaânnya* “Wait a bit, I will make you laugh with that” (instead of *...ndakûbwiira ibiîntu mu kaânnya kaândi biragsetsa*).

- *Turabyiishîima* “We will be happy with that” (instead of *Turabyiishîimira*, which implies the use of the applicative form with -ir-).
 - *Twîbûtse kô uyu muûnsi ni kuwa kâbiri tarikîya 21* “Let us remind you that today is Tuesday 21st” (VOA, News, 21 Feb. 2012) instead of ...*arî*...
- e. *Simplification and sometimes overgeneralization* again due to the “least effort law” as illustrated bellow in different ways:
- ...*ikibazo ni ukumenya arî ibiîhe* bihûgu *bizêmera iyo nguzanyo*...”The question is to know are which countries which will accept that loan” (Eugénie Mukankusi, VOA, 21 Ap. 2009, 6:00 am). The structure *V + Interrogative* is really cumbersome. Rather, we expected ...*ikibâzo ni ukumenya ibihûgu bizêmera iyo nguzanyo ibyô arî byô* < i + bi + ô ≠ a + ri ≠ bi + ô (augment + class prefix + precessive pronoun ≠ personal pronoun + verb “to be” ≠ class prefix + substitutive pronoun).
 - ...*mu Rwaanda igihe cy’îmyîvuumbagatanyo ya rubaanda...ahô ishyaka MDR ...ryaâfataga*...(Ingenzi, N° 30, 23 Dec. 2011 - 05 Jan. 2012, p. 5). Usually, instead of using...*ahô*..., we expected the following structure: personal pronoun + -ka- (temporal mark) + -bâ (to be) ≠ personal pronoun + conjugated verb (example: ...*n-ka-bâ* ≠ *n-â-mu-bwîir-ye*... > *nkaba nâmbwîiye*...; *u-ka-ba- u-a-mu-bwîir-ye*... > ...*ukaba wâmbwîiye*..., etc.). In this case, the verb is *ryafataga* < *ri + â + fât + aga* .It is the same case for the following sentence: *Chou-fleur...ahô ibonêkamô karoli*... “Cauli-flower...where it contains” (*Imvaho Nshya*, N° 2201, 27 Jan. 2012, “Chou-fleur ikungahaye ku ntungamubiri”, p. 12) should be *Chou-fleur...ikaba ibonêkamô*... Sometimes, by using *ahô*, we have one sentence whereby we expected to have two sentences (main clause + subordinate clause). Example:*Tujyê mu Ntâarâ y’Amajyêepfô ahô*...(TVR, News, Kinyarwanda, 9:30, 2 Feb. 2012) should be *Tujyê mu Ntâarâ y’Amajyêepfô. Murî iyo ntâarâ*.... *Ahô* normally has a locative meaning. Here, it has a temporal meaning. We have also noted that it has become a habit to systematically replace by *ahô* the structure indicating the consequence of an action, which is -ka-. The latter introduces a consecutive clause (or result clause). Example : ...*yîgijweyô kubêera amagaambo yakwîirakwîije kaândi bucece, n’îinzêego z’ûbutâsi...ahô zeemêza kô*... (*Umuco*, N° 41, 9-17 Oct. 2007, p.10) instead of ...*zikaba zêemeza kô*...This refers literally to “whereby”.
- f. *Introduction of the partitive form for countable things*: in Kinyarwanda, like in other languages, we have the partitive form. Example: *Mpa ku mâazi* “Give me a little water”; *Mpa ku mata* “Give me a little milk”; *Mpa ku biryô* “Give me a little food”...Generally, this structure is used for uncountable things (water, milk, food...) and very rarely for countable things: *Mpa ku mafaraanga* “Give me a little money”, the whole logic being that the real quantity is not known but implicit. But again, *amafaraanga* here is somehow considered as a whole. What is new is the generalized use of that sentence construction, very often with the diminutive form, indicated by the prefix “ka” (like in *umuuntu* “man”, which can give *akaantu* “small man”) . Therefore, you can hear: *Mpa/ntiiza ku gakarîta* “Give me/lend me some little of your card” (in offices, at check-points...); *Ntiiza ku gaterefoône kaawe* (in everyday conversations) “Lend me some little of your phone” (i.e. I want to use it for calling).

g. Introduction of the indirect object: this object has certainly been transferred literally from English or French, rendered respectively by *to* (verb + to...; *He talked to Peter*) and *à* (verb + à...; *Il a parlé à Pierre*). Normally, this concept is rendered by the applicative form *-ir-* incorporated in the verb. We can hear sentences like:

- *Yasabye indiriimbo kuri fiyaanse wê* “He dedicated a song to his fiancée” (Contact FM) instead of using the corresponding suffixed applicative morpheme *-ir-* (*yasabiye indiriimbo fiyaanse wê : a +-à + sab + ir +ye*).
- *...barasaba imfashanyo ku karêrê kaa Saheli...* “They are asking aid for Sahel region...” (VOA, 16 Feb 2012, News) instead of *...barasabira imfashanyo akarêrê kaa Saheli...* (*ba-ra-sab-ir-a*).

This kind of literal transposition from those foreign European languages certainly explains the following form: *huri umwê* “each one” (Monthly press conference, 2 Feb. 2012) instead of *huri wêese*. The first uses a numeral (*-mwê*) while the second uses a substitutive pronoun with appendix (*-êese*).

The phenomena we observe here have certain similarities to “linguistic crossbreeding” which is a controversial concept. For Sesepe N’sial Sala Nsien (Wald, 1981: 72), this issue is very often reduced to an epiphenomenon or a deviation while, in a heterogeneous linguistic situation while it should be considered as the most natural and the most expected from plurilingual communities. In other words, a homogeneous use of a code in a situation where conditions of crossbreeding are gathered would result from a metalinguistic vigilance, i.e. from a particular control from the speaker. Consequently, the refusal of crossbreeding will be more intentional and significant than the crossbreeding itself.

Languages evolve by new inputs but also by mistakes committed by renowned writers or scholars and languages are like trees. They lose their dead branches, ramify, and are renewed. Words appear, live, die but not definitely. As a phoenix, they rise from their ashes. But, should we hasten the death by denaturing the language deliberately or not? Another issue is raised by the educational point of view: can we teach a non standard language? Educationists, moreover trainers of trainers, are confronted with a dilemma. Can they, in the name of the sacrosanct principle of descriptivism, tolerate such “bastardization” of the language? All things considered, we have been surprised or shocked to see our students regularly reproducing those kinds of mistakes.

Conclusion

Curiously, the situation we have described for Kinyarwanda is comparable to what we observe in the pidginization process (Edema: 2012): perturbation (i.e. denaturation or debasement) of structures, juxtaposition of competences, rupture (discontinuity) with the norm, simplification of the grammatical system and lexical heterogeneity.

We tend to agree with the author when he describes Kiswahili. First, “Kiswahili is like an elephant; everyone cuts his/her piece” because it is so widely spoken, vast, that it is almost impossible for a Kiswahili speaker to possess it totally. Second, it is the recognition of the common smell, whichever part, which is important. Indeed, despite the differences of taste, according to the parts, or differences of recipe, we always recognize the elephant’s meat by its smell. This one remains the same. It is the same thing for Kiswahili. Beyond its vernacular varieties,

Kiswahili is the same. This incites Kiswahili speakers to tolerance. In fact, it is not because a given speaker of Kiswahili does not speak the same Kiswahili as us that it is no longer the same Kiswahili.

The question is to know whether we can or should wait until Kinyarwanda disintegrates totally because it runs the risk of extreme hybridization, bastardization and denaturation like in Lingala (DRC) where we have sentences like *Mais ye azali assistant comment se fait-il qu'alingi kocontredire titulaire ya cours?* "But he is an assistant! How come he/she contradicts a full Professor?" (Sesep in Wald: 67). Where is the threshold of tolerance? Couldn't we rather make a wake-up call? How can Rwandans learn from others' experiences? J.M. Lipski shows that language educators rather consider language hybridization a factor which "contributed an authenticity that deserves wider recognition" as "the verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispano civilizations" (p. 25), unlike racist Anglo-American milieus which see Spanglish as a "degenerate mix of Spanish and English" [...] not worthy to sit at the table of world Spanish" (p. 3), a "group of uninvited gate-crashers" (p. 4), a sign of "mental disabilities" (p. 12), "the slang of the dead-end kids" (p. 15), a "language degeneration" (p.16), something "socially and politically unacceptable" (p. 19), a "linguistic impoverishment" (p. 30), "a debilitating feature that undermines the 'purity' of the language" (p. 39). Thus, it becomes a "third language" (p. 31), a "Spanish-plus" (p. 33). He cites one of the defenders of Spanglish and hybridity, Ed Morales (2002), who says: "Spanglish is what we speak, but it is also who we Latinos are, and how we act, and how we perceive the world", i.e. something which guarantees a "linguistic self-sufficiency" (p. 37). He ends by this note: "we as linguists and educators [...] occupy strategic positions from which to interact with the constituents involved and to place the debate on an empirical footing" (p. 41). Talking of the use of English and various forms of mixtures of English and Slovene, S. Komar (Frățilă & Pârlog, Eds., 2010: x) also argues that language hybridization should not be forbidden by law, rather it should be accepted. Hall (2006: 18) also thinks that South African English is being reinvigorated by hybridity. He even supports Salman Rushdie (1991) who opposes "the absolutism of the Pure" and celebrates "hybridity, impurity, intermingling". For Kirkland (2010), "[...] English as taught in city schools does not always reflect the Englishes city students travel with [...]. Englishes, as opposed to English, are relevant to the twenty-first century conversations of English education" (p. 293). He concludes: "English educators must revise curricula to match the languages of the day, the English of the youth. This does not mean abandoning our study of the LWC [Language of Wide Communication]" (p. 301). In fact, all things being equal, where is the demarcation line between the two constraints, i.e. to safeguard the standard language as educators (particularly trainers of trainers) and to be open and flexible vis-à-vis the hybrid language(s)?

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