

Agreement as a grammatical criterion for Proper Name status in Kirundi.

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1. Introduction

In name studies, as in other subdisciplines of linguistics, the synchronic grammatical analysis of proper names is generally neglected. By means of a description and analysis of the agreement properties of proper name controllers in Kirundi, this paper shows that grammatical analysis can provide onomastics with language specific formal criteria for delimiting the category of Proper Names, as well as with data that are relevant for the ongoing discussion on the meaning of names. Conversely, paying due attention to Proper Names as a grammatical category allows for a coherent analysis of some otherwise puzzling agreement phenomena in the Bantu languages, which illustrates the usefulness of name studies for other branches of linguistics.

Before looking at the agreement properties of different types of Proper Names in Kirundi, I will discuss two essential theoretical distinctions underlying the analysis in this paper, viz. the distinction between proper names and proprial lemmas (Section 2.1) and that between proper names as a comparative concept and Proper Names as a descriptive category (Section 2.2). I will then provide some background on gender and agreement in the Bantu languages (Section 2.3). Section 3 applies the criterion of agreement on eight types of potential Proper Names. Section 4, finally, discusses the relevance of semantic agreement in Kirundi for the debate on the meaning of proper names.

2. Preliminaries

2.1. Proper names versus proprial lemmas

Following Van Langendonck (2007:7), I make an essential distinction between proprial lemmas and proper names. Proprial lemmas are lexical items such as *Nelson*, *Vicky* or *Durban*, that are typically, but not necessarily, used as proper names. The term *proper name*, in contrast, is used to refer to a semantic-pragmatic concept. Therefore, whether a word is a proper name or not depends on the way in which it is used in an utterance. In addition to proprial lemmas, Van Langendonck distinguishes appellative lemmas, i.e. lexical items typically construed as common nouns (e.g. *woman*, *city*, *car*), and proprio-appellative lemmas, i.e. lexical items that are construed as proper names or as common nouns with equal ease (e.g., *Volvo*, *Zulu*). The proprial lemmas *Vicky* and *Durban* are used as proper names in (1a). They “denote a unique entity at the level of established

linguistic convention to make them psychosocially salient within a given basic level category” (Van Langendonck 2007:87).¹ In contrast, examples (1b) and (1c) show relatively unusual common noun uses of the same proprial lemmas. *Vicky* and *Durban* are not used to denote unique entities here. Rather, they are used to refer to categories of entities marginally defined as ‘woman called *Vicky*’ and ‘settlement called *Durban*’, respectively. Formally, this is reflected in the fact that they take restrictive modifiers, including articles.²

- (1) a. Vicky lives in Durban.
 b. We’re clearly talking about different Vickies. The Vicky I know lives in Kuilsrivier.
 c. Is there a Durban in Australia too?

The distinction between proper names as a semantic-pragmatic concept and proprial lemmas as a lexical class is all the more useful in languages that have no or few proprial lemmas, i.e. languages in which appellatives, verb forms and/or entire phrases are picked as personal proper names and place names. Among many examples we can cite the Gabonese Bantu language Orungu (see Van de Velde & Ambouroue, to appear). In Orungu, we find names such as *Àmènjè* for a girl (also the word for ‘peace’) and *Ìjgùwà* for boys or girls (also the word for ‘shield’). *Pàjá*, the word for ‘doubt’ is also a village name and *Yálémbórè* ‘let us try’ the name of a dog. Without a distinction between proper names and proprial lemmas, it is difficult to make sense of names in Orungu. In languages such as English appellative lemmas can be used as proper names too, be it more marginally. Van Langendonck (2007: 246-249) convincingly argues that autonyms, i.e. linguistic items in self naming function, can be construed as proper names. In English, this is formally reflected in their ability to appear in close appositional constructions, such as *the word “phoneme”*.

2.2. proper names versus Proper Names

This paper discusses noun class agreement as a formal criterion that defines a category of Proper Names *in Kirundi*. It is enough to know that many languages do not have noun classes, or agreement, in order to understand that this criterion cannot be universally applicable. Therefore Kirundi Proper Name agreement is a language specific

¹ This is the pragmatic component of Van Langendonck’s definition of proper names, which also comprises a semantic and a syntactic component, see Section 2.2.

² The use of an article is a formal difference between common nouns and proper names of this type (i.e. person and settlement names) in English. Obviously, the absence of an article is by no means a universal formal characteristic of proper names.

criterion that defines a language specific descriptive category. As Haspelmath (2010) recently argued, it is better to clearly distinguish such language specific descriptive categories from crosslinguistically applicable semantic concepts and other comparative concepts. Distinguishing the two is complicated by the fact that descriptive categories and related comparative concepts tend to have the same name. A tradition in the typological literature uses an orthographic convention to distinguish between both: the names of language specific descriptive categories are capitalised, e.g., Kirundi Proper Names, whereas names of comparative concepts are not, as in “Every human language has proper names” (Hockett 1963: 21). I use this orthographic convention in this paper. Now consider Van Langendonck’s definition of proper names (2007: 87):

A proper name is a noun that denotes a unique entity at the level of established linguistic convention to make it psychosocially salient within a given basic level category [pragmatic].

The meaning of the name, if any, does not (or not any longer) determine its denotation [semantic].

An important formal reflex of this pragmatic-semantic characterization of proper names is their ability to appear in such close appositional constructions as *the poet Burns*, *Fido the dog*, *the River Thames*, or *the City of London* [syntactic].

The first two parts provide a definition of the proper name as a crosslinguistically applicable semantic-pragmatic concept. It is safe to assume that every human language has elements that comply to this definition. The third part, in contrast, is a useful criterion for delimiting the descriptive category of English Proper Names, but this criterion does not distinguish proper names from common nouns in the Bantu language Orungu, for instance (agreement does, see Van de Velde & Ambouroué). The question whether proper names are universal in the sense that every human language has a descriptive category of Proper Names definable by means of language specific formal criteria cannot be answered as long as we do not have more and better grammatical descriptions that pay attention to names. A priori, there is no reason to assume that every language has one and only one category of Proper Names. Some languages might have none, others might have several (Personal Names versus Non-personal Proper Names, for instance). We will come back to the distinction between proper names and Proper Names in Section 3.9.

2.3. Gender and agreement in the Bantu languages

A well known characteristic of the Bantu languages is their often extensive noun class system. Noun classes are defined as sets of nouns that trigger the same agreement

pattern. On average, Bantu languages have between ten and twenty noun classes, which are traditionally numbered in Bantu studies. Odd numbered classes usually contain singular nouns, whereas even numbered classes normally contain their plural counterparts. In Bantuist terminology, singular-plural pairings of noun classes are called genders. I will follow this tradition here. Noun classes are overtly marked on the noun by means of a prefix. For instance, Makwe, a Bantu language spoken in the Palma district in Mozambique has sixteen noun classes, exemplified in (2).

(2) Makwe noun classes (Devos 2008:42)

class 1 <i>muú-nu</i> ‘person’	class 2 <i>waá-nu</i> ‘persons’
class 3 <i>muú-twe</i> ‘head’	class 4 <i>mií-twe</i> ‘heads’
class 5 <i>li-wáala</i> ‘shoulder’	class 6 <i>ma-wáala</i> ‘shoulders’
class 7 <i>cií-nu</i> ‘thing’	class 8 <i>vií-nu</i> ‘thing’
class 9 <i>ng-úúnde</i> ‘bean’	class 10 <i>ji-ng-úúnde</i> ‘bean’
class 11 <i>u-kóombe</i> ‘nail’	
class 12 <i>ka-n-yéee</i> ‘little bird’	
class 15 <i>ku-wéena</i> ‘to go’	
class 16 <i>pa-méeza</i> ‘on the table’	
class 17 <i>ku-li-diimba</i> ‘at the field’	
class 18 <i>mu-li-poóndo</i> ‘in the pit’	

Gender agreement is well illustrated in the Makwe example in (3). The agreement prefixes that appear on the different agreement targets (adjective, demonstrative and finite verb) are fully predictable from the nominal prefix *ci-*.³

(3) Makwe (Devos 2008:43)

<i>cií-nu</i>	<i>ci-zúuli</i>	<i>cií-yá</i>	<i>ci-ni-yángúuk-a</i>
7-thing	VII-good	VII-that	VII-PST-fall-FV
‘That good thing has fallen.’			

Gender assignment is formal in the Bantu languages: nouns are assigned to a gender on the basis of their morphological form, i.e. their noun class prefix. Although there are some minor semantic sub regularities, there is no way to predict which noun class prefix a noun has on the basis of its semantics.

³ I use Arabic numbers for noun class prefixes and Roman numbers for agreement markers. The following abbreviations are used: AU augment (aka *preprefix*, *initial vowel*), FV final vowel (a TAM morpheme), GEN genitive, PPR personal pronoun, PST past.

3. Agreement as a Proper Name criterion in Kirundi

Kirundi is, together with French, the official language of Burundi. There is a considerable onomastic literature (e.g. Ntahombaye 1983, Kimenyi 1989). Kirundi Proper Names have at least two formal characteristics that distinguish them from Common Nouns. First, they tend to lack the so-called augment (aka preprefix or initial vowel) and, second, the agreement pattern they trigger can be predicted on the basis of their semantics. These formal characteristics have been noted in the literature for personal names (see, e.g. Meeussen 1959), but, as far as I know, not systematically for other types of proper names.

Both characteristics of Proper Names can be illustrated by means of two names based on the same appellative lemma, viz. the class 11 noun *urukara* ‘black(ness)’. As can be observed in examples (4b) and (4c), the augment/initial vowel *u-* of *urukara* is dropped when this lemma is used as a proper name. The augment in Kirundi is what Greenberg (1978) calls a stage II article, a morpheme that originates in a definite article (and ultimately in a demonstrative), the use of which has been generalised to the extent that it is absent in only a very limited number of environments. The absence of an augment with Kirundi proper names is thus basically the same phenomenon as the absence of an article in English personal Names and settlement Names.

- (4) a. *u-ru-kara* ‘black’ (cl. 11); *u-muu-ntu* ‘person’ (cl.1); *i-m-bwá* ‘dog’ (cl.9)⁴
b. *Rukara a-rikó a-rafuungura*
Rukara I-is I-eating
‘*Rukara* (a person) is eating.’
c. *Rukara i-rikó i-iraryá*
Rukara IX-is IX-eating
‘*Rukara* (a dog) is eating.’

Neither in (4b), where *Rukara* is a personal name, nor in (4c), where it is a dog’s name, does the name trigger agreement pattern XI, the agreement pattern normally triggered by nouns of class 11, such as *u-ru-kara* ‘black(ness)’. Instead, the personal name *Rukara* triggers agreement pattern I, as if the agreement controller were the class 1 common noun *u-muu-ntu* ‘person’, and the dog name *Rukara* in (4c) triggers the agreement pattern expected for controllers of class 9, such as the noun *imbwá* ‘dog’. These two examples illustrate the fact that Proper Names in Kirundi trigger the same agreement pattern as the common noun that is used to refer to their basic level category. Example

⁴ I provide glossing for noun class and agreement prefixes only.

(5b) shows that personal Proper Names trigger agreement pattern I on non restrictive nominal modifiers too.

- (5) a. u-rw-îmo ‘war’ (class 11)
 b. Rwîmo **w**-âcù
 Rwimo I-our
 ‘our Rwimo’
 c. u-rw-îmo **rw**-âcu
 AU-11-war **XI**-our
 ‘our war’

There are two alternative analyses for the different behaviour of Proper Names and Common Nouns. According to the first analysis, Proper Names and Common Nouns have different principles of gender assignment, viz. formal (Common Nouns) versus semantic (Proper Names) assignment. According to the second analysis, semantically motivated Proper Name agreement is a strategy for providing enforced agreement with a controller that does not have a gender specification. The first analysis is probably the most elegant solution for a synchronic grammatical description, but the second analysis might be more insightful from a comparative Bantu perspective. I will leave this issue undecided in this paper and rather concentrate on Proper Name agreement, however it is analysed, as a criterion for delimiting the category of Kirundi Proper Names.

In what follows, I will apply the criterion of agreement on a number of potential candidates of the category of Proper Names. But before we can use agreement as predicted by the basic level sense of the controller as a criterion for Proper Name status, we have to make sure that such agreement is not possible with clear examples of Common Nouns. It is not. Consider, for instance, example (6), where the subject relation is expressed by the class 3 Common Noun *u-mu-cûngwá* ‘orange tree’. The basic level term corresponding to *umucûngwá* is the class 7 noun *i-gĩ-ti* ‘tree’. If agreement of the type found with Proper Names were possible here, we would expect a prefix of agreement pattern VII on the verb, but this is ungrammatical.

- (6) a. u-mu-cûngwá **u**-kura ningoga.
 AU-3-orange_tree **III**-grows quickly
 ‘An orange tree grows quickly.’
 b. *u-mu-cûngwá **gi**-kura ningoga.
 AU-3-orange_tree **VII**-grows quickly

Unless specified otherwise, the data cited below are based on elicitation with two native speakers of Kirundi: Ferdinand Mberamihigo and Deo Nizonkiza. Many thanks are due to both of them. I briefly worked with Ferdinand and Deo on different occasions. Their intuitions were mostly consistent with each other and with examples I found in the literature. Wherever they had different intuitions this will be explicitly noted.

3.1. Places

A logical first place to start exploring agreement as a criterion for Proper Name status would be settlement names, which are together with personal names the most prototypical names in the languages of Europe. However, Burundi's dense population is not organised in villages, but rather in communities that occupy the same (side of a) hill or valley. Settlement names appear to be marginal. The consultants did not allow phrases like 'Bujumbura is beautiful', in which the city name is in subject position. According to their intuition, the city name has to appear in an appositional construction 'the city of B', so that subject agreement with *Bujumbura* could not be observed. Interestingly, they did accept names of Bujumbura neighbourhoods in subject position. The neighbourhood name *Kanyosha* in (7) is derived from the name of a brook that runs through it. Its initial syllable *ka* is formally identical to the nominal prefix of class 12. The copula *ni* is not an agreement target, but the predicative adjective agrees with the subject. The choice for agreement pattern IX in (7a) could be due to either of two class 9 borrowings: *ikómĩine* 'township' or *ikaritiye* 'district'. The same neighbourhood name can alternatively trigger the locative agreement pattern XVI (7b). The corresponding noun is the class 16 noun *ahaantu* 'place'. My consultants did not mention this option for other place names.

- (7) a. Kanyösha ní **nzi**-izá
 Kanyosha is **IX**-beautiful
 'Kanyosha is beautiful'
 b. Kanyösha ní **hee**zá (< ha-izá)
 Kanyosha is **XVI**-beautiful
 'Kanyosha is beautiful'

Names for hills trigger agreement pattern III, as does the class 3 basic level category term *u-mu-sózi* 'hill' (8).

- (8) Donge ni **mw**-izá
 Donge is **III**-beautiful
 ‘Donge is beautiful’ (hill)’

I have data for three types of hydronyms: names of rivers, lakes and brooks. River names provide the clearest example of Proper Name agreement, as shown in (9), where the river name *Maragaraazi* is in subject position. I do not know the etymology of this name. Its initial syllable is formally identical to the nominal prefix of class 6 (*ma*-). Agreement on the verb, however, is of agreement pattern XI, rather than VI. The basic level term *u-rú-uzi* ‘river’ is a noun of class 11. Note also that *Maragaraazi* lacks an initial vowel, as do the names in examples (6-8).

- (9) Maragaraazi **ru**-gabanya u-bu-Ha n ú-bu-Ruúndi
 Maragaraazi **XI**-separates AU-14-Buha from AU-14-Burundi
 ‘La Maragarazi separates Buha from Burundi.’ (Meeussen 1959:189)

Interestingly, names of lakes trigger the same agreement pattern as rivers, i.e. XI, suggesting, perhaps, that *u-rú-uzi* is the basic level term for water bodies. The word for ‘lake’ is the class 7 noun *i-ki-yága*. One consultant accepted formal agreement as an alternative for Proper Name agreement (10c).

- (10) a. Cõhõha **ru**-rasheeshe
 Cohoha **XI**-overflowed
 ‘(Lake) Cohoha overflowed.’
 b. Gacâmirĩndi **ru**-rasheeshe
 Gacamirindi **XI**-overflowed
 ‘(Lake) Gacamirindi overflowed.’
 c. Gacâmirĩndi **ka**-rasheeshe
 Gacamirindi **XII**-overflowed
 ‘(Lake) Gacamirindi overflowed.’

Names of brooks can be used in two ways. Either they are preceded by a locative prefix and have locative agreement of pattern XVI (11),⁵ or they have an

⁵ Locative prefixes in Kirundi are noun class prefixes that combine with the normal prefix of a noun to give it a locative meaning. They take the position of the augment, with which they are incompatible. Nouns with a locative prefix agree according to the lexical prefix within the noun phrase and according to the locative prefix on predicative targets, where all locative prefixes trigger the same agreement pattern (historically that of class 16).

augment and they trigger formal agreement (12). In neither usage can the brook names be considered Proper Names.

- (11) a. Mu-Rubâanza **ha**-áarakámye
 18-Rubaanza **XVI**-dried_up
 ‘The Rubaanza has dried up.’
 b. Mu-Kagaara **ha**-ratwáara
 18-Kagaara **XVI**-is_dangerous_for_drowning
 ‘The Kagaara is dangerous for drowning.’
- (12) a. U-ru-bâanza **rw**-áarakámye
 AU-13-Rubaanza **XIII**-dried-up
 ‘The Rubaanza has dried up.’
 b. A-ka-gaara **ka**-ratwáara
 AU-12-Kagaara **XII**-is_dangerous_for_drowning
 ‘The Kagaara is dangerous for drowning.’

The last type of toponym to be discussed are country names. We already saw two examples in (9), viz. *ubuHa* and *úbuRuúndi*. Both have an initial vowel, which suggests that they are not Proper Names in Kirundi. This is confirmed when we put these country names in subject position, where they trigger formal agreement, rather than the agreement pattern predicted by the basic level term *i-gi-húgu* ‘country’ (class 7).

- (13) u-bu-Ruúndi ni **bw**-ízà
 AU-14-Burundi is **XIV**-beautiful
 ‘Burundi is beautiful.’

3.2. Languages

In Kirundi, as in the other Bantu languages for which I have evidence (Eton, Orungu), language names are not proper names from a grammatical point of view. The word for ‘language’ is the class 11 noun *u-ru-rími*. Therefore, if language names were Proper Names, we would expect them to trigger agreement pattern XI. Instead, language names have an augment and trigger formal agreement. Since they always have a class 7 prefix, agreement with language names is always of pattern VII.

- (14) I-ki-rundi **ki**-ragoye
 AU-7-Kirundi **VII**-is_difficult
 ‘Kirundi is difficult.’

3.3. Numbers

Van Langendonck (2007:239-241) convincingly argues that numbers can be construed as proper names when they are not used attributively. A formal reflex of this, in English, is that they can occur as the second element in a close appositional construction as *the number seven*. In the Gabonese Bantu language Orungu we find grammatical evidence for this analysis too (Van de Velde & Ambouroue, to appear). The evidence is somewhat less straightforward in Kirundi. Example (15) shows that the word for the number five has a nominal prefix of class 12 and that it lacks the augment. One consultant spontaneously produced example (15b), where *gataanu* ‘five’ triggers Proper Name agreement, adding that (15a), with Common Noun agreement, is possible too. Agreement pattern VII is selected in (15b), because the word for ‘number’ is the class 7 noun *i-gi-tígiri*. Another consultant accepted (15b), but found it stylistically highly marked. Proper Name agreement is learned, perhaps even pedant here.

- (15) a. Ga-taanu **ga**-kwirikira ka-ne
 12-five **XII**-follows 12-four
 ‘Five comes after four.’
 b. Ga-taanu **gi**-kwirikira ka-ne
 12-five **VII**-follows 12-four
 ‘Five comes after four.’

3.4. Months

Names of months consistently trigger Proper Name agreement. They agree according to the common noun for ‘month’, viz. the class 15 noun *u-kw-êzi*.

- (16) Nzéro **gu**-kwirikira kigarama
 January **XV**-follows December
 ‘January follows December.’

 (17) Kigarama **gu**-kwirikira munyoonyó
 December **XV**-follows November
 ‘December follows November’

3.5. Linguistic material

In languages such as Orungu (Van de Velde & Ambourou, to appear) and English (Van Langendonck 2007: 246-249) autonyms can be construed as proper names. In Kirundi, Proper Name construal of autonyms is marginal. The class 11 noun *u-ru-rími* ‘tongue’ in subject position in (18a) is used autonymically. The noun keeps its augment in autonymic use as well as its usual agreement pattern (XI). However, one consultant gave (18b) as an alternative, where agreement pattern V is most probably due to the class 5 noun *i-jambo* ‘word’. In (18b) the autonym *u-ru-rími* behaves as a Proper Name according to the criterion of agreement, but not according to the criterion of absence of the initial vowel. Again, Proper Name agreement is perceived as being very formal.

- (18) a. U-ru-rimi **ru**-fisé i-n-síguuro zi-biri.
 11-ururimi **XI**-has AU-10-meanings X-two
 ‘*Ururimi* has two meanings.’
 b. ?*Ururimi* **ri**-fisé i-n-síguuro zi-biri.
 11-ururimi **V**-has AU-10-meanings X-two
 ‘*Ururimi* has two meanings.’ (very formal)

Interestingly, for an autonym based on a proper name, both consultants gave only one agreement option, viz. Proper Name agreement. Example (19) is a typical onomastic statement, giving the etymology of the personal name *Gashamba* (< *a-ga-shamba* ‘little bush’ (class 12) < *i-shamba* ‘bush’ (class 5)). *Gashamba* does not trigger its formal agreement pattern XII, but an agreement pattern consistent with the class five noun *i-zina* ‘name’. Another example is given in (20).

- (19) Gashamba **ri**-vuuye mw’ i-jaambo *ishamba*
 Gashamba **V**-comes_from LOC 5-word *ishamba*
 ‘*Gashamba* comes from the word *ishamba*.’
 (20) Musavyi **ri**-vuuye mw’ i-jaambo umusavi.
 Musavyi **V**-comes_from 17 5-word umusavi
 Musavyi comes from the word *umusavi*.

3.6. Artefacts

Familiar individual artefacts that are very important for a person can receive a proper name, expressing affection for the named artefact. The two examples that Ferdinand Mberamihigo gave me, have agreement properties typical for Proper Names. The phrase *bisuumba gutiira* means ‘it is better than to borrow’. Its initial syllable *bi* is the subject

agreement prefix of pattern VIII. In example (21) this phrase is used in subject position as the name of an old car. Agreement on the verb is of pattern IX, because *imodoka* ‘car’ is a noun of class 9. Likewise the phrasal bike name in (22) triggers agreement pattern V. The word for ‘bicycle’ is the class 5 noun *i-kiinga*.

(21) Bisuumbagutiira **i**-ranyáruka

Bisuumbagutira **IX**-is_fast

‘Bisuumbagutiira is fast.’

(22) Singirábakwé, **ry**-ó, ri-zooguteembagaza

Singirabakwe **V**-PPR V-will_knock_you_down

‘Singirábakwé, she, she will knock you down.’

3.7. Groups

As an example of a collective name, consider *Giramahoro* (*gira* ‘have’, *a-ma-horo* ‘peace’) in (23), the name of a group of dancers. Interestingly, two kinds of semantically motivated agreement are possible, one presumably according to the noun for ‘group’ (*u-mu-gwi*, class 3) and a plural agreement pattern for its members (*a-baa-ntu* ‘persons’, class 2). These two options are also available for other group names, such as that of the theatre collective *Tubiyaáge* (< ‘let’s talk about it’).

(23) a. Giramahoro **w**-atamvye neza.

Giramahoro **III**-danced well

‘Giramahoro danced well.

b. Giramahoro **b**-atamvye neza.

Giramahoro **II**-danced well

‘Giramahoro danced well.’

3.8. Biological species

Names of subspecies low on the biological taxonomy are sometimes Proper Names in Bantu languages (see e.g. Van de Velde 2008: 111 for the Cameroonian language Eton). Evidence for this observation can be found in Kirundi too. All names for species of beans in (24) agree according to the noun *i-gi-haragé* ‘bean’ (class 7, plural class 8). The species name *muremberwa* in (24a) is based on a conjugated passivised form of the verb *ku-remb-er-a* ‘bind at stakes for’. The subject prefix *mu-* is the verbal prefix of class 1, which normally indexes human subjects. Thus: ‘him is bound at stakes for’. Interestingly, the same bean has an alternative name with a class 7 prefix, preceded by the augment: *i-ki-remberwa* (plural: *i-bi-remberwa*, class 8). The name of the species of

beans in (24b) is derived from the class 9 noun *i-ny-amanza* used to denote a species of colourful bird. Note that this derivation implies the loss of the augment *i-*.

- (24) a. Muremberwa **bi-raryóoshe**
 muremberwa **VIII-are_tasty**
 ‘Muremberwa beans are tasty.’
 b. Nyamanza **bi-raryóoshe**
 nyamanza **VIII-are_tasty**
 ‘Nyamanza beans are tasty.’

3.9. Not all Kirundi Proper names are proper names, and vice versa

By way of a conclusion of Section 3, it is useful to come back to the distinction between proper names as a semantic-pragmatic concept and Proper Names as a grammatical category of Kirundi. Without such a distinction some of the outcomes of the application of the agreement criterion would be hard to accept. First, we saw that nouns that are used to refer to countries and languages are not construed as Proper Names in Kirundi, whereas they can be in other languages. Arguably, these nouns have or can have the semantic-pragmatic properties of proper names. Conversely, the names for biological species low on the taxonomical hierarchy in Section 3.8 have an asserted meaning that determines their denotation. Therefore, they do not have the crucial semantic characteristic of proper names, and yet they have the morphosyntactic characteristics of typical Kirundi Proper Names. Kinship terms are another example of this type of mismatch, especially anchored kinship terms (i.e. terms such as ‘my_father’, ‘your_father’, ‘his_father’). In many Bantu languages, including Kirundi, these terms are Proper Names. This is illustrated in (25), where the kin term *nyina* ‘his/her_mother’ triggers agreement pattern I (according to the noun for ‘person’) if the mother of a human being is meant, but agreement pattern IX in the case of the mother of a cow (‘cow’ is a word of class 9 in Kirundi).

- (25) a. nyina a-raryamye
 3SG.mother I-is.sleeping
 ‘His/her mother is sleeping.’ (person)
 b. nyina i-raryamye
 3SG.mother IX-is.sleeping
 ‘His/her mother is sleeping.’ (cow)

An explanation for the inclusion of anchored kinship terms and certain specialised biological terms into the category of Kirundi Proper names should probably be sought in pragmatics. This remains speculative and I will not go into it here.

4. Proper name agreement and the meaning of names

Agreement in Kirundi may provide useful evidence for the ongoing debate on the meaning of proper names. I will limit myself to pointing out that the Kirundi data are compatible with Van Langendonck's views on the meaning of names, and, at the end of this section, to a brief discussion of so-called quotation theories of proper names.

According to Van Langendonck (2007: 71-84), proper names have different kinds of presuppositional meanings (i.e. meanings that are taken for granted rather than asserted), viz. a categorical meaning, grammatical meanings, and potentially also associative and emotive meanings. In order to use a name, one has to know the category to which the name bearer belongs, i.e. the categorical meaning of the name. The fact that Kirundi Proper Names trigger an agreement pattern that can be predicted on the basis of their categorical meaning, as we saw in Section 3, confirms the claim that names have a (presuppositional) categorical meaning. The only example of proper name agreement that does not reflect the categorical meaning of the proper name in Section 3 is example (23b), where agreement pattern II is optionally selected. Group names can apparently be interpreted as the name for a collective or as a name for its individual members. This is reminiscent of the number agreement alternatives triggered by collective nouns such as 'team' in English.

However, personal proper names can trigger another kind of semantically motivated agreement, viz. augmentative agreement of pattern VII or diminutive agreement of pattern XII. The former can be deprecating, whereas the latter can be endearing. This type of semantic agreement reflects the potential emotive meanings of proper names (augmentative and diminutive) as argued for by Van Langendonck (2007: 83). Examples (26 a-c) are taken from Meeussen (1959:191).

- (26) a. Taama **a**-raaje
Taama I-arrives
'Taama arrives'
b. Taama **ki**-raaje
Taama VII-arrives
'(the big) Taama arrives'
c. Taama **ka**-raaje
Taama XII-arrives
'(little) Taama arrives'

Crucially, augmentative and diminutive agreement are not possible with human common nouns (27), unless they are derived by means of a diminutive or augmentative noun class prefix.

- (27) a. u-mu-ganwa **a**-raaje
 AU-1-prince I-arrives
 ‘The prince arrives’
 b. *u-mu-ganwa **ka**-raaje
 AU-1-prince XII-arrives
 ‘The (little) prince arrives’

It is not entirely clear which other proper names can trigger emotive semantic agreement. The only spontaneous example my consultants gave, was of diminutive (endearing) agreement with familiar artefacts, as with the car *Bisuumbagutiira*. Compare the categorical agreement in (21) to the emotive one in (28).

- (28) Bisuumbagutiira **ka**-ranyáruka
 Bisuumbagutiira XII-is_fast
 ‘Bisuumbagutiira is fast.’

Van Langendonck (2007:81) distinguishes two kinds of associative meaning: connotations pertaining to the referent and connotations pertaining to the name form. The former are of no importance for our subject. The latter are especially relevant in languages that have no or few proprial lemmas. Take, for instance, the personal name *Rwîmo*, which, as we saw in (5), is derived from the common noun *u-rw-îmo* ‘war’. The motivation for bestowing such a name must traditionally be sought in the conditions of birth. Since the origin of the name is clear, it may give rise to different connotations. Someone who hears the name for the first time may think of a belligerent person. Ofcourse, this does not say anything about the name bearer. Perhaps this associative meaning could be reflected in a type of semantic agreement too. If a speaker does want to suggest that a person called *Rwîmo* is belligerent, then this speaker might be able in Kirundi to jokingly use agreement pattern XIII. I found this hypothesis too context dependent to test by means of elicitation. A corpus study would be needed to confirm it.

Before moving to the next section, it is useful to point out that the agreement behaviour of Proper Names in Kirundi does not provide arguments in favour of so-called quotation theories of names. Such theories, also called *metalinguistic theories* or

description theories, hold that “a proper name is synonymous with a definite description of the form ‘the individual named so-and-so’ (Geurts 1997:319). At first sight, the fact that the personal name *Rwîmo* triggers proper name agreement according to the common noun for ‘person’ seems to confirm the claim that the meaning of *Rwîmo* is ‘the person called *Rwîmo*’. However, quotation theories cannot make sense of emotive agreement of pattern VII, XII or XIII. A second, stronger argument against quotation theories of proper names is that name forms can be used with the meaning ‘X called Y’. They are then construed as a kind of common nouns, called deproprial nouns in Van de Velde & Ambouroue (to appear), and they have different agreement properties. Meeussen (1959: 191) notes that in some cases Kirundi personal names trigger syntactic agreement on nominal modifiers and semantic agreement on predicative targets, as in (29).⁶

- (29) Kagūba **ka**-a = Nkúba **a**-ríima
 Kaguba **XII**-GEN = Nkuba **I**-rises_to_kingship
 ‘Kaguba (son) of Nkúba rises to kingship.’

Here we find mixed syntactic/semantic agreement as predicted by the agreement hierarchy.⁷ For syntactic agreement within the noun phrase to be possible, two conditions must be met. First, the name must have a recognisable class prefix, i.e. it has to be based on a noun or an adjective, rather than on a verb form, for instance. Second, the nominal modifier has to be restrictive, i.e. it must disambiguate between several bearers of the same name. This can be contrasted with the non-restrictive use of the possessive modifier in (5), here repeated as (30), where *Rwîmo* is a genuine proper name and obligatorily triggers semantically motivated Proper Name agreement on all agreement targets. Note that syntactic agreement is optional in examples such as (29). Especially younger speakers will readily accept the use of agreement pattern I.

- (30) *Rwîmo* **w**-âcù
 Rwimo **I**-our
 ‘our Rwimo’

⁶ “Les textes examinés ont fourni des exemples d’accord double: les mots attributifs ont la classe suggérée par le préfixe (à moitié inerte), les mots prédicatifs ont la classe 1.”

⁷ In a situation like that in (28), where different agreement targets follow different agreement patterns, agreement according to the morphological form of the noun is called *syntactic agreement*, whereas the more semantically motivated agreement is called *semantic agreement*. Cross linguistically, semantic agreement is more likely to occur on agreement targets higher on the agreement hierarchy, as first defined by Corbett (1979): attributive > predicate > relative pronoun > personal pronoun.

The distinction between proper names and deproprial nouns is more obvious with toponyms in Kirundi, since these can have syntactic agreement as well as the augment when used with the meaning ‘place called *x*’. Ferdinand Mberamihigo provided the dialogue (31) in order to illustrate this.

- (31) a. U-mw-íicanyi ba-amufatiye i Kiréemba
 AU-1-criminal II-caught_him LOC Kiréemba
 ‘They caught the criminal in Kiréemba.’
- b. I-kiréemba c=aa=hé? c=i Ngoozi cáanké
 AU-[7]Kiréemba VII-GEN=where VII.GEN=LOC Ngoozi or
 c=i Gitéga?
 VII.GEN=LOC Gitéga
 ‘Which Kiréemba (lit. ‘Kiréemba of where’)? close to Ngoozi or close to Gitéga (lit. ‘of at Ngoozi or of at Gitéga’)?’
- c. Kiréemba c=i Gitéga
 Kiréemba VII.GEN=LOC Gitéga
 ‘The Kiréemba close to Gitéga.’

A similar grammatical distinction between genuine proper names and deproprial nouns meaning ‘individual called so-and-so’ can be found in other Bantu languages too. Consider the examples in (32) from the Congolese Bantu language Mongo. In (32a) the proper name *Ilumbé* triggers agreement pattern I on its non-restrictive genitive (“connective”) modifier. The same lemma *Ilumbé* is restrictively modified in (32b). By definition, it does not function as a proper name, but as a deproprial noun meaning ‘person called *Ilumbé*’. This is formally reflected in the selection of agreement pattern XIX, motivated by the initial syllable of *Ilumbé*, which is identical to the class 19 prefix *i-*.

- (31) Mongo (Hulstaert 1966:7)
- a. Ilumbé ŏ-a=bo-kúnji
 Ilumbe I-GEN=1-harpist
 ‘Ilumbe, the harp player’
- b. Ilumbé y-ǎ=bo-kúnji
 Ilumbe XIX-GEN=1-harpist
 ‘Ilumbe the *harp player* (not another person called *Ilumbe*)’

The distinction between proper names and deproprial nouns is not always clearly reflected in grammar. Nevertheless, the existence of even a small number of examples of a formal distinction between both is a strong, grammatical argument against quotation theories of names.

5. Conclusion

In the beginning of Section 3 we saw that some typical proper names, viz. personal names and names of pets (dogs), have agreement properties that differ from those of Common Nouns. Whereas the agreement pattern of Common Nouns can be predicted on the basis of their morphological form, i.e. their class prefix, the agreement pattern of Proper Names is semantically determined, also if they are based on an appellative lemma. More precisely, Proper Names trigger the same agreement pattern as the basic level term that expresses their categorical meaning. I called this phenomenon *Proper Name agreement* in this paper and used it as a criterion for Proper Name status in Kirundi.

In the remainder of Section 3 I applied the criterion of proper name agreement to potential types of names and noted in passing that the absence of an initial vowel provides another formal criterion. Names of hills, rivers, neighbourhoods, lakes, months, familiar artefacts and some biological species low on the taxonomy turned out to comply to both criteria for proper name status. Proper name agreement with names for neighbourhoods could be either locative (presumably with ‘place’ as basic level term) or according to the noun for ‘neighbourhood’ and names for groups could agree according to the noun for ‘group’ or according to the noun used to refer to the group’s members. One consultant accepted common noun agreement with names of lakes as an alternative for proper name agreement.

As we move towards the margins of a (grammatical) category, it becomes more likely that only some of the formal criteria apply or that one encounters variation in their application. Numbers can trigger either Common Noun agreement or Proper Name agreement, the latter being highly marked stylistically. They do lack an initial vowel. Nouns retain their initial vowel and their usual agreement pattern when used autonymically, although Proper Name agreement is not entirely ungrammatical. Autonyms based on proper names, in contrast, obligatorily trigger Proper Name agreement. This might be due to the fact that they lack an initial vowel. Finally, some names that are readily construed as Proper Names in English, such as names for languages, brooks and countries, show no grammatical proper name behaviour in Kirundi.

At least personal names and names for familiar artefacts can trigger agreement pattern VII, XII or XIII, with an augmentative or diminutive reading. I called this type of

agreement *emotive agreement*. It is not clear to which extent emotive agreement is possible with other types of Proper Names. Proper name agreement and emotive agreement in Kirundi confirm Van Langendonck's views on the meaning of names.

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