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# A pragmatic analysis of some Kirundi ongoing checks

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**UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL**  
**SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
**AND LITERATURE**

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SOME**  
**KIRUNDI ONGOING CHECKS**

BY

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## DEDICATION

To my cherished parents for all that they are to me.

To my brother and sisters for the warmth we shared at home.

To my brother Jean-Paul NYIRUBUTAMA and his warmates for what they did.

To my cherished nephew David B.R.

**These pages are warmly dedicated.**

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### *I.1 THE BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM*

In general, linguists deal with small units of language such as words, sentences, speech-acts, etc... but they also tackle units larger than a speech-act, e.g., conversation. According to Wardhaugh (1985), conversation is defined as a social activity which involves the participation of both speakers and listeners. In a conversation, there must be a common understanding, otherwise there would be a failure in communication. In addition, conversation has a great importance in any community of the world. It is a tool for communication because it is through conversation that people convey messages, that people exchange ideas and so forth.

In short, conversation is an aspect of language which is very useful for human beings. Fromkin and Rodman (1978) affirm that:

*Whatever else people may do when they come together ...  
they talk ... we live in a world of words ... we talk face  
to face and over the telephone ...*

So, conversation is man's everyday life. Hence, in any society there are certain specific rules governing the conduct of a conversation, the observation of which

facilitates communication. That is why the study of Kirundi conversational strategies in our society is necessary.

Besides, the significance of Kirundi in national life arises from the fact that Kirundi is the only national language used by the population; so it is a language that we hear always. All these factors motivated us to investigate our language so as to find out more about its functioning and the speech community which uses it.

In this respect, it was decided to choose Kirundi ongoing checks as the subject of our research. And the latter appears in a conversation to keep it going and to assure the speaker's or the listener's attention to and interest in what is being said but not necessarily the content.

Indeed, this field has been ignored in Kirundi Pragmatics. Up to now, not much has been done in the area of Pragmatics in general. Researchers were interested in Syntactic and Semantic relations, and therefore this study is justified.

## *I.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM*

As stated above, the ongoing checks are used to check how a conversation is kept going: the words and phrases that are put into use when it is already opened. The

ongoing checks can follow or precede utterances in conversation. They serve to maintain social contact between the interlocutors. They have a strong social meaning which submerges all other meanings. They make a conversation cooperative and dynamic.

Besides, they are universal: they exist in all languages of the world. They are some of the conventions that people follow in a conversation. So, in choosing the study of Kirundi ongoing checks as the subject of our research, our aim is to see how these conversational devices are used in a conversation; which place they take in a conversation. In short, we are going to examine some Kirundi ongoing checks in their contexts, to see whether those expressions do respect some Pragmatics theories such as the theory of implicature, the deictic meaning, the functions of those conversational devices as well as their phatic function. This study will contribute to a better understanding of Kirundi ongoing checks and the linguistic problem, which we think the study will attempt to resolve, is the fact that Kirundi ongoing checks are much more useful in a conversation than one may think. Even if the use of Kirundi ongoing checks is sometimes unconscious, it plays a great role for the effectiveness of communication and maintenance of social contract.

### *I.3 OBJECTIVES*

The general objective is to see how conversation in Kirundi is sustained by some "rules" and principles to achieve order. That is why when a conversation is begun, speakers have an obligation to keep it going and close it gracefully.

In this respect, our specific objectives are:

- a) to study how Kirundi ongoing checks are used in a conversation.
- b) to investigate how the ongoing checks are expressions and noises which indicate the approval of the fact of speaking.
- c) to establish the social (pragmatic) significance of these ongoing checks.

### *I.4 STRUCTURE OF THE WORK*

This thesis has four main parts:

The first one deals with the introduction of the whole work: the background to the problem, the statement of the problem and the objectives of the study.

The second part provides a theoretical framework, to the study by relating Pragmatics to the conversational strategies known as ongoing checks.

The third part of the work is the research methodology and it shows how the investigation was conducted and the data was collected.

The fourth part, which is the most important one, is the "Pragmatic analysis of some Kirundi ongoing checks": here we apply some theories, described in the literature review, to our collected data.

The work ends with a conclusion which gives an account of the whole work in general.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *II.1 INTRODUCTION*

Taking part in a conversation requires your cooperation and participation even when you are not actually talking or intending to talk very much or at all. That is why conversation must be a cooperative activity. Lack of cooperation kills the activity. So, having managed to begin a conversation, we are faced with the task of keeping it going. That task requires therefore a set of skills of a different kind from opening the conversation to closing it.

When we speak, particularly if we want to hold the floor for a while, we must ensure that we indeed have listeners and continue to have listeners. Moreover, we must try to see whether our listeners are attending willingly. What we need is some kind of assurance that what we are saying is having some effect. When we are listening to others, we also feel a need to show we are listening either to encourage the speaker or merely to be polite. Therefore, there exist many important indicators of attention such as ongoing checks.

What are ongoing checks?

As we know, people stress the need to see language as a dynamic, social and interactive phenomenon between the speaker and the hearer. So, particularly for our topic, the ongoing checks exist thanks to the culture shared by the speaker and the hearer. In other words, in order to sustain their conversations (to make it successful), there must be certain exchanges such as those ongoing checks between the speaker and hearer. That is why the success of a dialogue largely depends on people recognizing their communicative weaknesses through the use of clarification like ongoing checks, e.g. the speaker: Are you with me?

the hearer: Hmh.

The speaker checks if the hearer is attending willingly, and the hearer shows the speaker that he is following.

Therefore, this study focusses on some Kirundi ongoing checks. Since ongoing checks exist in all languages, we have preferred to attempt a study of that kind of exchanges which appear in Kirundi because it is Kirundi that we hear more in our immediate environment. We will carry out a pragmatic analysis of some Kirundi ongoing checks. But before applying some pragmatic theories to our collected data, it is necessary first to define pragmatics and to present the theoretical framework of the present study. It should be highlighted at the outset that the topic under discussion falls under pragmatics.

Pragmatics is a study of language in use, therefore it is concerned with all concepts in relation with a good understanding of language usage. Some of those concepts are: the context of an utterance, the deictic meaning, the conversational analysis, the theory of implicature, and the phatic function. For example, the use of ongoing checks cannot be understood without the context. Levinson (1983:21) states:

*Pragmatics is a study of relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding.*

Simultaneously, that relation between language and the context of an utterance is partly defined by deixis which is one of the central topics in Pragmatics and to some extent, Semantics.

In fact, the ongoing checks and deictic words cannot be studied out of their contexts. So they share a property: they cannot be studied out of context. Deixis is concerned with the relationship between structures of languages and the context in which they are used. Besides, according to Levinson (1983), the notion of conversational implicature is one of the single most important ideas of Pragmatics.

Conversational analysis, on its turn, is made of techniques used for the study of conversations and all its strategies like the use of ongoing checks. It is a tool of pragmatics.

The last concept of pragmatics that we will discuss is the phatic function of language. Like other functions of language, the phatic function is useful for the effects of the uses of language.

A detailed discussion (and review of the relevant literature) of the above-mentioned concepts is presented below. It should be emphasized that any discussion of the topic cannot overlook these concepts.

## II.2 WHAT IS PRAGMATICS ?

Many disciplines have contributed to the study of human communication. Pragmatics is one of those disciplines.

Pragmatics has contributed to a deeper understanding of human conversational skills. Therefore, many scholars have tried to define Pragmatics. Gumperz (1982:3) defines Pragmatics as follows:

*Pragmatics is a study which is concerned with the analysis of communicative processes involved in human learning, social, cooperation and underlying social evolution. It concentrates directly on the verbal strategies of speaker (hearer coordination, as revealed in turn-taking) and other processes of conversational processes.*

I find this definition complete. It specifies the important points which Pragmatics tackles such as a good understanding of human behaviour and a functioning of verbal signs in human cooperative processes.

Another definition is offered by Brown and Yule (1983) who suggest that in Pragmatics, we are concerned with what people using language are doing and accounting for the linguistic devices in the discourse as the means employed in what they are doing.

This definition of Brown and Yule (1983) helps us to see how people make effort to describe their linguistic regularities used to describe their intentions and meanings.

Another scholar, Leech (1983:6), defines Pragmatics by comparing it with Semantics.

*Both fields are concerned with meaning but the difference between them, can be traced to two different uses of the verb to mean. Meaning in Pragmatics is defined relative to a speaker or user of the language, whereas Meaning in Semantics is abstraction from particular situations, speakers or listeners.*

Here Leech (1983), by comparing Pragmatics and Semantics, gives a rough distinction and makes us understand that Pragmatics is in fact a study of meaning in relation to speech situations.

Like Leech (1983), Ervin-Tripp (1964) quoted in Gumperz and Hymes (1972), also defines Pragmatics by comparing it with Semantics. He states that:

*Usually, students of communication distinguish Pragmatics and semantics as follows: Semantics indicates verbal categorization of objects, actions, and experience in terms of their objective properties while Pragmatics deals with the effect of symbols of various kinds on speakers*

*and listeners, i.e. the significance of what is communicated for the actors involved.*

Pragmatics here is concerned with the effective communication that requires that both speakers and listeners agree both on the meaning of words and on the social import or values attached to the choice of expression.

Pragmatics is also a theory of language use. According to Kempson (1977), the main aim of such theory is expected to be the explanation of how speakers can use the sentences of that language to convey messages which do not bear any necessary relation to the linguistic content of the sentence used.

Such theory of Pragmatics explains also the relation between the use of sentence and the linguistic act (illocutionary act) which that sentence is used to perform.

However, Levinson (1983:7) has given another definition of Pragmatics where he stresses the role of context. He says:

*Pragmatics is concerned solely with performance principles of language use. A theory of Pragmatics would essentially be concerned with the disambiguation of sentences by the contexts in which they were uttered.*

In fact, it is clear that context does a lot in the interpretation of utterances that make an effective communication.

After having examined different definitions of Pragmatics given by scholars, we have noticed that all of them share something: Pragmatics is related to language in use. To sum up, we have adopted a definition which is understandable and complete.

*Pragmatics covers both content-dependent aspects of language structure and principles of language usage and understanding that have nothing or little to do with linguistic structure. (Levinson, 1983:9)*

In this case, since the ongoing checks exist in all languages and help to make clarity between speakers and listeners when communicating, and since they cannot be used out of context, our operational definition is:

*Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalised or encoded in the structure of language. (Levinson, 1983:9)*

### **II.3 THE CONTEXT OF AN UTTERANCE**

In order to interpret an utterance in a piece of discourse, it is necessary to know who the speaker and hearer are, the time and the place of the production of the discourse. That is why it is necessary to take into account the context in which a piece of discourse occurs. So, many scholars have given their points of view on the role of

context. Hymes (1964), quoted in Brown and Yule (1982:38), suggests that:

*The role of context in interpretation is on the one hand limiting the range of possible interpretations and on the other, in supporting the intended interpretation. (Hymes 1964 quoted in Brown and Yule, 1982: 38)*

For Hymes (1964), a context can support a range of meanings. When a form is used in context, it eliminates the meanings possible to that context other than those the form can signal. The context eliminates from consideration, the meanings possible to the form other than those the context can support. So, Hymes (1964) emphasizes the role of context in the interpretation of utterances as it helps to overcome ambiguity and vagueness. That is why scholars like Levinson (1983) are aware of the importance of context.

Levinson (1983) emphasizes the role of context in saying that the scope of context is not easy to define but one must consider the social and psychological world in which the language user operates at any given time.

Among the features of the context of an utterance we will name only those that are important and relevant to the interpretation of utterances. These are presented below.

1. Participants: Participants must be reasonable people who can be expected to deal with one another. There must be a certain "commonsenseness" among them. In other words, each of the participants who come into contact with

one another should be able to deal adequately with the world. In short, participants in a conversation must share a certain amount of background knowledge, they must share a set of beliefs, that is, certain things must be known to all parties; others may be known; some will have to be explained; questions may be asked for clarification, difficulties will be negotiated or cleared somehow; people will be understanding and tolerant; and the various processes that are involved will be conducted decently. This is the view of Wardhaugh (1985).

2. Surrounding physical context : Each conversation must have a location in both time and space. A conversation must have a where and a when of an utterance. The role of physical setting is important to the interpretation of utterances. Setting gives structure to the utterance.

3. Degree of formality: Speakers and Hearers must be aware of the specific choices of words and phrases according to the topic under discussion.

Wardhaugh (1985) asserts that if we were to ignore the context of use in a conversation, we would be forced to conclude that its meaning would be vague and ambiguous.

#### II.4 DEICTIC MEANING

Ongoing checks are forms which cannot be understood or studied out of their context. That is the case of deictic forms (words). According to Hurford and Heasley (1983:63):

*A deictic word is one which takes some element of its meaning from the situation (i.e. the speaker, the addressee, the time and the place) of the utterance in which it is used.*

In fact, when people speak, they often refer to things in their environment. They can identify things by pointing and saying this ("near me") and that ("not near me"). Obviously, the words this and that cannot be defined other than by saying that they identify by pointing -that is, by deixis. Similarly, the words I, you, he, she etc... vary in what they identify: it depends on who is speaking, and to whom and what third parties there are in the environment. So, we have:

- a) place-deixis (this, that, here, there)
- b) person-deixis (I, you, he, it, etc...)
- c) time-deixis (yesterday, today, tomorrow, this morning, etc...)

Deixis belongs within the domain of Pragmatics because it directly concerns the relationship between the structure of languages and the contexts in which they are. Levinson (1983) says that the single obvious way in which the

relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of languages themselves is through the phenomenon of deixis. According to him, deixis includes:

- a) first and second person pronoun
- b) tense

According to Levinson (1983), tense-deixis is one of the factors ensuring that nearly all sentences when uttered are deictically anchored to a context of utterance. Besides, every utterance has its context-dependency because of the tense. Morphemes indicating tense like was, is, will, etc... have the context-dependent property. And that is the case for first and second pronouns.

- c) specific time and place adverbs (now and here)
- b) a variety of other grammatical features tied directly to the circumstances of utterance.

Deixis concerns the ways in which languages encode, grammaticalize features of the context of utterance or speech-event, and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance.

Coupland (1988) states that the facts of deixis should act as a constant reminder to the theoretical linguist of the simple but important fact that natural languages are especially designed to interaction.

Deixis can be classified among the features of context because like other features of context, deixis identifies objects, persons and events in terms of their relation to the speaker in time and space. For instance, the speaker must be able to identify the participants in conversation - himself and the person(s) to whom he is speaking. The forms with which he achieves this are the first and second personal pronouns: I/we and you, respectively in English. The choice of pronoun is, however, often involved with other social factors. For instance, French 'vous' can refer to a group of people or just one respected addressee.

#### *II.5 CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS*

One may wonder why Pragmatics is the only kind of empirical study that conversation deserves. First of all, it is because conversation is the prototypical kind of language use; second, it is the most basic kind of language use while Pragmatics is the empirical kind of investigation of language usage.

Therefore, the study of the whole conversational organisation including verbal strategies like the use of ongoing checks must be done through empirical techniques of Pragmatics such as conversational analysis.

In fact, conversational analysis is a sociological study composed by a set of techniques that the members of

a society themselves utilize to interpret and act within their own social worlds. Hence, the use of the term ethnomethodology.

Conversational analysis is an empirical approach, its methods are essentially inductive. Search is made for recurring patterns through many records of naturally occurring conversations which is different from methods in discourse analysis which is restricted to data.

In conversational analysis, the data consists of tape-recordings and transcripts of naturally occurring conversation with little attention paid to the nature of the context as that might be conceived with sociolinguists: whether the participants are friends or belong to a certain social group, or whether the context is formal or informal.

That kind of analysis (conversational analysis) is relevant to our topic because it concentrates directly on verbal strategies of speaker/listener coordination as revealed in turn-taking and other practices of conversational management.

As stated above, the main objects of study in most existing forms of conversational analysis are communicative signs as such and their patterning in texts i.e. either in written passages or in transcripts of spoken dialogue.

Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) were the first to focus on conversation as the simplest instance of naturally organized activity and attempt to study the process of conversational management without making any assumption about social and cultural background of participants. Their research concentrated on isolating strategies effecting speaker change, opening and closing conversations, establishing semantic relations between utterances and otherwise controlling and channelling the course of an interaction. According to Gumperz (1982), conversational analysts are concerned with naturally occurring instances of everyday talk, mechanisms that serve to allocate turns of speaking, to negotiate changes in focus and to manage and direct the flow of interaction and which so far has made little use of notions like event and frame.

#### *II.6 CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE*

Implicature refers to what an utterance or uttered expression implies rather than what it literally means. This theory is applicable to the conversational processes. Grice (1975) uses the term conversational implicature to refer to the assumptions a hearer must take to reinterpret messages so as to accord with presumption that this conversational principle is observed. Similarly, Levinson (1983) asserts that an important contribution made by the notion of implicature is that it provides some explicit account of how it is possible to mean (in some general

sense) more than what is actually 'said' (i.e. more than what is literally expressed by the conventional sense of the linguistic meaning of the sentences, to find the hidden message, or the implied meaning.

Thus, the distinction between what the speaker explicitly says and what he tacitly implies and a classification of implicatures into various types are now part of the standard machinery for Pragmatic analysis.

### *II.7 DEFINITIONS AND FUNCTIONS OF ONGOING CHECKS*

Pragmatics has been particularly concerned with the use of language to establish and maintain social relationships. The phatic use of language has been frequently commented on; particularly the conventional use of language to open talk-exchanges and close them.

Conversational analysts also have frequently been concerned with the use of language to negotiate role-relationships, the exchange of turns in a conversation.

So, once talk has begun, most conversationalists assume that they have undertaken a definite obligation to keep it going. If they intend to discontinue it, they must do it gracefully.

Keeping it going also requires the various parties "to work" so as to show that all get some satisfaction out of the activity because cutting talk short is a clear indication of failure or disagreement.

Since conversation must occur in an endless variety of circumstances, there must be some easily recognized principles to follow, to prevent chaos, achieve order.

Therefore, conversation turns out, upon analysis, to be a highly structured activity, in which people operate with a set of basic conventions.

Conversation can be thought of as having an opening, a middle and an end. The participants make their moves and often seem to follow certain rules as the dialogue proceeds.

We always monitor ourselves and others to keep the cooperative enterprise going. We have said above that there exist rules and principles to keep that enterprise going by using ongoing checks when conversing. And they appear in all languages in the world.

To both speaker and listener, these actions, noises, expressions indicate approval of the fact of speaking. But they indicate that one party is willing to give the floor to the other in the expectation that at some later point,

the other will be equally considerate. They are signs of manners rather than of agreement, although they may or may not be according to circumstances..

The speaker interjects expressions like: You know, you see, you understand. These are indicators of our desire that the listener acknowledges that we still have his or her attention i.e. to show his/her need for constant reassurance.

To be a good speaker, then, you must be aware of your listeners and know whether you have their attention and are not about to lose it, particularly if you wish to keep on speaking. Sometimes you can do this by deliberately involving your listeners in your speaking by directly referring to them. Expressions like:

- And you know what I said?
- Can you guess what I said?
- Let's suppose ...

Speakers must be sensitive to their listeners' needs, they must try to become aware of any difficulty they are experiencing. They must respond in some way to the speaker if they expect that person to continue speaking. For example, a teacher trying to get certain points across to students must rely heavily on indicators of both attention and understanding if he or she is to perceive that task to be successful.

If the students just sit like rows of dummies, the teacher has no way of knowing what is going on, whether or not what is being taught is being learned.

Questions, interruptions, nods of agreement (and attention) can help you, but still you may sometimes find it necessary to resort to direct appeal to find out whether the audience is still attentive.

You may ask certain questions for this purpose: simple yes-no questions; examples:

- Ok so far?
- Do you get what I mean?
- Are you with me?
- Are you following?
- You know what I mean?
- Got it?
- Right?
- Am I making myself clear?
- You see? etc...

You do this to give your listeners the opportunity to express their views on the matter. The listeners can use a confirming device:

- What you are saying is ...
- You mean... etc...

Those nods of attention or agreement or those ongoing checks which appear during conversation are also called contextualization devices. They serve as channelling of interpretation. They are the means by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, they show how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows it. These features are habitually used and perceived but rarely consciously noted and almost never talked about directly.

Examples of ongoing checks by the speaker:

- Do you see?
- Can you guess what I said?
- Are you with me?
- Do I make myself clear?
- Don't you think?
- Let me put it another way...
- Don't get me wrong.
- What I am trying to say is ...

Examples of ongoing checks by the listener:

- You mean...
- Have I got you right?
- Are you serious?
- Hmh
- I don't get you.
- Let's get that straight.
- Do you mean that ...
- You are kidding.

- Are you implying that?
- Are you saying that?

Otherwise, there could be no recognizable devices for beginnings, endings, no procedures for filling in the middles, non rules about who could say that, when and how.

Such behaviour is, after all, cooperative. You are trying to help the speaker communicate what he or she wants to get across to you to the extent that you are willing to point out where the attempt is failing. So, you must be prepared to break in and request a repetition or a clarification.

Listeners have available to them a variety of ways in which to signal their attentiveness to speakers. Their movements and gestures as they listen are important. But many signals involve the use of language. Some expressions such as Yes, Hmh, Sure, Quite? I see, Yeah, OK, do not even interrupt the speaker's flow of words.

Completing a speaker's sentences is also possible. such completions may keep the flow going but they also sometimes indicate a desire to take over the conversation because they can be used quite easily to engineer interruptions.

Therefore, they may be studied in process and context rather than in abstract. A contextualisation cue is any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signalling of contextual presuppositions. Such cues may have a number of such linguistic realisations depending on the historical given repertoire of the participants.

Conversational openings, closings and other sequencing strategies can all have similar contextualizing functions. Although such cues carry information, meanings are conveyed as part of interactive process.

Unlike words that can be discussed out of context, the meanings of contextualization cues are implicit.

They are not usually talked about out of context. Their signalling value depends on the participants' tacit awareness of their meaningfulness. When all participants understand and notice the relevant cues, interpretive processes are then taken for granted and tend to go unnoticed.

However, when a listener does not react to a cue or is unaware of its function, interpretation is brought to a participant's attention, it tends to be seen in attitudinal terms.

So, a speaker is said to be unfriendly, impertinent, rude, uncooperative, or fails to make himself understood. By signalling a speech activity, a speaker also signals the social presuppositions in terms of which a message is to be interpreted.

They are learned by interrupting with others in institutionally defined networks of relationships. In short, the conversational strategies, the ongoing checks in particular, make conditions favorable to establishing personal contact and negotiating shared interpretations because of indirect ways in which they function and the variety of surface forms they can take.

#### *II.8 ONGOING CHECKS AS PART OF PHATIC EXCHANGES*

Jakobson (1960) has classified the communicative functions in five functions: the informative function, the expressive function (express the originator's feelings and attitudes), the directive function (commands and requests), the aesthetic function and finally the phatic function of language.

Among these functions, the ones which most directly involve the social roles of language are the expressive, directive and phatic functions.

In fact, the phatic function of language, called phatic communion by Malinowski (1935), has the function of keeping communication lines open and keeping social relations in good repair. Here, it is not so much what ones says, but the fact that one says it at all, that matters. It is a kind of language used for establishing an atmosphere or maintaining social contact rather than exchanging information or ideas.

This study is concerned with that phatic function of language. And a study of phatic function in Kirundi contributes to identifying and describing how Barundi use conversational strategies to maintain social contact and non-conflicting relationship. It is our view, however, that phatic expressions are used in all cultures to satisfy social norms like talking about weather and health or polite questions such as "how is the family?", "how is the new-born?", etc... In Kirundi, those expressions exist. For example, when a person finds a friend who is collecting food stuff:

1st person: Mpa dukeyi = give me some

2nd person: Ngo wakire = come and have some

Meanwhile, the phatic communion by Malinowski (1935) is defined by Leech (1983:141) as follows:

*... such conversation, if it has no other illocutionary point, serves to extend common ground of agreement and experience shared by the participants.*

Similarly, the phatic maxim emphasizes the need to avoid silence: "Avoid silence or keep talking".

Apart from those phatic expressions above, there exist phatic exchanges that we find in utterances during a conversation such as ongoing checks. They are phatic exchanges and they become important speech events in the sense that they satisfy a social norm. They serve to maintain contact, to be sure that the message given has arrived. for example: Cold here, isn't it?

This piece of chit-chat of phatic communion without any other goal except the maintenance of social relations. It is also one way of interpreting the maxim of manner and maintaining friendly social relations.

The phatic exchanges are often empty of meaning. they are words which do not convey meaning but have a purely social function.

A social psychiatrist Berne (1966), quoted in Gumperz (1982) says that:

*Phatic exchanges are seen as a mutual stroking ritual in which a balance is maintained between the amount of pleasure administered and received.*

This use of phatic exchanges, particularly the ongoing checks, is very delicate and complex, yet strategic for all parties. The shared knowledge of the interlocutors plays an important role. By using them, one avoids uncooperative

and impolite behaviour. One can uphold the "Cooperative Principle", the politeness principle and the use of phatic exchanges without being conscious of the existence of such principles.

### *II.9 SUMMARY*

To summarize, Pragmatics which is a theory of language use helps us to know, to study and to understand all the means used when using a language. Among those means, we are concerned with the expressions, the nods of attention and agreement used by people when they converse. These appear both at the beginning, the middle and at the end of a conversation.

Our study is particularly concerned with those which fit the middle of a Kirundi conversation. This is because it is the Kirundi language that we hear more often.

In fact, these expressions (ongoing checks) are used both by the speaker and the listener, they come unconsciously, they are necessary for the success of a dialogue, for the efficient use of language. They are called ongoing checks because they are used by the speaker to check if the listener is following, and by the listener to show attention.

The ongoing checks like deictic words cannot be studied out of context because without context they are not meaningful. Therefore, the context is necessary in the interpretation of an utterance.

The study will focus on the application of the above-mentioned theories to our collected data: Kirundi ongoing checks in their contexts.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### *III.1 INTRODUCTION*

This study is a pragmatic one; it comprises a theoretical part and a practical one. The theories we have chosen to use are pragmatic theories: Grice's theory of implicature, deictic meaning, the functions of ongoing checks, and the phatic function.

The practical work involves collecting the items to be analyzed with the aim of applying the above-mentioned theories to the data. In particular, we show the functions of Kirundi ongoing checks. In short, the work intends to find out to what extent Kirundi ongoing checks are used in accordance with the theory of deixis and the theory of implicature as well as the phatic communion. The evidence comes from the study of some Kirundi ongoing checks in various contexts because they cannot be studied out of their context of use. Otherwise, they have no meaning.

### *III.2 DATA COLLECTION*

There exist many methods of collecting data. However, some of them present shortcomings and they do not fit our study. For example, the natural observation method consists

of listening to people talking freely and requires going from one place to another in order to get samples in various contexts; in other words, it consists simply of collecting chunks of conversation and then transcribing them for subsequent analysis. We dropped this method because one cannot easily predict when ongoing checks are used in conversations and they come unconsciously from the mouth of the speaker or the listener. There exist even some conversations in which we cannot find enough of them.

Another method which is not suitable to our study is the questionnaire technique because our study is not of a survey kind. On the other hand, Brown and Yule (1983:20) suggests that:

*The discourse analyst's "data" is taken from written texts or tape-recordings. It is rarely in the form of a single sentence. This type of linguistic material is sometimes described as "performance data" and many contain features such as hesitations, slips ...*

In accordance with this statement, we have chosen to use a written text to collect our research data. As a matter of fact, the choice of a written text was not random. We have realized that instead of recording oral conversations, which may or may not contain ongoing checks, and transcribing them soon after, analyzing a carefully selected written text, one which is rich in the use of ongoing checks, would fit our study better than other methods.

Moreover, the text we have chosen to use is a Rundi play entitled KARABA UNDABE written by Nzikobanyanka. We have chosen this play for three reasons: first, our choice was motivated by the fact that the play is particularly rich in ongoing checks which constitute the devices we are investigating. Second, the play is written in standard Kirundi, and thirdly the play is very interesting: it talks about everyday life.

The play KARABA UNDABE relates things that happen in everyday life. In fact, a man called Fideri who is an intellectual loves an intellectual woman named Rosa. They love each other, they want to get married. However, Fideri's parents, Yozefu and Mariya with Fideri's uncle, Muryango, are very much against the marriage. Their main reason being that Rosa, being educated, will be no good with the household chores. Fideri's parents request to choose another girl of the village that they find more suitable. Her name is Sisiriya, but she, in turn, loves another man. In brief, Fideri is having problems at home. He tries to find people who can help him convince his parents. The first to come to his house is his brother-in-law Aderino who came from Europe (Germany). The second to come to the rescue is the Priest of the village along with his advisor; they talk to Fideri's mother: Mariya accepts the wedding while Fideri's father, Yozefu, continues to disagree. At the end of the play, Yozefu eventually agrees to the marriage and there is a big celebration.

The play contains all the conversational strategies such as openings, closings, topic-shift devices and so forth because there is a turn-taking system. In short, the play constitutes a good piece of material for conversational analysis.

The data for this analysis is drawn from the Rundi play above-described. But since the play is divided in three acts, we have found Act II richer in ongoing checks than the other two. So, examples of Kirundi ongoing checks have been isolated and analysed one by one by considering their contexts of use.

### *III.3 TOWARDS DATA ANALYSIS*

The analysis of the collected data (some ongoing checks) will be based on the theory of implicature and the theory of deixis and at the same time, we will show the functions of those Kirundi ongoing checks based on the distinction between some which are used by the speaker (to attract the listener's attention, to check if the listener is still attentive, or to clarify what he is saying) and others used by the listener (to show his attention by agreeing or disagreeing with a speaker, to encourage the speaker to continue speaking, or to seek clarification or comment from the speaker).

Thus the phatic function of some Kirundi ongoing checks will be taken into consideration in its own section. All this will be achieved by considering the speech-acts preceding the ongoing checks and hence knowing their functions. Besides, since the interpretation of an utterance must be based on the context in which the speaker and the listener are interacting, the analysis will tackle the whole utterance including the ongoing check because the total meaning of an utterance derives from its context.

## CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### *IV.1. INTRODUCTION TO DATA ANALYSIS*

Our topic being "A Pragmatic Analysis of some Kirundi Ongoing Checks", we have drawn our research data from a Rundi play entitled KARABA UNDABE (Act II). We have isolated only Kirundi Ongoing Checks that we will analyse one by one by considering their contexts of use.

First of all, we will describe the functions of those Kirundi Ongoing Checks. Those functions depend on the intention a speaker or a listener has when uttering an ongoing check. In fact, according to Wardhaugh (1985), when speaking, a speaker must assure himself that he indeed has listeners and continues to have listeners. On his turn, the listener must feel a need to show he is listening to the speaker. Second, we will see if the ongoing checks chosen to be analysed have implied meanings or not, because listeners and speakers often, "mean more than they say". According to Grice (1975:44), quoted in Brown and Yule (1983:31), conversational implicature is determined by the "conventional meaning of the words used". Thirdly, as far

as deixis is concerned, we will find out whether Kirundi ongoing checks have the property of deictic words or not.

And finally, we analyse the phatic function of ongoing checks.

#### *IV.2 DATA ANALYSIS*

This part focusses directly on the examples of Kirundi ongoing checks and their contextual meanings. In fact, ongoing checks can have different structures: they can be:

- particles that indicate the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse e.g. "*Erega*" "*Mbega*"  
"*By the way*"
- single words e.g. "*Ego*" "*Yes*"
- expressions e.g. "*Ngize nti*" "*I say that*"
- questions e.g. "*Si vyo?*" "*Isn't it?*"
- two or multiple word-utterances e.g. "*Ehe ... urazi ko...*"  
"*Look ...do you know that ...*"

The communicative and phatic functions of those Kirundi ongoing checks, their deictic meanings, and their implied meanings are going to be discussed based on a selection of examples of ongoing checks that we present in their contexts of use.

Example 1 line 2 page 110

Mariya: Ego muhu, niwakire agatebe

T: Yes boy, have a seat

In the Kirundi culture, when a visitor reaches his guest's house he greets before he enters the house. And someone in the house responds to welcome him. Here in this context, "*Ego*" "*Yes*" is used by Mariya who responds to Muryango who is greeting. That word "*Ego*" "*Yes*" is used, generally, to respond to someone's yes/no questions. Muryango says: "*Is there anyone in the house?*" and Mariya responds with "*Ego*" "*Yes*" she even adds: "*Have a seat*". "*Ego*" "*Yes*" is in fact a single word which stands for an ongoing check used by a listener. Its function is to assure the speaker that there is indeed someone who is ready to listen to the good or bad news that brings him. The ongoing check "*Ego*" "*Yes*" does not have an implied meaning. Besides it is not a deictic word. However, it has a phatic function because the listener uses it to encourage the speaker to go ahead with what he has to say to him. The addressee behaves cooperatively and unrudely by allowing in and offering a seat to the addressor.

Example 2 line 3 page 111

Yozefu: Erega Muryango, hanura umuhungu wawe  
yananiranye

T: By the way Muryango, try to advise your son  
who is stubborn.

Fideri's father (Yozefu) wants to tell Fideri's uncle (Muryango) that Fideri is stubborn. That he does not listen to his parents. Yozefu wants Muryango to help him to convince Fideri who does not want to marry Sisiriya. In general, "Erega" is a pre-announcement, a particle, like in this particular context of use. Yozefu starts his utterance with the particle "Erega" "By the way" which stands for an ongoing check. Its function is to attract the listener's attention. The ongoing check "Erega" "By the way" does not have an implied meaning and it does not have a deictic form either. Its phatic function is reinforced by making it followed by the name of the addressee (Muryango). In conversation, mentioning the listener's name makes the latter more attentive as he feels he is needed by the speaker to fulfil a two-way communicative function.

Example 3 line 16 page 111

Fideli: Yamara, ndabamena umutwe ntari ibuye.

T: How can I really break your head if I am not a stone?

When Fideri asks for another drink because he is very thirsty, his father is worried because he thinks that Fideri can beat them if he gets drunk. And Fideri disagrees. That single word "Yamara", generally means "mugabo", "ariko": "but". But in this particular context, it has another meaning which is "really". It expresses surprise. That is why its function, here, is to respond to

the speaker with strong surprise and disagreement. It has an implied meaning which is : "*How can I really dare do that?*" Besides, the ongoing check "*yamara*" "*really*" is not a deictic word. "*Yamara*" is here used as the introducer of the speaker's comment. It is a mild term expressing a caution or reservation that does not upset the listener and thus ensures cooperation, understanding and tolerance between the participants, henceforth its phatic function.

Example 4 line 19 page 111

Fideli: Aho rero, mbega murabizi? Namye kwa ya ntore none nje nifuza ico nagiriyeyo.

T: Well, do you know? I went to see the beauty and I now regret having gone there.

Fideri went to see Sisiriya, the girl that his parents want him to marry. When Fideri goes back to his home, he wants to tell his parents what has happened to him. The expression "*mbega murabizi*" "*do you know?*" is a pre-announcement in general and even in this particular context. It stands for an ongoing check used by a speaker in order to introduce his informative utterance. The function of this ongoing check "*mbega murabizi*" "*do you know?*" is to attract the listener's attention. Here Fideri wants to attract his parents' attention: he wants to tell them about his misadventure, he continues telling them how Sisiriya hid when she saw him. The ongoing check "*mbega murabizi*" "*do yo know?*" has no implied meaning but it

belongs to person deixis in that it requires that there be people (more than one) whom the speaker is addressing. As far as its phatic function is concerned, this expression can only be uttered once there already exists social contact and acceptance among the participants. The presupposition is that the latter already know each other and have shared knowledge about the topic about to be introduced.

Example 5 line 22 page 111

Fideli: Ngize nti namye kwa Sisiriya ...

T: I say that I stopped by Sisiriya's place ...

When Fideri says he went to see the "beauty", Sisiriya, his mother pretends not to have understood what Fideli means by "intore" "beauty". Fideli's mother (Mariya) does not get well what Fideli wants to say. That is why Fideli goes on explaining who he is referring to as the "beauty". Fideli uses the expression "ngize nti" "I say that" as it is used normally in the Kirundi culture. In fact, that expression stands for an ongoing check which has the function of clarifying what seems obscure to a listener. Fideli uses it because he sees that his mother does not seem to know the person referred to. The ongoing check "ngize nti" "I say that" does not have an implied meaning and it belongs to person deixis category in that the speaker refers to himself vis-a-vis his addressee. Clarifying what seems unclear or misunderstood shows a

speaker's willingness to behave cooperatively with the listener and thus the phatic function is fulfilled in that way.

Example 6 line 45 page 112

Fideri: N'Imana ntikavyumve ...

T: May God not hear what I am saying ...

Fideri is upset. He asks his parents if they think seriously because they are obliging him to pay too much for the dowry besides choosing a wife for him. His father is also upset. He even complains about Fideri's behaviour and says: *"We gave you life, we brought you up and now you say we are talking nonsense"*. Fideri responds to his father by saying: *"N'Imana ntikavyumve" "May God not hear what I am saying"*. This is an expression which expresses a wish. In this context, it stands for an ongoing check. Its function is to respond to the speaker by disagreeing but also with a wish and a strong regret of something said ill-thoughtfully. The ongoing check *"N'Imana ntikavyumve" "May God not hear what I am saying"* has an implied meaning: *"No, that is not what I meant when I said that you should think seriously"*. The ongoing check *"N'Imana ntikavyumve" "May God not hear ..."* does not have any deictic meaning. The phatic function of the expression is to rectify a social gaffe consisting of saying something unacceptable to one's parent. The son reassures his father that under no circumstance can he insult him.

Example 7 line 47 page 112

Fideri: Raba, umusore agomba kwubaka arabwa n'inzu,  
ikori ...

T: Look, a young man who wants to wed must have  
a house, must pay taxes ...

When Fideri's parents ask him to pay too much for the dowry, Fideri starts to enumerate all his financial needs before he gets married because his parents seem to ignore those needs. In this context, "Raba" "Look" is a pre-announcement which serves to introduce a given sentence. Here "Raba" "Look" stands for an ongoing check used by a speaker and which has the function of attracting the listener's attention: Fideri wants his parents to listen to him carefully because he is going to enumerate all his needs. That ongoing check has an implied meaning which is "listen carefully". That single word "Raba" "Look" belongs to person deixis category although it literally refers to space deixis too (e.g. if someone points to or shows something). The phatic function of the expression is undeniable because its context of use is one whereby a son is explaining a genuine social problem to his parents who are likely to offer sympathy or, to understand their son's situation.

Example 8 line 54 page 112

Fideri: Ehe ngushirire aho ushaka :

T: Let me put things the way you want :

When his father accuses him of spending all his money on beer instead of paying the dowry, Fideri tells him frankly and once for all that someone, who accepts to pay a large amount for the dowry does not care about his future life. Fideri starts his sentence by a whole sentence which is a pre-announcement and which stands for an ongoing check. Its function is to introduce a comment and to attract the listener's attention. The ongoing check "*Ehe ngushirire aho ushaka*" "*Let me put things the way you want*" has an implied meaning which is: "*Let me tell you frankly*". That sentence belongs to person deixis category because the utterance can only have a meaning if one knows who is talking to who ('me' refers to the speaker and 'you' to the hearer). Undoubtedly, the expression has a phatic communion as it serves to reduce the gap between the participants' views and attitudes on a same issue.

Example 9 line 95 page 113

Fideri: ... Hinge ndakuqanyire: ikimbabaza kimbaga  
n'uko bagomba kungoboza amata mu kanwa ...

T: ... Let me seek sympathy from you: what  
upsets me is that there are people who want to  
take away what is precious to me ...

The conversation is between Fideri and his lover Roza. When Roza goes to see Fideri and finds him upset, she realizes it even on Fideri's face and asks what is wrong with him. But Fideri does not want to tell her. Roza

insists, then Fideri eventually decides to tell her what the real problem is. Fideri starts his sentence with "*Hinge ndakuganyire*:" "*Let me seek sympathy from you*" which is a pre-announcement and which stands for an ongoing check. It has the function of attracting the listener's attention. It signals that the speaker (Fideri) has a genuine problem about which he is seeking help. Besides, the ongoing check "*Hinge ndakuganyire*" "*Let me seek sympathy from you*" has an implied meaning: "Listen to me. Let me tell you about my problem". Even that sentence (ongoing check) "*Hinge ndakuganyire*" "*Let me seek sympathy from you*" belongs to the category of person deixis because it presupposes the presence of an addressor (me) and addressee (you). Phatically, you can only seek sympathy from one you are on good terms with, one you trust and who trusts you, in other words, there must be good relations between the two participants.

Example 10 line 98 page 114

Roza: Ugira ngo ndumva ico ugomba kuvuga?

T: I do not really get what you mean.

When Fideri tells Roza that they want to rob him something precious, Roza continues to ask him what he means by something "*precious*"; she uses a sentence which stands for an ongoing check. Its function is to seek comment from the speaker: Roza wants comments from Fideri. The ongoing check "*Ugira ngo ndumva ico ugomba kuvuga?*" "*I do not*

really get what you mean" has no implied meaning although we cannot rule out that Rosa pretends she does not know that he is referring to while she actually does. That utterance belongs to person deixis category signalled by the personal pronouns "I" and "you" that stand for the speaker and listener respectively. Although Roza seems not to have understood what Fideri says, there is a mutual understanding between them. So, there is phatic communion between the participants (addressor and addressee).

Example 11 line 158 page 115

Fideri: Sha twaratase n'ab'i muhira n'igituma  
ntukiyobewe.

T: Hey, I have quarrelled with my parents for a reason that you know well.

Aderino: Ime...

T: That is right...

Fideri tells Aderino that he has quarrelled with his parents and adds that Aderino must know the reason. But Aderino knows a bit of the problem, he wants Aderino to tell him more about it. That is why Fideri says: "Ime ..." "That is right ...". In general, this single word is used to express agreement with someone's statement/question. But in this particular context, the word "Ime ..." "That is right ..." is used as an ongoing check which has the function of encouraging the speaker (Fideri) to continue

speaking, to give the whole information. The ongoing check "*Ime ...*" "*That is right ...*" has no implied meaning. And it does not belong to the category of deixis. Its phatic meaning lies in the fact that it confirms the participant shared knowledge of the subject under discussion. They both know the cause of the quarrel and this is confirmed by the particle 'Ime' (true).

Example 12 line 182 page 116

Fideri: Mugabo ndakurahiye ntuzosubira i Buraya  
ntararanye umugeni muri irya nzu yanje.

T: But I swear that you will go back to Europe  
again before we get married.

Aderino: Nta kindi nabifuriza

T: That was my only wish to you.

This is a short conversation between Aderino and Fideri. The latter assures Aderino that he will not go back to Europe again before he gets married. Aderino replies that it is the only thing he wished for them. Aderino uses that ongoing check "*Nta kindi nabifuriza*" "*That was my only wish to you*" which has the function of agreeing with the speaker on an issue of family concern with great enthusiasm. This ongoing check has an implied meaning which is: "*I totally agree with you*". Besides, it belongs to the category of person deixis because it shows who is talking to who. In phatic terms, the utterance expresses full

agreement between the participants on the marriage issue which is a concern of the whole family.

Example 13 line 201 page 117

Yozefu: Nzure data!

T: Damned my father!

Aderino, Roza, Fideri, Roza's sister are together. They are happy, they even start singing. Fideri's father comes from the house and tells them that since there is no wedding, there is no reason for singing. He even threatens to kick them out. Then Fideri makes him realize that there is a guest among them and an important one. So Fideri's father (Yozefu) is surprised when he hears that it is his son-in-law (Aderino). He says "*Nzure data?! "Damned my father?!"*". In the Kirundi culture, that expression is a swearing: "*Ndakazura data*" "*May I dig out my father's tomb*". But in this particular context, "*Nzure data!?" "Damned my father!?"*" is a question and expresses a great surprise at the same time. It is an ongoing check which has the function of expressing someone's surprise at something he did not know at all while encouraging the speaker to continue speaking and give the whole information. The ongoing check "*Nzure data!?" "Damned my father!?"*" has an implied meaning which is: "*really?" "Do you really mean it?"*". And it belongs to the deixis category because it makes reference to who is being told the news and reacts to it. In the Burundian culture, the in-laws are highly

respected and this ongoing check expresses the importance of the presence of a son-in-law among the family and this per se justifies the expression's phatic meaning.

Example 14 line 205 page 117

Aderino: Ntirikabe muvyeyi

T: Mother, I wish that never happened

Fideri's father is apologizing because he did not see Aderino and greet him. So he tells Aderino: "*please do not go around saying that your father-in-law ignored you*". Aderino replies by: "*Ntirikabe muvyeyi*" "*Mother, I wish that never happened*". This expression is normally a wish and is it in this particular context. The expression stands for an ongoing check used by a listener. Its function reassures the speaker that under no circumstance can the interlocutor disappoint him as he thought would be the case. And it has an implied meaning which is: "*No I cannot do that*" or "*this can never happen to me*". That expression has a person deictic meaning as the speaker is referring to himself. There is phatic communion among the participants because there is mutual agreement on the type of code of conduct that characterises them.

Example 15 line 244 page 118

Mariya: Ehe mupfasoni, twahereye imyaka tumubwira tuti zane inkwano tuze tuguhereze umugeni, arata agati.

T: Look my son, we have been asking him to get the dowry ready and get a wife but in vain.

When Fideri's brother-in-law (Aderino) comes from Europe, he asks Fideri's parents why they do not help him to wed (to find a wife). Then, Fideri's mother: Mariya responds to Aderino and starts her sentence by "Ehe" "Look". Normally, this single word is used to show something to someone. But here, it is used as a pre-announcement, as an introducer. It plays the role of an ongoing check which has the function of attracting the listener's attention. Mariya wants Aderino to listen carefully. She invites him to follow her. "Ehe" "Look" has an implied meaning which is: "Listen". Besides, the single word "Ehe" "Look" has a person deictic meaning because it refers to the addressee. The occurrence of the word "mupfasoni" (a decent person) together with the ongoing check reinforces its phatic function as it shows the social hierarchy existing between the participants.

Example 16 line 246 page 118

Mariya: None wumva twari kumugira gute?

T: What do you think we should have done?

Mariya continues to complain about his son's behaviour. She is explaining to Aderino that they have tried to convince Fideri to choose a wife but in vain. Then she ends her sentence by "None wumva twari kumugira gute?"

*"What do you think we should have done?"* That expression has the function of seeking comment from the listener. When Mariya says so, she wants Aderino to make a comment on what she told him. That expression which stands for an ongoing check has no implied meaning. It is straightforward. But it belongs to the person deixis category as it shows who is speaking to who through the use of the personal pronouns "we" and "you". The fact that the speaker asks the listener to give his own suggestion or comment on an issue of family concern justifies the phatic function of the expression. There is mutual understanding and good relations between the addresser and addressee.

Example 17 line 255 page 118

Aderino: Muvyeyi, ubona novyubahuka?

T: Mother, do you think I can dare do that?

Fideri's mother (Mariya) asks Aderino if he wants Fideri to marry a useless girl. Aderino replies: *"Muvyeyi, ubona novyubahuka?"* *"Mother, do you think I can dare do that?"*. It is a whole sentence used as an ongoing check which has the function of reassuring a speaker with strong emotion. The ongoing check *"ubona novyubahuka?"* *"do you think I can dare do that?"* has an implied meaning which is: *"I cannot really do that"*. And it belongs to person and place deixis categories through the use of the personal pronouns "you" and "I" and the demonstrative "that". The phatic meaning of the expression is obvious in that Aderino

reassures his mother that she will never dare do something she disapproves of.

Example 18 line 265 page 118

Aderino: Nariko ndavuga nti umusore n'inkumi bubakanye badashakana ko ata rugo bubaka ngo rugume.

T: I was saying that when a man and a woman marry against their will, their marriage will not last long.

Fideri's father (Yozefu) is very upset because he realizes that Aderino supports Fideri in his behaviour. Yozefu threatens to kick them out of the house. Fideri tells him that he is daring because he says that he can kick out his son-in-law. In brief, Fideri and his father quarrel, then Aderino interrupts them and says: "*Nariko ndavuga nti...*" "*I was saying that...*". The function of that expression, which stands for an ongoing check, is to clarify what was said previously. In this context, Aderino wants to clarify his opinion on marriage. That ongoing check "*Nariko ndavuga nti...*" "*I was saying that...*" does not have an implied meaning. In addition, it belongs to deixis person category as it makes reference to oneself who can only be identified in a precise context of use. Providing clarification about a certain issue has a phatic function in itself as it helps to remove ambiguity and vagueness and seeks to establish common agreement among the participants.

Example 19 line 270 page 119

Aderino: Sivyo wanse ga, Fide?

T: Isn't it what you dislike, Fide?

Aderino explains to Fideri's parents that a marriage against a man's and a woman's will cannot last long. He adds that it is even dangerous to marry someone that you do not want. After his sentence, he asks Fideri: "*Si vyo wanse ga, Fide?*" "*Isn't it what you dislike, Fide?*". That question stands for an ongoing check. And its function is to check if the listener (Fideri) and the speaker (Aderino) have the same opinion on something. That ongoing check does not have an implied meaning. And it has a deictic meaning in that the speaker makes explicit reference to the one who is listening to him through the use of 'you'. By seeking agreement from the listener, the speaker wants to make sure that they have no divergence over the marriage issue, a proof of good relations among them.

Example 20 line 271 page 119

Fideri: Wavuga nkaba inyakamwe

T: It is a pity I am alone listening to you

Fideri answers the question above. When Aderino asks him: "*Si vyo wanse ga, Fide?*", Fideri responds to Aderino: "*Wavuga nkaba inyakamwe*" "*It is a pity I am alone listening to you*". The whole sentence is an ongoing check. Its function is to fully agree with the speaker. This ongoing

check has an implied meaning which is: "*I totally agree with you*". And it belongs to the deixis category because reference is made to the speaker "I" and the listener "you". Total agreement between the participants is a sufficient proof for phatic communion between them and here lies the very phatic meaning of the above ongoing check.

Example 21 line 290 page 119

Yozefu: Ugize ngo iki ga sha?

T: You guy, what are you saying?

First, Aderino tells Fideri's parents that they have no reason to choose a wife for Fideri. Fideri adds that he must marry Roza since they love each other. Upset, his father asks him to repeat what he said. He uses that whole sentence which stands for an ongoing check: "*Ugize ngo iki ga sha?*" "*You guy, what are you saying?*" Its function is to express anger but also to request the son to reassert his position. Yozefu wants Fideri to repeat clearly what he was saying. That ongoing check does not have an implied meaning. In addition, it has a deictic meaning instantiated by the pronoun 'you'. Although there seems to be a point of disagreement between the son and his father, the exchange is still phatic because both are trying to reach an agreement on the wedding issue.

Example 22 line 338 page 121

Aderino: Ko mbona ...

T: I see that ...

When Aderino sees that he has failed to convince Fideri's parents, he advises Fideri and Roza to go to tell it the Priest of the village. According to Aderino, the Priest can help them. Aderino starts his sentence with the expression "*Ko mbona...*" "*I see that ...*" which is a pre-announcement. In this context, it plays the role of an ongoing check which has the function of attracting the listener's attention and of introducing one's opinion. That ongoing check does not have an implied meaning. But it belongs to the category of person deixis because the speaker refers to himself through the use of the personal pronoun "I". The context of the conversation itself embodies a phatic meaning. The participants are trying to find a solution to a problem that concerns them all.

Example 23 line 360 page 122

PA: Hanyuma naho?

T: And then?

The Priest welcomes Roza and Fideri. They tell him what the real problem is. They start by saying that they love each other, that they are ready to live together but that Fideri's parents are against the marriage; they do not want Fideri to marry Roza. Then, the priest asks them

"*Hanyuma naho?...*" "*And then?...*". That expression which stands for an ongoing check has the function of encouraging the speaker to continue to provide additional details. The priest wants them to continue giving him the whole information. This ongoing check does not have an implied meaning and it does not belong to the category of deixis. Naturally, the priest is attentive and willing to help the two lovers to find a solution to their problematic situation. Thus the ongoing check has a phatic function. It means "go ahead, I am listening to you".

Example 24 line 368 page 122

Roza: Ehe Pati, urazi ko ...

T: Look father, do you know that ...

On her turn, Roza tells the Priest that her parents, her mother in particular, are not against the marriage. That she understands that Fideri cannot afford to pay the dowry. Thus, Roza's mother allows Fideri to marry Roza. What is important is that they love each other. Roza starts the whole story with the words "*Ehe ... urazi ko ...*" "*Look ...do you know that ...*" which is normally an introducer. In this particular context, it plays the role of an ongoing check used by the speaker in order to attract the listener's attention. It announces something that is going to be stated. She wants him to listen carefully. That ongoing check has an implied meaning. It means "I want to inform you that". It also belongs to the category of person

deixis as it refers to both himself and to the addressee through the use of the pronouns "I" and "you". Like in the previous example, there is clear phatic communion among the participants because they are still trying to resolve the wedding issue and they really count on the priest's suggestion.

Example 25 line 393 page 123

Yozefu: ... Nyakubahwa. Nagira ni Fideri yagiye antutse.

T: ... Honourable, I thought it was Fideri who left after having insulted me.

Patiri: None rero ...

T: So then...

Yozefu: Nacumuye. Eka ni agasaga.

T: I have sinned. No, goodbye.

The Priest goes to see Fideri's father. They want to discuss Fideri's problem. When Fideri's father sees the Priest, he greets him and the Priest asks Yozefu: "*None rero ...*" "*So then...*". In Kirundi, this expression is used to express a consequence, a result but here in this context, it is used as an ongoing check which has the function of encouraging the speaker (Yozefu) to continue speaking. That expression has some implied meaning. It means "go ahead" and it does not belong to the category of

deixis. This is a follow-up of the above bits of conversation and the participants are still indulging in phatic exchanges aimed at sorting out the marriage problem.

#### *IV.2 SUMMARY*

This chapter concentrates on the data analysis and findings. We have dealt with Kirundi ongoing checks extracted from a written text: a Rundi play KARABA UNDABE (Act II). That is to say that we have analysed those Kirundi ongoing checks one by one, by considering their contexts of use.

In our research, we have observed that Kirundi ongoing checks, in general, are used with different functions on the side of speakers and listeners in a conversation. That is why they have varied functions. They can be uttered by a speaker in order to attract the listener's attention, to check if the listener is still attentive or to clarify what is being said. They can also be uttered by a listener in order to agree/disagree with a speaker, to seek clarification from the speaker or to encourage the speaker to continue speaking (see table 1 below).



Through the analysis of the Kirundi ongoing checks drawn from the play KARABA UNDABE (Act II), we have realised that those ongoing check devices are just an indication of a social solidarity between speakers and listeners in a conversation. They show that the various participants acknowledge that they have a social bond which they have agreed to maintain. According to Ndikumagenge (1992) in his thesis, the Rundi phatic formulas, the Kirundi ongoing checks in particular, are institutionalized phatic talks because there is a social norm which expects everyone to perform some phatic talk in certain circumstances. He continues saying that every participant in a conversation says something because he wants to look friendly: to keep communication lines open. However, sometimes phatic formulas can serve other functions like pragmatic uses (they can have expressive function as has been shown in this study).

In addition, we have noticed that some Kirundi ongoing checks have implied meanings others do not. Similarly, for the deictic meaning, some Kirundi ongoing checks have deictic meanings, other do not.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The present study has been an attempt to present some conversational devices known as ongoing checks and to know how and when they are used in Kirundi conversations with reference to a Rundi play KARABA UNDABE (Act II).

In all conversations, particularly in Kirundi, participants (speakers and listeners) must follow certain norms. That is why opening devices are necessary before a conversation starts, ongoing check devices fit the middles of a conversation to keep it going and alive to avoid chaos and disorder, closing devices also are needed when all the participants are about to break off. At the end of the analysis, we have found that Kirundi ongoing checks can only be studied in their contexts. Out of contexts they have no meaning. They share that property with deictic expressions. We have also noticed that Kirundi ongoing checks have different types of functions. Besides, all the Kirundi ongoing checks investigated have a phatic function.

However, we do not expect to have exhausted this concept of Kirundi ongoing checks. There is a room for further studies. Indeed, we studied just one piece of text: a play

and only its second Act. If we had had enough time, we could have studied other conversations, written or oral. All along our study, we were struck by how Kirundi conversations use ongoing checks. We think that a further study can be carried out to see how it ensures cohesion in Kirundi conversations. We strongly recommend our fellow students to consider exploring this aspect.

## APPENDIX: DATA COLLECTED AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

### SITUATION 1 PAGE 110

Muryango: Muraduhe

Is there anyone in the house?

Mariya: Ego muhu, niwakire  
agatebe

Yes boy, have a seat

### SITUATION 2 PAGE 111

Yozefu: Erega Muryango, hanura wa  
muhungu wawe yananiranye.

By the way Muryango, try to advise your son who becomes stubborn.

Muryango: Fideri yananiranye mu  
biki?

In what Fideri is stubborn?

Mariya: Hagarara umwumvire

Wait for a while and listen to him.

SITUATION 3 PAGE 111

Fideri: Nkubita kindi kimwe  
ndabe ko uduhogo tworoha.

Yozefu: Eeee... Tworohe ubashe  
kutumena umutwe.

Fideri: Yamara ndabamena umutwe  
ntari ibuye.

Give me one more bottle  
so that my throat  
becomes soft.

Eeee... you want to get  
drunk and beat us?

How can I really break  
your head if I am not a  
stone.

SITUATION 4 PAGE 111

Fideri: Aho rero. mbega murabizi?  
Nanye kwa ya ntore, none  
nje nifuza ico nagiriyeyo.

Well do you know? I  
went to see the  
'beauty' and I now  
regret having gone  
there.

Mariya: Mbe abo wita intore ni bande?

Who are those you call  
'beauty'?

Fideri: Mubaye ababayobewe? Ngize nti  
nanye kwa Sisiriya ngo ngire  
ndaramutsa baranka kwitaba;  
aha ankubise ijisho aca yitera  
mu nzu ngo urantunga. None

Of course you know them  
I say that I stopped by  
Sisiriya's place and  
they refused to talk  
to me. The minute she

vyanshavuje cane, sinshaka  
n'uwumumvugira iruhande.

saw me, she locked  
herself in the house.  
It made me so mad that  
I do not even want to  
hear her name anymore.

SITUATION 5 PAGE 112

Yozefu: N'ako si agatutsi ni ishano!  
...Twarakuvyaye turagukuza,  
none usigaye uvuga ngo  
twayagura ivyo tutiyumviriye?

I'm utterly offended!  
... We gave you life,  
we brought you up and  
now you accuse us of  
talking nonsense.

Fideri: N'Imana ntikavyumve? nemeje  
gusa ko ata musore afise  
ubwenge yokwemera gutanga  
ibintu nk'ivyo ngo ni  
ugukunda abageni. Uti kuki?  
Raba, umusore agomba kwubaka  
arabwa n'inzu, ikori ...

May God not hear what  
I am saying. I am only  
saying that no young  
men, in their right  
mind, would give away  
so much money just for  
the love of a young  
girl. Ask me why.  
Look, a young man  
who wants to marry, he  
must build a house,  
pay taxes ...

SITUATION 6 PAGE 112

Yozefu: None ayo mufata muyashira  
 hehe? Ntimwirirwa  
 murayasesagura kuri rwa  
 rufuro ngo ni primus mukabura  
 n'ayo mukwasha abageni?

So what do you  
 do with your salary?  
 Aren't you always  
 spending your money  
 on primus? And you  
 say you do not have  
 money for the dowry?

Fideri: Ehe ngushirire aho ushaka:  
 uwemera gutanga inkwano  
 y'umurengera, nta bwo aba  
 akunda na buhoro uwo agomba  
 ko vyubakana.

Let me put things  
 the way you want them:  
 when someone accepts  
 to pay a large amount  
 for the dowry, it means  
 that he does not care  
 his future wife's life.

SITUATION 7 PAGE 113

Roza: Ugira ngo ni bibi  
 mbabajwe n'ibikubabaza?  
 Ubwo koko uremeye ko ata  
 wokuvuna ubwo bwijirwe?  
 None aho tugira ngo  
 twubake rumwe, si ukugira  
 ngo tuze dusangire ubuhirwe  
 n'amaganya?

Don't you think that  
 what hurts you hurts  
 me too? Do you refuse  
 a helping hand when  
 you are feeling so low?  
 When people get  
 married they promise  
 to share the good

Fideri: Basi ko urukundo rugutumye  
gusangira ibingoye, hinga  
ndakuganyire: ikimbabaza  
kimbaga, ni uko bagomba  
kungoboza amata mu kanwa.

Roza: Ugira ngo ndumva icyo  
ugomba kuvuga?

Fideri: N'uko bagomba kukunkurako  
ari wewe nsigaye ndota.

SITUATION 8 PAGE 115

Fideri: ... Sha twaratase  
n'ab'imuhira n'igituma  
ntukiyobewe.

times as well as  
the bad ones.

If it is love that  
makes you reach out  
to me so, let me seek  
sympathy from you:  
what has upset me  
so is that there are  
people who want to  
take away what is  
most precious to me.

I do not really get  
what you mean.

There are people  
who want to separate  
you from me when you  
are my dream come true.

... Hey, I have  
quarrelled with my  
parents for a  
reason that you  
know well.

Aderino: Ime ...

That is right...

Fideri: Ngize ndavuga nti  
umushaha wanje nta wundi  
nzowuha atari Biroruhore  
Roza ubona; barantuka  
baranyonona.

When I said that  
it is only Biroruhore  
Roza that I can give  
my heart, they insulted  
me too much.

SITUATION 9 PAGE 116

Fideri: Mugabo ndakurahiye,  
ntuzosubira i Buraya  
ntararanye umugeni  
muri irya nzu yanje.

But I swear that you  
will go back to Europe  
after our wedding.

Aderino: Nta kindi nabifuriza.

That was my only wish  
to you.

SITUATION 10 PAGE 117

Yozefu: Ni musohoke mumvire  
mu nzu, nta bukwe naraje.

Get out from my house,  
there was no wedding  
here.

Fideri: Ewe, uravuga buhoro  
hano hari umugumo. Mbe  
ntimucibara abakwe?  
Uyu si Aderino mwene

Be careful, there is  
someone special here.  
You no longer respect  
your in-laws? You do

bamwana avuye i Buraya  
aje kuturamutsa?

not see Aderino who  
just come from Europe  
to greet us?

Yozefu: Nzure data?!

Damned my father?!

Fideri: None ntumubona?

So, don't you see him?

SITUATION 11 PAGE 117

Yozefu: Mupfaso, ntunyararaze ngo  
databukwe yarantutse,  
sinamenye ko ari wewe  
ndakakwambura.

My friend, do not go  
around saying that your  
father-in-law insulted  
you, I swear to God  
that I did not know  
you were here.

Aderino: Ntirikabe muvyeyi

Father, I wish that  
never happened.

SITUATION 12 PAGE 118

Mariya: Ehe mupfasoni, twahereye  
imyaka tumubwira tuti  
zana inkwano tuze  
tuguhereze umugeni,  
arata agati. Tumwereka  
inkumi adushusha uwa mbiri.

Look my son, we  
have been asking  
him to get the  
dowry ready and  
get a wife but in  
vain. What do you

None wumva twari kumugira gute?

think we should have done?

Yozefu: Erega murabona Fideri ngo ni umuntu, ni ikigaba cahejeje, ni gati bataye.

As I know Fideri, he is a good-for-nothing.

SITUATION 13 PAGE 118

Mariya: None ga mupfaso, ugomba kumushingira ikomvyo na we?

So my friend, do you want him to marry a useless girl?

Aderino: Muvyeyi, ubona novyubahuka?

Mother, do you think I can dare do that?

SITUATION 14 PAGE 119

Aderino: Nariko ndavuga nti umusore n'inkumi bubakanye badashakana, ata rugo bubaka ngo rugume ... Si vyo wanse ga, Fide?

I was saying that when a man and a woman marry against their will, their marriage will not last long ... Isn't it what you dislike, Fide?

Fideri: Wavuga nkaba inyakamwe.

It is a pity I am alone listening to you.

SITUATION 15 PAGE 119

Aderino: Na Fideri ubu ko  
yumva mugomba kumushingira  
uwo atazi n'ukumenya

Even Fideri learns that  
you want him to marry  
an unknown lady.

Fideri: Erega n'ubu bapfa kuvyitamwo  
utagira ngo ni bo bazomutwara!

Even though they want  
to interfere, they are  
not the ones who are  
going to marry her.

Yozefu: Ugize ngo iki ga sha?

You guy, what are you  
saying?

Fideri: Jewe ndira uwuzomara irungu

I just need someone  
who will keep me away  
from loneliness.

SITUATION 16 PAGE 121

Aderino: Ko mbona twagerageje uko  
dushobora kwose bikananirana,  
hasigaye ko twotuma umuntu  
w'Imana. None rero gende  
mubikorereze Patiri  
azobafasha.

I see that we have  
tried our best but  
in vain. Now, our  
last resort is to  
contact the Priest,  
maybe he will help us.

Fideri: Tuzoguhemba iki nivyakunda?

What are we going to give you as a reward?

SITUATION 17 PAGE 122

Fideri: Pati, aha twaratase  
n'abavyeyi kuko nagomba  
kuva mu bwana ngo ninjire  
mu bugabo. Inzu yanje  
narayujuje nkifuza kuyibamwo  
n'uyu Roza ubona. None  
abavyeyi narabibaganiriye,  
ngo sinshobora gutwara  
uwo badashimye, nanje ndanka.

Dear Father, I have  
been in conflict with  
my parents because I  
wanted to put up  
with childhood to  
become an adult.  
I built my house  
and wanted to live  
in it with this lady.  
But when I told my  
parents, they were  
against the marriage  
and I refused.

Patiri: Hanyuma naho?

And then?

Fideri: Ntidushobora kwubakana  
n'uwo ntitoreye ngo antore,  
nti kandi sinshobora  
kwubakana n'uwo tudahujije  
imico.

I cannot marry someone  
whom I did not choose  
and who did not choose  
me. Besides, I cannot  
marry someone with  
whom I do not share  
behaviours.

SITUATION 18 PAGE 122

Roza:Ehe Pati, urazi ko Fideri  
afise akazi nkagira akandi.  
Narabwiye abavyeyi nanje ko  
Fideri yisesaguye muri vyinshi ...  
Narabibaganiriye barahaheza  
barabona ko bamwatse inkwano  
bazoba batadukunda.

Look Father, do you  
know that Fideri and  
I are working and  
I have salaries. I told  
my parents that  
Fideri has many  
financial charges.  
So, they have  
realized that if they  
ask him to pay the  
dowry, they would not  
love us.

SITUATION 19 PAGE 123

Yozefu: Ndagitakamvye Nyakwubahwa.  
Nagira ni Fideri yagiye  
antutse agarutse.

Honourable, I thought  
it was Fideri who  
left after having  
insulted me.

Patiri: None rero ...

So then ...

Yozefu: Nacumuye, eka ni agasaga.

I have sinned.  
No, goodbye.

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