Title: "The Class 10 Plurals of Rwanda and Rundi: How Languages Set Themselves Apart – the Implication for Teachers, Students, and Linguists"
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ABSTRACT:

With regard to the pluralization of nouns with **iN**- (class 9) and **uru**- (class 11), all previous authors stated that the plural of both classes are the same. This is partially correct. In Kinyarwanda and Kirundi words formed from consonant roots have the same plural form (**iN**-) for classes 9 and 11, both characterized as members of Bantu class 10. However, when the root begins with a vowel, the plurals differ: **iny**- is the plural of vowel roots in class 9 (**iny**-), but **inz**- pluralizes vowel roots whose singular is in class 11 (**urw**-). While this seems to be a "linguistic" discovery, it has enormous sociolinguistic and cultural implications. Firstly, it demonstrates how this Bantu subfamily has distinguished its speech from all the others. Secondly, while Rwanda and Rundi differ in cross-dialectal communication in many regards, this is one feature they both share in common. This demonstrates a period in the mutual history of these languages when the people were cohesive and on friendly terms (unlike the Hutu-Tutsi conflicts of Rwanda and Burundi which have been surfacing over the past two hundred years). Thirdly, in African Language Demographics, Kinyarwanda and Kirundi enjoy a special language status within the entire African and Bantu community. Fourthly, for teaching these phenomena, the platitudes of the Meinhof school do not always apply; no textbook on either Rwanda or Rundi takes up this matter so that students and teachers need to recognize that revised curricula are always in order. Lastly, in terms of analysis tools for African Studies Programs, while the noun class system characterizes Bantu languages and can be used broadly for certain programs, the individual differences of each speech variety must be catered to, respected, and dealt with.

While Louise Nibagwire and I were conducting research for the *Kinyarwanda and Kirundi Comparative Grammar*, we had assumed that the statements made by all previous authors (textbook developers and grammarians) with regard to the pluralization of nouns with **iN**- (class 9) and **uru**- (class 11) were identical. The claim was: the plural of both classes are the same in every regard. This is partially correct.[1] They are indeed the same for consonant roots.

One of the more complex and fascinating areas of Rwanda and Rundi grammar from the pedagogical point-of-view is that both teachers and students must be on their toes because words formed from consonant roots (Table 1) differ from those derived from vowel roots (Table 2). This often involves different tonal patterns and sound (or morphophonemic) changes.

Table 1. Consonant Roots in Group 5 (classes 9-10) and Group 6 (classes 11-10).

im- [change of iN- > im- before labials]
   /**imbabázi – imbabázi**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'forgiveness, pardon, mercy' < /–**bábara**/
   /**imbeba – imbeba**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'mouse, rat'
   /**imbogó – imbogó**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'buffalo, *Syncerus caffer*
   /**imbúgitá – imbúgitá**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'kitchen knife'
   /**imbwá – imbwá**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'dog'
   /**imfáshanyo – imfáshanyo**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'help, aid, assistance' < /–**fásha**/ 'help'
   /**impaká – impaká**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'argument, dispute, controversy'
   /**impáano – impáano**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'gift, donation' < /–**há**/ 'give' [change of **h** > **p**]
   /**urubágará – imbágará**/ {Rundi}, /**urubágara – imbágara**/ {Rwanda} *n6 = cl11/10* 'weed'
   /**urubavu – imbavu**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'rib'
   /**uruvyíno – imvyíno**/ {Rundi}, /**urubyíno – imbyíno**/ {Rwanda} *n6 = cl11/10* 'song and dance'
   /**uruhaánde – impaánde**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'side, part' [change of **h** > **p**]
   /**uruhíinja – impíinja**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'infant, baby' [change of **h** > **p**]
in-
   /**indíriimbo – indíriimbo**/ *n5 = cl9/10* 'song, hymn, anthem' < /–**ríriimba**/ 'sing' [change of **r** > **d**]
   /**inkoni – inkoni**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'stick, piece of wood'
   /**intaama – intaama**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'sheep'
   /**urugaánda – ingaánda**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'forge; factory'
   /**urugó – ingó**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'enclosure, fence, stockade'
   /**urukwáavu – inkwáavu**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'rabbit, hare'
   /**ururími – indími**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'tongue, language' [change of **r** > **d**]
   /**ururíriimbo – indíriimbo**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'song, chant' < /–**ríriimba**/ 'sing' [change of **r** > **d**]
iny- = i(N)-ny- [reduction of cluster **inny**- to **iny**-]
   /**inyama – inyama**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'meat'
   /**inyána – inyána**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'calf'
   /**inyóota – inyóota**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'thirst' < –**nywá** 'drink'
   /**urunyáanyá – inyáanyá**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'tomato'
inz-
   /**inzérerezi – inzérerezi**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'bum, vagabond' < /–**zéreera**/ 'wander'
   /**inzigo – inzigo**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'hostility, antagonism, enmity' < –**yig**- [change of **y** > **z**]
   /**inzogá – inzogá**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'beer, alcoholic beverage'
   /**inzóka – inzóka**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'snake' < –**yok**- [change of **y** > **z**]
inz- [irregular, i.e., with alternate plurals]
   /**inzira – inzira** OR **amayira**/ {both} *n5-sg/n3-pl* 'road, path' [root: –**yir**-; change of **y** > **z**]
   /**inzu – inzu** or **amazu**/ {both} *n5-sg/n3-pl* 'house' [root: –**zu**]

However, unlike all other known Bantu languages, both Kinyarwanda and Kirundi differentiate the plural of class 9 (**iN**-) as opposed to class 11 (**uru**-) when the root begins with a vowel, where class 9 (**iny**-) has the same plural with **iny**- but class 11 (**urw**-) has a different plural with **inz**-.

Table 2. Vowel Roots in Group 5 (classes 9-10) and Group 6 (classes 11-10).

Roots with **a-**
  /**inyandiko – inyandiko**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'writing' < /–**aandika**/ {both} 'write'
  /**urwaandiko – inzaandiko**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'letter' < /–**aandika**/ {both} 'write'
  /**inyanduruko**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'motive, cause, origin' < /–**aanduruka**/ {Rundi} 'come from'
  /**urwáamo – inzáamo**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'uproar'
Roots with **e-**
  /**inyégamo – inyégamo**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'partition' < /–**éegama**/ {both} 'lean'
  /**inyeengo – inyeengo**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'brewing' < /-**eenga**/ {both} 'brew'
  /**urweéga – inzeéga**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'apiary, stand for a beehive' (usually in a tree) < /–**éegeka**/ {both}
    'prop s.t. up, support'
  /**urwéego – inzéego**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'ladder, trellis' < /–**éegeka**/ {both} 'prop s.t. up, support'
Roots with **i-**
  /**inyíbano – inyíbano**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'stolen item' < /–**íiba**/ {both} 'steal'
  /**inyígiisho – inyígiisho**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'teaching' < /–**íigiisha**/ {both} 'teach'
  /**urwíitwaazo – inzíitwaazo**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'excuse, pretext' < /–**íitwaaza**/ {both} 'excuse'
  /**urwiibutso – inziibutso**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'souvenir, reminder' < /–**íibutsa**/ 'remind'
Roots with **o-**
  /**inyóngeerá – inyóngeerá**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'surplus, extra' < /–**oongera**/ {both} 'add, increase'
  /**inyongezo – inyongezo**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'increase, supplement' < /–**oongera**/ {both} 'add, increase'
  /**urwoobo – inzoobo**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'pit'
  /**urwoóndo – inzoóndo**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'mud, mortar'
Roots with **u-**
  /**inyungú – inyungú**/ {both} *n5 = cl9/10* 'profit' < /–**uunguka**/ 'gain'
  /**inyúmviiro – inyúmviiro**/ {Rundi} *n5 = cl9/10* 'ear' < /–**úumva**/ 'hear'
  /**inyúmviro – inyúmviro**/ {Rwanda} *n5 = cl9/10* 'drum' < /–**úumva**/ 'hear'
  /**uruugi – inzuugi**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'door'
  /**urúuzi – inzúuzi**/ {both} *n6 = cl11/10* 'river'

While this appears on the surface primarily to be a "linguistic" discovery, and is "newsworthy" as such, it has enormous sociolinguistic and cultural implications more relevant to the themes of this conference. These languages have preserved and have been preserving themselves.

Firstly, it demonstrates how a single Bantu family has sought to distinguish its speech from all the others. This particular innovation is not reflected in any of the studies on either of these languages, from Hurel (1911) on Kinyarwanda, or Bagein (1951) on Kirundi, up to the most recent survey of Bantu edited by Nurse and Philippson (2003).[2] There are plenty of other grounds for considering Rwanda and Rundi as members of an independent Bantu subgroup, originally designated as *J.60*.

Secondly, while Rwanda and Rundi differ in cross-dialectal communication in many regards, this is one feature they both share in common. The now famous enmity between Hutus and Tutsis, culminating in the Rwandan Genocide, had historical roots dating to about the 13th

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[2] I am grateful to Derek Gowlett for calling this publication to my attention. Since I did not have a copy available to me, he checked the treatments to ensure that this phenomenon did not occur elsewhere in the Bantu family.

century (according to Mamdani as well as Sekhon), but was clearly exacerbated by European colonization. As this highly specific innovation intimates, the parent language of Kinyarwanda and Kirundi included a time of linguistic togetherness. It is therefore reasonable to assume that there was cultural intimacy among these peoples in prehistoric times. Even if there had been Rwanda and Rundi kingdoms, the speakers of these languages (both Hutus and Tutsis in either kingdom) had extensive inter-tribal communications and dealings.

Thirdly, in terms of African Language Demographics it is safe to say that Kinyarwanda and Kirundi enjoy a special status within the entire African and Bantu community. In terms of population, they each rank among the top twenty African languages (with approximately 5 million speakers each). Collectively or jointly they rank among the top ten. They are each extremely fortunate to be the major and predominant languages of their respective countries, a rare situation which is shared with Lesotho, Djibouti, Swaziland, and Madagascar among Africa's fifty-two nations. Rwanda and Rundi are each healthy languages used in most domains: political offices, meetings, and economic affairs. Each enjoys official language status. There are broad-based monolingual media (TV, radio, and the press). They are media of instruction in primary school and functionally literate citizens have plenty of materials to keep their skills from atrophying.

Fourthly, for teaching these phenomena, the platitudes of the Meinhof school do not always apply; no textbook on either Rwanda or Rundi take up this matter so that students and teachers need to recognize that revised curricula are always in order. In this regard, I find the distinction between "groups" and "classes" very useful. The term NOUN CLASS refers to the 21 or so individual members of the Bantu nominal system most are familiar with. Several grammarians have fused the singular and plural of these together into what may be distinguished (terminologically) as NOUN GROUPS (others refer to these pairings as GENDERS).

> **umu**- [*cl1*] & **aba**- [*cl2*] = Group 1 [*n1*]
> **umu**- [*cl3*] & **imi**- [*cl4*] = Group 2 [*n2*]
> **i**- [*cl5*] & **ama**- [*cl6*] = Group 3 [*n3*]
> **iki**- [*cl7*] & **ibi**- [*cl8*] = Group 4 [*n4*]
> **iN**- [*cl9*] & **iN**- [*cl10*] = Group 5 [*n5*]
> **uru**- [*cl11*] & **inz**- [*cl10b?*] = Group 6 [*n6*]

I did so originally because my first students in Sotho, and later Xhosa, got enormously annoyed when some classes went missing. "What the heck happened to Classes 11-13?" one shouted! When I saw that several Bantu grammarians had fused the systems into singular and plural forms, I thought it would be more *emic* (language-specific) to deal with just as many groups, sequentially numbered, as a given language had. I did not want to base a teaching methodology on a proto language, which students rarely understand and about which they have little enthusiasm and no tolerance. The advantage of using the group system in the explanation of this Kinyarwanda and Kirundi phenomenon is that *n5* is **iN**- [sg] / **iN**- for consonant roots, **iny**- [sg] / **iny**- [pl] for vowel roots while *n6* is **uru**- [sg] / **iN**- [pl] for consonant roots, **urw**- [sg] / **inz**- [pl] for vowel roots. If one imposes the predetermined Bantu class system, how is one to distinguish these two unique plurals, perhaps *cl10a* **iny**- vs. *cl10b* **inz**-?

As to the homographs within group 5, the same form is used in the singular /**inyégamo**/ *cl9*

'partition' as in the plural /**inyégamo**/ *cl10* 'partitions.' That is, there isn't a single singular noun in Rwanda-Rundi that doesn't have a homographic plural in what I call Group 5 = Bantu cl9 vs. cl10. However, there is a disambiguating concord distinction that distinguishes the homographs within a phrase or sentence:

/**inyégamo yíinzu**/ 'the partition of the house'
/**inyégamo zíinzu**/ 'the partitions of the house'

Teachers need to illustrate these helpful grammatical paradigms.

Lastly, in terms of analysis tools for African Studies Programs, while the noun class system characterizes Bantu languages and can be used broadly for certain programs, the individual differences of each speech variety must be catered to, respected, and dealt with. It is not correct (or *emic* or language faithful) to describe the Rwanda-Rundi class 9 and 11 plurals as "the same," because vowel roots show that they differ in formation. A vowel root in class 9 will then have its singular in **iny**- AND its plural in **iny**- (group 5). But a vowel root in class 11 with the prefix **urw**- will have a plural formed with **inz**- (group 6). Now if this is Bantu class 10, what happened in the development of these languages from their mother tongue? At the very least, to be faithful to Rwanda-Rundi, one would have to set up a Class 10a (iny-) and a Class 10b (inz-). But then we are setting up a LANGUAGE SPECIFIC convention for what is intended to be a pan-Bantu system.

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