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

OPPOSITENESS OF MEANING IN KIRUNDI PROVERBS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree "LICENCE EN LANGUE ET LITTERATURE ANGLAISES".

Bujumbura, April 2002

DEDICATION

To
You
Our father who made it all possible,

You
Our late mother and sister,

You
Dear brothers and sisters,

You
Aunts, uncles and relatives, ...

You
Who care about our success,
Whom we wish love and happiness,.

We warmly dedicate this thesis.

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My thanks go to all those who, in a way or another, helped me all along my education Great is the desire of naming them but I run the risk of forgetting some

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Michel NTUNGA -

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

H	:	Hearer
LT		Literal Translation
P		Proposition
¬P		non-P (it is not the case that P.)
PM		Proverbial Meaning
S	:	Speaker
T		Translation

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CHAPTER I : GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I.0. Introduction

Burundian society is based on oral tradition where proverbs constitute the predominant genre among the ones that make up its literature. Oral literature in Burundi is to proverbs what mother is to daughter. Proverbs tell a lot about the culture and life experience of a given society. In addition, they transmit the history and past experiences of a given people. Traditionally, proverbs were means of education and served to spread the history of the Barundi. This was done through the process of communication As Andersen (1978 : 5) says :

> *communication, here, is the supreme relationship among people who, by the very nature of living, are forced to solve problems together. It is supreme because in every social act the bonding element of communication makes a relationship satisfactory or unsatisfactory.*

What is this process which affects all humans so significantly? We define it as the purposeful, transactional process by which one person, through the use of audible and visible symbols, engenders meanings in the minds of his listeners. This suggests the problem of language.

Although we always use language, a small number of people happen to ask themselves what language is. In fact, the question of language is a crucial one. There are many ways of communicating such as gestures, postures, facial expressions, etc. But language is still the most important tool of communication between human beings. Language talks about language, that is to say, it fulfills a metalinguistic function For example, it establishes and shows quite well the relations between a society and the language used by the members of the community. Among the characteristics which help to define a community are those related to the quality of the verbal - behavior of its speakers This case is illustrated by the Burundian community in which most native speakers, if not all, use proverbs in their everyday conversation.

Proverbs, as a means of communication, are sayings which do not have any specialised occasions. They are just devices that contribute in rendering speech more persuasive. They are involved with speech and action on every sort of occasion. Frequently used in any kind of situation, proverbs are significant everywhere they appear.

Conversely, a proverb in isolation has limited meaning. In most cases, proverbs are uttered according to the prevailing situation in which speaker and hearer are involved. In other words, proverbs have proper meanings when put in context. However, the modification of a single word, in a proverb, makes the whole proverb lose its meaning or become totally wrong.

It is quite obvious that in proverbs, words are organised in a poetic form and related to each other in such a way that both the meaning and the sound are beautifully and harmoniously achieved. In this respect, some elements within the same proverb may have opposite meanings. Thus, as far as this study is concerned, we are not concerned with investigating all the forms of proverb - construction, rather this oppositeness of meaning within proverbs is the subject of our investigation.

I.1. Background to the Topic

Proverbs, being the main literary genre of the Burundian oral literature, have prompted the interest of many people. So, before showing the aspect to be concentrated on, we would like to mention some of the aspects of the Kirundi proverbs that have already been investigated.

The first one to mention is Rodegem's (1961) Sagesse Kirundi. Proverbes, Dictons, Locutions usites au Burundi and (1983) Paroles de Sagesse au Burundi. The second is Ntahomvukiye (1981).

These two authors did not show the oppositeness of meaning within Kirundi proverbs. Rodegem, simply, listed alphabetically the Kirundi proverbs with their French translation. Ntahomvukiye made a deep analysis of proverb-use in communication.

The third case to mention are the dissertations of Murekambanze (1989), Gashikanyi (1986), Nikobamye (1997), Sindayikengera (1997), Nduwamungu (1998) to name but a few. They tackled their topics from a pragmatic point of view except Nduwamungu (the one who did it from a semantic viewpoint) but they did not say anything about the oppositeness of meaning. They all worked on Kirundi proverbs.

On the whole, so far none of the studies on proverbs was concerned with oppositeness of meaning. Therefore, we would like to complete them by working on it and bringing a contribution from a semantic viewpoint.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

No single study at all has been conducted in the direction of showing oppositeness of meaning in Kirundi proverbs. Then, by looking at man's life, one may say that from birth to death a person gets many experiences either good or bad. So, to study the life of a given people involves a number of things among which the knowledge of its language, its cultural values and also its living-conditions. The language spoken or written calls back, stores and preserves the literature of that community.

Nevertheless, currently we witness a progressive lack of interest in proverbs. Traditionally and a few years ago, proverbs were more frequently used but nowadays, there is a certain tendency to let proverbs disappear. So, to work on proverbs may be one way of inviting Burundians, particularly the younger generations, to pay more attention to this literary genre, vehicule of wisdom, life experience and education.

Another problem that pushed me to work on this topic is that the sense of the proverb, in general, is different from the meanings of its constituents. The constituents themselves are sometimes mutually contradictory - but for a rethorically useful purpose. For instance, if one says : **Umugabo abura ibanga ntabura ibara** (If you say what you should have kept as a secret, be sure of forthcoming consequences), the constituents that are contradictory or opposed in meaning are the following : **abura** (misses) **ntabura** (does not miss) **ibanga** (secret) **ibara** (misfortune). From these, we notice that these

four words are opposed in meaning. In addition, we see that in **abura** and **ntabura**, they are almost the same words but distinguished by the negative morpheme (**nti-**). The latter is also responsible for making the words **ibanga** and **ibara** being opposed

Besides, proverbs are used in everyday conversation and their meanings are conveyed by making reference to the cultural experience of the people No single person can pretend to fully understand the meaning of a proverb if he or she does not know the culture and social principles of the community. To understand proverbs involves getting their cultural interpretation, that is to say, showing clearly their use in a given context and its appropriateness in speech.

I.3. Purpose of the Study

Proverbs have different forms of construction. Thus, this study of oppositeness of meaning as reflected in Kirundi proverbs shows up one of the forms of Kirundi proverb - construction It aims at showing that two or more words that are opposed in meaning are, in fact, compatible within the same proverb and do not change the meaning of the whole proverb To do this, we have collected Kirundi proverbs containing oppositeness of meaning from two books cited earlier : Rodegem (1961) and BEPES (1984) Then, these proverbs have to be studied semantically because semantics is defined as the study of meaning And since semantics and pragmatics work cooperatively, we cannot presume to do a purely semantic study. For a full semantic interpretation of proverbial expressions or utterances, we have to consider not only the literal meaning of words or lexical items but also a precise view of the communicative intention of the speaker

In short, semantics is simply the study of meaning but we have to be careful because the meaning intended by the speaker may be different form the literal meaning This is why Levinson (1983 : 12) puts emphasis on participants who are involved in a given conversation, that is, the sender or speaker and the receiver or hearer

I.4. Motivation

It is interesting to explore a new area by studying oppositeness of meaning in Kirundi proverbs. The reasons that are behind the choice of this topic are the following :

(i) Many studies have been carried out on other languages but Kirundi has been neglected. Yet proverbs enjoy a privileged place in Burundi, particularly in culture, life experience, wisdom and education.

(ii) We wish to give more knowledge to whoever is interested in Burundian oral literature, especially in proverbs. This idea came into our mind when witnessing the alteration of proverbs by younger generations.

(iii) Moreover, we chose to work on proverbs to provide as many insights as possible with regard to proverbs. In this respect, younger generations could get reference even though they are not accustomed to using proverbs.

(iv) The last but not least reason that underlies the choice of this topic is to show how Kirundi language is rich and to encourage people to go deeper in order to develop their communicative competence.

I.5. Scope and Delimitation

The present study is concerned with oppositeness of meaning in Kirundi proverbs. There are Kirundi proverbs whose constituents have opposite meanings. We would like to show that although the meanings of those constituents are opposed, they are compatible within the same proverb and the meaning of the proverb as a whole is not contradictory. Likewise, our investigation is limited to showing that words or expressions, in a given proverb, are opposed in meaning due to the use of the Kirundi negative morphemes nti - si -, - ta - and other words that are naturally opposed. Our research will focus only on terms or expressions opposed in meaning which are specifically used in the same proverb.

CHAPTER II : LITERATURE REVIEW

II.0. Introduction

In this section, our aim is to provide the reader with a review of the available studies that deal with the subject under study. There are few theses which deal with the Kirundi language, especially Kirundi proverbs. However, those theses, even if they are not numerous, will influence our work on oppositeness of meaning in Kirundi proverbs.

In this chapter, we are going to emphasize on what different authors have said on proverbs. To this end, we will use every available written material about proverbs whether published or not.

II.1. Studies on Proverbs

II.1.1. Proverbs in General

Studies on proverbs carried out so far suggest that proverbs are not yet well defined. The causes evoked are that they are various and complex in their nature. Tilley(1950) says that proverbs are not easy to recognize, and only an expert can collect them. He goes on saying that proverbs have their wisdom, their saltiness, and the frequent beauty of their form. He asserts that proverbs are of inestimable value because, in particular, they clear up passages hitherto obscure and, in general, they lead to a more intimate understanding. He even asserts that there is no agreement on what constitutes a proverb. An appropriate definition is not yet found but all authors tried by different ways to make approaches on what the meaning of a proverb is. Some of them suggested to use form, content and context to define proverb. Finnegan (1970 : 393) stipulates that the exact definition of a **proverb** is no easy matter. There is, however, some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. It is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense, and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.

In Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, the definition provided reads as follows :

> *A proverb is a short sentence that people often quote and that gives advice or tells you something about human life and problems in general.*

> Rodegem (1983 : 393) says what follows : *Le proverbe est caractérisé par le rythme, la norme et l'image. Le proverbe est un témoignage du savoir-dire et un exercice du Langage.*

Translated as : The proverb is characterised by rhythm, the norm and images. The proverb provides evidence for knowledge-telling and is a language exercise.

For us, the definition of Rodegem seems to be the most plausible. It combines formal elements and elements of content. In addition to this, we agree that proverbs say much in few words.

II.1.2. Kirundi Proverbs

II.1.2.1. Problem of Terminology

According to Murekambanze (1989) there are two Kirundi terms designating the proverb : **Umugani** and **Umwibutsa**. Literally, **Umwibutsa** derives from the verb **Kwibutsa** meaning to remind. Hence, **Umwibutsa** means that which reminds. As for the term **Umugani**, it may refer to either one of the two genres of folklore, the proverb and the tale. And in order to avoid such confusion when using the word **Umugani**, one should state whether it is short (proverb) or long (tale); or simply use the term **Umwibutsa** which does not bring about any confusion.

II.1.2.2. Understanding Proverbs

II.1.2.2.1. Context

Kirundi proverbs are well understood when used in a given context. As stated by Leech (1983 : 13) :

> *Context is any background knowledge assumed to be shared by speaker and hearer and which contributes to hearer's interpretation of what speaker means by a given utterance.*

So, the context involves a number of features among which there are : the setting, the participants and the text. This case may be illustrated by the following examples :

1. Umugabo yihindukiza mu kirago ntiyihindukiza mw'ijambo.

T : A responsible man keeps his word.

Situation : A wise man has given a verdict but wants to come back to his word because he has got a bribe. In this case, one can utter the proverb : **Umugabo yihindukiza mu kirago ntiyihindukiza mw'ijambo.**

2. Abagabo babiri ntibabana mu nzu .

T : There is competition and rivalry between people with the same status and looking for the same interest.

Situation : Two authoritarian men work in the same department. But they are so incompatible that they request each to be transferred to another department. Then the personnel manager separate them and says : **Abagabo babiri ntibabana mu nzu.**

3. Umugore musangira amata ntimusangira amazi.

T : Wives search for easiness and comfort.

Situation Mary loves Mike, a prosperous gentleman of her town. But Mike has a big bill he is still paying. The customs officers seize his stock and sell it So, Mike goes bankrupt and Mary abandons him. Then many people are indignant and say the proverb :
Umugore musangira amata ntimusangira amazi .

4. Umugabo ni uwurya utwiwe n'utwabandi.

T : A powerful man is one who steals.

Situation . Two brothers have one cow their father left them by will. Then, one sells it alone and does not give the other brother his share. The latter complains and, instead of sympathising with him, most people laugh and say
Umugabo ni uwurya utwiwe n'utwabandi.

5. Amunguranka niyo mazikesha.

T : The higher one aims at, the lower he achieves.

Situation : Kabura wants to stop his work in order to resume studies. His friend Toyi tells him a story about someone wh left his job to resume studies and who failed. When he returned to his job, the personnel manager did not welcome the latter. Then, he ends the story with the proverb :
Amunguranka niyo mazikesha.

From some English linguists'viewpoint, no single sentence can be fully analysed without resorting to context. Furthermore, stating the importance of the context, Wardhaugh (1985 : 102) cited in Niyongabo (1996 : 17) says that it is context which creates possibilities for interpretation and helps remove the multiple ambiguities that utterances would have if they occurred in isolation. This is why there is no way to study language apart from the context. Then to study language involves to scrutinize the contexts in which it is used. This is very important mostly for sentences

As context is of paramount importance, its role is seen when someone utters a proverb whose meaning we cannot pretend to know. Context is an important tool used to provide the right interpretation of the proverb. Generally speaking, a great number of linguistic forms have various meanings which are interpreted when and only when they appear in context, otherwise they fail to be meaningful.

In summary, we can say that context is an important means in providing the meanings of linguistic forms that are adequate and relevant and it helps eliminate those that are irrelevant.

II.1.2.2.2. Features of Context

a. The Setting

In order to understand fully any particular item in conversation, we need to know who is talking to who, the where and when of the utterances, that is, their location in place and time. We must examine the content of what is said and the precise manner in which that content is communicated. In short, the setting is the space-time situation and the actions performed in that situation.

b. The Participants

Participants in the speech event are the speaker and the hearer and there must be an interaction between them (i.e. the message). In making a piece of conversation, there are at least two functions that must be fulfilled : The speaking - function and the hearing-function. The term " participants " is used by a general common agreement and is attributed to both speakers and hearers. On the one hand, the speaker is known as the sender, the addressor or the encoder whose role is to send the message. On the other hand, the hearer is called the receiver, the addressee or the decoder whose role is to receive the message.

To avoid the ambiguity that can be created by these two terms **receiver** and **addressee**, Lyons (1977 : 34) says that a receiver is the person who receives and interprets the message whereas the addressee is a person who is an intended receiver not the bystander who could catch a message not addressed to him. In other words, the addressee is the person for whom the message is directly designed. The hearer and the receiver may not be directly concerned with the message being transmitted. They may play the role of bystanders. They just receive the message or get the message even if this message is intended to another person.

c. The Message Form

The participants especially in proverbs must be sure that they are talking about the same thing and in the same manner, otherwise there might be misunderstandings. This is to say that the information about the kind or form of message is needed, i.e. whether it is a chat, a debate, a love-letter, a formal letter, etc. This is already a step toward the success of the analysis because none of these genres requires the same speech event as another one. The speaker and the hearer must be cooperative as we said it earlier

II.1.2.3. Description of Kirundi Proverbs

Most Kirundi proverbs have at least two important parts where the speaker has to take a half and the hearer completes the second-half. For instance, this proverb : **Umugore musangira amata ntimusangira amazi** (A wife shares milk with you but not water) is made of two important parts : the first part is **Umugore musangira amata** which is said by the speaker and the second one is **ntimusangira amazi** which may be said by the hearer. Therefore, where is the oppositeness of meaning in this proverb? What are the words that are opposed in meaning? These questions will find answers in chapter four.

Stylistically speaking , as Harerimana (1998 : 30) says that proverbs are brief, concise and condensed, they are free of superfluons words. They are constructed on the basis of symbols. The latter are taken from the deep culture and their understanding is difficult to repay since their meaning is given by the culture itself. Therefore, to understand proverbs involves decoding symbols.

II.2. Previous Studies on Kirundi Proverbs

As we have realized it, working on Kirundi proverbs, in general, and Kirundi proverbs containing oppositeness of meaning within themselves, in particular, is not an easy task. That is why it is very important to mention some of the works carried out so far.

From a pragmatic point of view, we have such scholars as : Murekambanze (1989) and Sindayikengera (1997). In fact, Murekambanze (1989) considers proverbs from a general point of view but Sindayikengera (1997) focusses on a specific theme but remains in the field of pragmatics.

Other Scholars such as : Ntahomvukiye (1981), Gashikanyi (1986), Ndikuryayo (1989) and Sakaganwa (1987) exploited proverbs in other areas. Ntahomvukiye (1981) shows the role of proverbs in human communication. Gashikanyi (1986) attempts to provide a number of literary expressions and ideas showing the relation of friendship through proverbs. As for Sakaganwa (1987), he studies proverbs by giving them a stylistic interpretation and tries to deal with a little semantic study.

As far as Kirundi proverbs and linguistic competence are concerned, many studies, especially those carried out on Kirundi proverbs before 1986, were limited to collection, classification and translation from Kirundi into French. These include Rodegem (1969) and BEPES (1984) who respectively made a collection and translation of Kirundi proverbs and classified them on basis of their themes.

In concluding this section, the aim of this chapter was to review previous studies on proverbs in order to search for a place for our contribution. We cannot pretend to give an exhaustive list of all the researchers on proverbs but the few ones we enumerated above have topics that are similar to ours. Proverbs are the main key word for us but the difference lies in the theme **Oppositeness of Meaning** and the **SEMANTIC** approach

CHAPTER III : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

III.1. Theoretical Framework

III.1.1. Semantics

A great interest in this research has been in the study of language whereby the main concern is the exploration of our Kirundi proverbs in the semantic area. Much attention is put on the way meaning operates in language, especially in Kirundi proverbs. In fact, meaning is central to the study of human communication. Even though semantics works cooperatively with other areas such as pragmatics, syntax and phonology, our interest will be found in semantics since we will not put proverbs in context. The fact is that putting proverbs in context would involve a careful study of pragmatics. As we are native - speakers of Kirundi, we can tell clearly whether a given Kirundi proverb contains words that are opposed in meaning or not. In terms of meaning, Searle (1979) argues that the literal meaning of a sentence is distinguishable from what a speaker means by the sentence. He says that in uttering a sentence, a speaker may mean something different from what the sentence means. Semantics studies the meanings that are expressed in a sentence. Syntax, on the other hand, studies the structure of language. Then, the cooperation between syntax and semantics is that semantics refers to the structure of sentences. Therefore, the form in a language is one way of getting at meaning. Stork (1974 : 118) states this :

> *semantics is, in its most general sense, the study of meaning, and meaning is obviously central to language. Without meaning there could be no language.*

He continues saying that meaning is the most difficult aspect of language to treat in an objective way. Meaning, by its very nature, is subjective rather than objective since we all have slightly different ideas about the meaning of words or sentences, even those which we use every day.

Among the most accepted definitions of semantics, Stork and Widdowson (1974:17) offer the following :

> *semantics is the study of all aspects of meaning in language, and examines the relationship between words and the concepts to which they refer. It considers the complex interactions between language, thought and behaviour.*

III.1.2. Definitions

The topic under study uses some key terms which need to be explained. These are: oppositeness, meaning and proverb. Therefore, what is oppositeness? What is meaning? Or what is a proverb? In answering these questions, we are going to follow the sequence of the words as they are formulated in the topic. Then, let us begin with oppositeness. **Oppositeness** is derived from **opposite** meaning opposed to, set against, entirely different or exactly contrary; and **opposite** comes from the verb **to oppose** that means to set against or to look in opposite direction. So, oppositeness is a noun derived from **opposite** and is defined as the state of being opposite.

For the word " meaning ", there are various points of view from different authors and we cannot present them all. But here are some drawn from some authors. The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics defines the word **meaning** as :

> *what a language expresses about the world we live in or any possible or imaginary world. The study of meaning is called Semantics. Semantics is usually concerned with the analysis of meaning of words, phrases or sentences and sometimes with the meaning of utterances in discourse or the meaning of a whole text.*

This view is also held by Barber (1964 : 242) who says that when we use the word **meaning** , we are talking about the relationship between language and the real world, between the signalling systems and the things that the signals refer to or stand for.

From these definitions, it is clear that meaning is the most difficult aspect of language to pin down in analysis. The true complexity of language is seen at the semantic level and it is precisely because meaning is so central to it that language is so complex. The true nature of language can only be understood through an understanding of meaning. Meaning plays a part at all levels of linguistic analysis (and whether we like it or not, the concepts of phoneme and morpheme are in some way concerned with meaning), and it plays a central role in many applications of human life. Loreto (1987) asserts that meaning is not **given** and is never **absolute**. He says that meaning is not an easy concept to deal with because it is context-dependent and it deals with abstraction (the image it reflects).

Now, what is a proverb? A proverb is also difficult to define since there are numerous views about it from different authors. According to Lyons (1968 : 177), a proverb is a short and concise sentence whose meaning does not reflect the meanings of its component parts. Nevertheless, the real meaning of a proverb may or may not have a relation with its literal meaning. Taking for instance the proverb **Sindya aka aba yariye akandi**, translated literally as " He who does not eat this ate something else ", we realise that this proverb is short and concise and its meaning does not reflect the meanings of its component parts. This is because : **Sindya** (He who does not eat) is opposed to **aba yariye** (ate) and **aka** (this) is opposed to **akandi** (something else) are naturally opposed in meaning. We also note that the negative morpheme **si-** plays an important role in the meaning of the proverb.

Moreover, the tenses used in this proverb play a vital role in the interpretation of a proverb : **Sindya** (He who does not eat) is opposed to **aba yariye** (ate). The first verb introduced by the negative morpheme **si-** is in the present tense and the second verb is in the simple past. Here, the meaning of the whole proverb is that when a person is satisfied with food, she or he starts to select what is good for her or him.

Similarly Seidl (1909 : 214) asserts that proverbs express in few words a truth which relates to every day experience. We can find proverbs which fit any human situation and this gives them general application. He goes on to say that proverbs are used to give a word of advice or of warning or a wise general comment on a situation, and they do this in a precise poignant style which makes them easy to remember and use.

Furthermore, the metaphorical meaning of a proverb has a much wider application, which extends far beyond the literal meaning. For example in the saying **Wenda nabi ugata, uvyara nabi ntuta**, we have the literal meaning, if you marry badly you throw, but if you breed badly you don't, and we also have the proverbial meaning which is "when one's wife misbehaves, divorce is possible but if one's children misbehave one is condemned to keep them". It results from this that the real meaning of the proverb is that when there is a strong misunderstanding between the couple (a wife and a husband), the husband may dismiss his wife. But when there is a misunderstanding between children and parents, it is a misfortune that the latter are obliged to stand

Charlotte and Wolf (1962 : 31) express their views by saying that it might be argued that great figures in English literature were subject to the laws of conversation of indigenous African languages. They say that conversational wit in many African languages postulates a ready command of diverse proverbs. It is assumed that there are a number of human situations which keep on recurring. The incidentals vary; the personalities vary, the situations vary sometimes in important ways but the essential elements of the situation are supposed to be recurring themes in human experience, and the proverb captures the recurrent nature of grief in the human condition. A ready grasp of proverbs, utilized convincingly, is therefore evidence of discernment and wisdom. As a Yoruba proverb has put it "**a wise man who knows proverbs reconciles difficulties**".

A similar admiration of elegant speech, and the place of proverbs in that kind of speech, can be found among the Ibo. Donatus Nwoga (1962) tells us that the Ibos have a dictum to the effect that to make a speech without using proverbs is like trying to climb a palm tree without the climbing rope. Nwoga then goes on to make a connection between traditional proverbs and Shakesperean quotations in contemporary Africa. He says

> *I suggest that the tendency toward supporting one's statement with proverbs might have carried over into this market literature in the form of using proverbs.*

Terence (1989 : 55) states that proverbs are another likely discourse universal but their role in polite speech varies considerably from culture to culture. He says that in many countries, including much of the Middle East and Africa, proverbs and other formulaic utterances are frequently employed as aids in arguing, in complimenting, in expressing condolences, and so forth.

In short, we see that many definitions including those mentioned above give similarly the same meaning about proverbs. They all talk about human life in a given society. We should draw the conclusion that a proverb is recognized by its truth and is a device which says much in few words.

III.1.3. The Semantic Aspect

According to the Linguistics Encyclopedia, semantics has two meanings :

(i) A branch of linguistics that deals with meaning in language;

(ii) It is used to describe something which concerns the meaning of words and sentences.

While making the semantics - pragmatics distinction, Yule (1985 : 91) says that ''semantics'' and ''pragmatics'' are concerned with aspects of meaning in language. However, he distinguishes 'pragmatics' and 'semantics' as follows :

> *generally, work in semantics deals with the description of word and sentence meaning, and in pragmatics with the characterization of speaker-meaning.*

Gardar (1979 : 280) says :

> *Conventionally, semantics has to do with the sentence, ignoring other aspects of utterance-meaning influenced by context of use or its intended purpose. Pragmatics has to do with the context and intentions of the speaker and addressee.*

III.1.3.1. The Concept of Meaning

The term meaning is a very complex concept which is difficult to define with precision. In fact, in every language, meaning can be denotative, connotative, cultural and/or environmental.

Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary (1987) states that the meaning of a word, expression or gesture is a thing which can be explained by using other words. In other words, it is the thoughts or ideas that are intended to be expressed by it.

Fromkin (1974 : 24) when talking about the meaning of meaning says that to define the meaning of a morpheme or a word, we find ourselves using other words in the definition. If the meaning of the prefix **in-** is **not**, what does **not** mean? If the meaning of **man** is defined by such semantic properties as **male**, **human**, and so on, what is the meaning of **human** and **male**? It is clear that at some point we have to stop and assume that everyone **knows** the definitions of the describing terms. Those words that are left undefined are the basic primitive semantic elements. Anyone who has studied geometry is acquainted with this procedure. One reads a definition **: A line is the shortest distance between two points.** What is a point? One assumes the knowledge of a point. **Point** is a primitive concept in geometry.

Saporta (1961 : 269) talking about **meaning and use** says that the most obvious way to conceive meaning is to conceive it as a dyadic relation between a sign and an object. For **meanings of meaning**, he asserts that there are at least as many **meanings of meaning** as there are disciplines which deal with language, and of course, many more than this because exponents within disciplines do not always agree with one another.

Nevertheless, definitions do tend to correspond more or less with the purposes and techniques of the individual formulating the definition, focusing on that aspect of the phenomenon which his discipline equips him to handle. Thus, the sociologist or anthropologist typically defines the meaning of a sign in terms of the common features of the situations in which it is used and of the activities which it produces. A careful correlation of occurrences of the term **stick** for example, with external situations and behaviours will gradually isolate its **meaning** from **branch**, from **pipe**, from **string** and so on. This clearly applies better to denotative meanings than to connotative meanings, and it says nothing about the behavioural principles operating within human organisms which bring about such correlations.

Conversely Travis (1986 : 10) argues that to know the meaning of a word or expression is not an easy task. In fact, he is puzzled by what the words or expressions described truly on one occasion of use and what they describe or might not describe on another. Generally speaking, these words or expressions have the originality of varying from one occasion to another. In this case, one can use words or expressions in conformity with what they mean or in conformity with what they do not mean provided that they are of the same code. It has been observed that in each message, be it a written or a spoken one, some words or expressions can be misleading. This is due to passwords, that is, polysemous words that vary from time to time and from place to place. Therefore, the understanding of the words or expressions requires some other prerequisites for reciprocal intelligibility. This means that those words or expressions must share a network of certain basic concepts.

To conclude this, one can say that words or expressions can only be understood via expectation in the light of mutually accessible background information or knowledge. Moreover, the interpretation of an expression is determined by the interpretation of each part of the expression.

III.1.4. Other Semantic Aspects

III.1.4.1. Antonymy

We cannot talk about oppositeness of meaning without saying a word about antonymy. The word **antonymy** originates from the Greek language and it has two parts: **ant-** which means **opposite** and **-onymy** which means **name**. Antonymy deals with **oppositeness of meaning** and words that are opposite are antonyms. In fact, antonymy is a regular and natural feature of language.

There are different views about antonymy but what is common to all is that antonyms are said to be of different sounds and of opposite meanings. According to Fromkin (1974), the meaning of a word may be defined by saying what it is **not**. **Male** means **not female**. **Big** means **not small**. Words which are opposite in meaning are often called ''ANTONYMS''. He continues to say that ironically, the basic property of two words which are antonyms is that they share all but one semantic property. The property they do not share is present in one word and absent in the other. Thus, in order to be opposites, two words must be semantically very similar. For instance, you know that **tall** is the opposite of **short** because you know that included in the semantic specification of both adjectives is the property **measure**, **size** or **height** on a vertical plane, indicating distance from the earth. Notice that the meaning of these adjectives and other similar ones is relational. The words themselves provide no information about absolute size.

Because of our knowledge of language, and of things in the world, this usually causes no confusion. But it does, like every aspect of language, provide a vehicle of humor. If the meanings of words were indissoluble wholes, there would be no way to make the interpretations that we make. For instance, we know that **big** and **red** are not opposites because they do not share all but one semantic property. They are both adjectives, but **big** possesses a semantic property involving **size** whereas **red** possesses a semantic property involving **colour**.

In English, there are a number of ways to form antonyms. You can, for example, add the prefix **un-** before a word and form its opposite, as in likely / **un**likely, able / **un**able, or you can add **non-** as in entity / **non**entity, conformist / **non**conformist. Or you can add **in-** as illustrated by tolerant / **in**tolerant, discrete / **in**discrete, decent / **in**decent.

In Kirundi, there are also number of ways to form antonyms. Some are lexical antonyms such as **Gukunda** (to love, to like) / **Kwanka** (to hate), **Kunezerwa** (to be happy) / **Kunabirwa** (to be unhappy); **Gutinya** (to be fearful) / **Kurinda** (to be fearless) and so forth. Others such as the negative morphemes . **nti- si-** and **-ta-** are used to form negative sentences. Examples are : **nti-** as in arya / ntarya, ata / ntata, yiga / ntiyiga, **si-** in nza / sinza, nywa / sinywa, ndya / sindya; **ta-** illustrated as agira / atagira, arondeye / atarondeye, apfa / adapfa.

In short, because we know the semantic properties of words which define their meanings, we also know when two words are antonyms, synonyms, homonyms or are totally unrelated as regards meaning. In addition to this, according to some authors, there are different kinds of oppositeness of meaning. These are namely :

- Gradable antonyms
- Complementary antonyms
- Converse antonyms / relational opposites.

For Howard (1988 : 74), such antonyms as narrow - wide, small - large, tall - short, weak - strong, etc. are called **gradable antonyms** because they are adjectives which do not refer to absolute qualities, but which may be subject to comparison or qualification. For example, we could say of a road, that it is **very narrow** or **very wide** , quite narrow or quite wide or that one road is wider or narrower than another. He goes on saying that the antonyms represented by the following pairs are called **complementary antonyms** : alive - dead, male - female, open - shut, relinquish - retain or keep. Complementarity, here, means that the denial of one member of the pair implies the assertion of the other member. For instance if someone is not dead, she or he is alive; if a person is not male then she is female, if the shop is not open it is shut; if you do not relinquish a post you retain it.

Howard (1984) also notices that there is a more clear-cut either or opposition with complementary antonyms than with gradable antonyms, though the distinction between the two types is perhaps rather more fuzzy than we have implied. Someone can after all be **more dead** than alive, or even **very much alive**; and a door may be **almost shut** or **not quite open**.

The antonyms represented by the pairs, over - under, receive - give, sell - buy, wife - husband are called **converses** or **relational opposites** since one member of the pair refers to the converse relation referred to by the other member. For example, if the bathroom is **over** the hall, then the hall is **under** the bathroom. Similarly, if Mary **receives** chocolates from Bill, then Bill **gives** chocolates to Mary; if Harry **sells** chocolates to Bill, then Bill **buys** chocolates from Harry; and if Mary is Bill's **wife**, then Bill is Mary's **husband**. A relation exists between these antonyms such that one is the converse of the other : they represent two (opposite) perspectives on the same relation. This type of antonymy is quite distinct from the other two and there appears to be no overlap.

For antonyms, we can formalise a relation on basis of meaning postulates. This is to say that if something is A, it is not B and vice-versa : $\mathbf{A} \Rightarrow \sim \mathbf{B}$ and $\mathbf{B} \Rightarrow \sim \mathbf{A}$. To be more precise, the adjectives **wide** and **narrow** are antonyms and we have : $\forall \mathbf{x}$ **(W (x)** $\Rightarrow \sim$ **N (x)** and $\forall \mathbf{x}$ **(N (x)** $\Rightarrow \sim$ **W (x)).**

Moreover, we know that if A is a parent of B then B is a child of A. The formulation is the following **:**$\forall \mathbf{x}$ $\forall \mathbf{y}$ **(x Ry** $\rightarrow$ **yR'x).** That is, for all x and for all y, if x stands in relation R to y, then y stands in relation R' to x that they are converses or relational opposites of each other.

III.1.4.2. Characteristics of Antonyms

According to Cruse (1986 : 204), antonyms share the following characteristics :

(1) They are fully gradable (most are adjectives, a few are verbs) in English.

(2) Members of such a pair denote a degree of some variable property such as length, speed, weight, accuracy, etc.

(3) When more strongly intensified, the members of a pair move, as it were in opposite direction along the scale representing degrees of the relevant variable property. Thus, **very heavy** and **very light**, for instance, are more widely separated on the scale of weight than **fairly heavy** and **fairly light** .

(4) The terms of the pair do not strictly bisect a domain : there is a range of values of the variable property, lying between those covered by opposed terms which cannot be property referred to by either term. As a result, a statement containing one member of an antonym pair stands in a relation of contrary with the parallel statement containing the other term. Thus, **it is long** and **it is short** are contrary, not contradictory statements.

In Kirundi, such antonyms can be met. Some Kirundi verbs can be accompanied by gradable words. For example **kubabara cane / rwose** (to be very sad / unhappy) is an antonym of **kunezerwa cane / rwose** (to be very happy). **Kwisonera** (to be well-bred / raised) is a antonym of **kwerura** (to be impolite).

III.2. Methodology

In this section, we will be concerned with three important things : first, we will describe the data collection procedures; second, we will talk about the analysis procedures, and, third, we will talk about the difficulties encountered.

Concerning the data collection, we will mention any material which helped us collect a number of kirundi proverbs containing oppositeness of meaning. For the analysis procedures, we will show the words that are opposed in meaning in each proverb.

III.2.1. Data Collection Procedures

The corpus of our study consists of Kirundi proverbs constructed on the basis of words that are opposed in meaning. We know for sure that writing was unknown in traditional Burundi. Therefore, there have been no written materials on Kirundi proverbs. Most researches on oral tradition are still in the developing process.

Nevertheless, little academic research has been carried out on Kirundi proverbs from a linguistic perspective and very few written materials are available. The primary sources we have used for this study are Rodegem's (1969) Sagesse Rundi : Proverbes, Dictons, Locutions Usités au Burundi and BEPES (1984) « Inyigisho y'Imyibutsa »; which give a list of proverbs used in Kirundi and their thematic classification. The only criterion for selecting the proverbs to study is oppositeness of meaning. A sample of Kirundi proverbs containing oppositeness of meaning was selected. Only a sample of 80 proverbs, mostly drawn from Rodegem (1969), was selected for analysis. This is due to the fact that most of the proverbs found in BEPES (1984) are also found in Rodegem (1969).

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III.2.2. Data Analysis Procedures

The Kirundi proverbs in our sample contain words that are opposed in meaning and their analysis is meaning based. Here, we are mostly concerned with the analysis of meanings, of the meaning relations between words within Kirundi proverbs containing oppositeness of meaning.

As we know, the vocabulary of a given language is not an unrelated aggregate of words. On the contrary, there are systematic relations between words within a language. If we consider two words that are opposed in meaning in a given proverb, what they have in common is that they reflect one and same image they want to present.

As far as our analysis of meaning is concerned, it is done through the form of the proverbs. The meaning is looked at through the lexical items which could be the vehicle of that meaning. Particular stress is put on the components of the proverb which contain oppositeness of meaning.

Furthermore, this work aims at showing that there is a socio-cultural knowledge which is required for the understanding of proverbs, the lack of which leads to the misuse and misinterpretation of proverbs. This is shown through the analysis.

Proverbs are always connotated. So, the message is hidden and revealed by images and symbols which are usually used. The interpretation of proverbs requires a knowledge of culture and society. In fact, it is within this part that we are confronted with symbolic meanings. We show what those images and symbols represent. In some cases, symbols and images can stand for different realities. To avoid the ambiguities of some lexical items used in Kirundi proverbs, we use the method of componential analysis.

In fact, componential analysis helps to break down a word into a set of semantic components or features. In our work, we try to see what words composing a proverb refer to and show that they are opposed to one another in meaning. We must know the true meaning of lexemes contained in proverbs before we understand them as images.

The componential analysis then helps us locate a word in its operational field, in case the word has many associations.

This study consists of showing what symbols (concrete objects) and images (abstract things) stand for in Burundian culture and society. Componential analysis helps to understand the cultural meaning. We know for sure that culture and society have a great influence on how people view the world in which they live. We analyse the difference between the semantic level of a proverb and the cultural level. Our analysis leads us to showing that language and culture are interdependent and that the understanding of a proverb requires a socio-linguistic competence beside the linguistic one. The understanding of proverbs requires the understanding of culture and society. Thus there is a prior knowledge of culture and society which allows us to understand proverbs.

III.2.3. Difficulties Encountered

The most difficult problem we have encountered is related to translation. In fact, we cannot always find word by word equivalents in English and in Kirundi. This makes translation difficult and even impossible for some Kirundi words. This is why we spent a very long time to translate and analyse the data of our study. Moreover, Kirundi and English are two different languages belonging to two different families. The first belongs to the group of Bantu languages whereas the second belongs to the Indo-European family of languages.

Therefore, the cultures of the speakers of the two languages are not the same. They do not share the same values and norms and consequently they are quite different because their respective languages are made on the basis of different experiences, histories, manners and ways of living. A perfect translation of a Kirundi word into English is then difficult and sometimes impossible. This is why the only thing we can do is to paraphrase in order to find the appropriate equivalent meaning. This allows us to keep close to the original meaning.

CHAPTER IV : FINDINGS

IV.0. Introduction

The present chapter aims at giving the results of the analysis of the collected data (that is kirundi proverbs containing oppositeness of meaning in themselves). We are going to analyse those kirundi proverbs semantically. Our concern will be the analysis of the meaning of kirundi negative morphemes such as **nti-, si-, -ta-** and other words that are naturally opposed in meaning.

IV.1. Relationship between Culture, Language and Proverb

According to Taylor quoted in Hymes (1964 : 55), culture can be defined as :

> *that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society .*

Culture includes everything related to man's way of living and his means to live in a given society. By way of living, we know that a man must communicate with others. He uses a language. This is why we have to make a link between culture and language. So, language is part of culture since it allows one to communicate with other members of the society

As stated by Stork and Widdowson (1974 : 7), language is man's most important means of communication. Language, however, is not a natural phenomenon, it is a creation of man's social needs; it is acquired by imitation. Hymes (1964 : 456) also says that the interrelation of language and other aspects of culture is so close that no part of culture of a particular group can properly be studied without reference to the linguistic symbols in use. Language is also part of human behaviour. Language is an acquired habit of systematic vocal activity representing meanings coming from human experiences. One can also say simply that language is an acquired vocal system for communicating meanings. According to Nasr (1980 : 1), this statement tells us :

a) that language operates in a regular and systematic fashion;

b) that language is basically oral, and that the oral symbols represent meaning as they are related to real life situations and experiences, and;

c) that language has a social function, and that without it, society would probably not exist.

Thus, what is correct language? Since language is part of culture and also part of human behaviour, our attitude towards it must not be different from that towards any other part of culture or human behaviour.

Any act in our social life would be either correct or incorrect depending on the situation in which the act is performed. A number of examples can be enumerated such as the kind of clothes we wear, the table manners we use, the subjects we talk about, and so on. For instance, an evening function may require a special kind of dress; a dinner invitation may require a different table sitting; and the subjects for discussion will vary in business, meetings, or friendly gatherings. Such too is the case with language.

So, what is correct or incorrect in a language at any given time is determined on the basis of how **educated** people in important positions actually **use** the language. Communication through speech alone between speakers of different languages is impossible because there is no necessary connection between the sounds that each language uses and the message that is expressed even if the message in both languages is the same. Thus, there is a relation between the kinds of sounds speakers of various languages make and their cultural setting. A communication system must have two characteristics : people who want to communicate a message must be able to use it in a number of ways, and those who receive the message must be able to understand it.

From this, we can say that language is a system which connects the world of meaning and the world of sound. On the one hand, we have **things to say**, on the other hand, we make noises which, under ordinary circumstances, carry these things to a listener or listeners. Language enables a speaker to transform ideas into sounds, and it enables a listener within his own mind to transform these sounds back into the ideas with which the speaker began. Language uses the following process : ideas arise within the nervous system of a human being, who is led to change these ideas into sounds; the sounds travel to the other persons and are soon changed within their nervous systems into some form of the original ideas.

Briefly speaking, culture and language are closely interrelated in such away that changes in one entails changes in the other. It should be borne in mind that today language is thought of in the context of man's social evolution. As he evolved, so his cultural horizons expanded and his language inevitably developed at the same time.

One should ask oneself the relationship between culture and language on one hand and proverbs on the other. Before showing the relationship between them, let us first define proverbs. Proverbs are said to be the simple truthful statements that we have got from our ancestors and that have become granted affirmations that are used even nowadays. Then, their relation with culture and language is that proverbs constitute ways of education and serve to spread the history of a people. The ways of education were traditionally taught to children by their parents and they were transmitted by means of language. The history of a people was transmitted from one generation to another through the use of proverbs. Indeed, proverbs are said to be effective ways of expressing people's thoughts about their every day experiences.

In general, proverbs have no precise source and have been invented to clarify the ways by which a man creates, observes, thinks and behaves, and the potentiality to witness and interpret his daily experiences. One's viewpoints are expressed through proverbs and shared with the hearer or the audience. For this reason, one must choose the appropriate proverb according to the prevailing situation or according to what he wishes to express.

Proverbs are the reflection of what the world is comparatively to what the world was some years ago. By using proverbs, Burundians exchange ideas and experiences of human life.

For messages or conversations to be effective and well-transmitted, Burundians prefer to use proverbs. The choice of a given proverb during the conversation goes with the choice of images which denote the culture of interlocutors. It is very important to note that the cultural meaning or cultural interpretation of a proverb is understood through images. The proverb is the expression of culture and its meaning equates the meaning of the speaker and hearer's culture. If the receiver of the message does not know how to relate images to the culture, she or he runs the risk of being far from understanding the meaning of the proverb.

In short, the relationship between culture, language and proverbs can be demonstrated through the following process : culture is understood as the transmission of customs, traditions, norms and so forth, from one generation to another by using a language. While teaching anything related to culture, one uses proverbs as strong and convincing arguments. In fact, proverbs compress big amounts of information.

IV.2. Contextual Orientation

According to Nasr (1980 : 110), in order to understand the meaning of a sentence (a proverb in our case) well, the hearer must know three things :

a) he must know the meanings of individual words in the utterance;
b) he must know the meanings that come from the grammatical instruments (the forms and the arrangement or order of words) in the utterance and;
c) he must know the context in which the utterance is made.

Here, we are mostly concerned with (a) because it is directly related to our topic. We are dealing with the meanings of individual words in Kirundi proverbs.

Everything said or written is done in a particular situation for a particular purpose. In order to understand what is said and its purpose, therefore, one must know about the situation around it. Situational understanding means knowing about the situations in which language is used. The elements of these situations are meant by contextual orientation.

IV.3. Functions of Kirundi Proverbs

In Kirundi, proverbs have many functions. Those functions vary according to many parameters, especially the topic under discussion, the social relationships between the interlocutors, their friendship, how they are familiar to each other, how they are different in age, richness, intelligence, etc. Nevertheless, a Kirundi native-speaker is able to recognize the possible functions of a Kirundi proverb as well as its situations of use.

In the same way, Dzobo (1973) emphasizes the functional aspects of proverbs as follows :

> *Proverbs are short meaningful statements about all aspect of life, its successes and failures and its trials and sufferings. They create in us the desire to discover what life does mean in this earthy existence as they express 'long experiences in short sentences'. They deal with every topic of everyday living, business dealings, family relation, vice and virtue, poverty and richness, joy and sorrow.*

The functions of Kirundi proverbs are so various that we cannot enumerate them all. Some of them are used to give a warning or a piece of advice, others are used to convince the hearer, others are used to give a justification to a behaviour and more others are used to sum up the whole of the topic that is being dealt with.

IV.3.1. Proverbs Used to Warn or Give a Piece of Advice

Most often, proverbs of this type / category are used as a way of putting the hearer on the correct side of things, that is, the proverbs are to warn the addressee to take a given behaviour in order to protect himself against a probable danger or to reach a goal. Some Kirundi proverbs illustrating this case are :

E.g. 1. Isoko si iyagiro

L.T. : The market is not a place where to chat.

P.M. : It is not good to say everything when there are people who are not concerned.

E.g. 2. Kuvuga menshi siko kuyamara.

L.T. : To say much is not to say it all.

P.M. : Say what is necessary / The less said the better.

E.g. 3. Ibitakuraba uraba hasi.

L.T. : Look away from what does not concern you.

P.M. : Of what does not concern you, speak neither good nor evil.

E.g. 4. Ntawusukiranya amata n'amateke.

L.T. : Nobody can mix milk and cush-cush.

P.M. : A good association is made between individuals who are equal.

E.g.5. Abakebana ntibakeburana.

L.T. : Rivals do not advise one another.

P.M. . One must know to whom he is talking.

IV.3.2. Proverbs Used to Convince

In regards to this type of proverbs, we may say that they are used as a method of influencing behaviour. The following examples serve to specify the case :

E.g.6. Umugabo si urucumu.

L.T. : A man is not a spear.

P.M. : It is better to pay attention to any person one does not know.

E.g.7. Utagira urugo ntagira igabo.

L.T. : Who has no compound does not have manhood..

P.M. : We have to obey to all the persons who are superior to us.

This proverb is used as a self-warning and helps to protect oneself against a probable danger. This proverb is used by a person who is talking to himself as a reaction during some abnormal circumstances (e.g when a person is angry).

E.g.8. Umuvyara ntakubwira ngo tinya ingwe.

L.T. : A cross – cousin does not tell you to be afraid of a leopard.

P.M. : Avoid jokings in some circumstances.

From these proverbs, we realise that with these warning-proverbs, the speaker and the hearer belong to the same contextual situation. They are face to face and the one who utters the proverbs gives a warning that serves to protect a person from a difficult situation or some very hard consequences of a given action. The goal of the speaker is to convince the addressee to conform himself with the speaker's wishes. These proverbs influence the behaviour.

IV.3.3. Proverbs Used as Justification

A number of Kirundi proverbs is used to justify a given situation or behaviour in a given context. They deal with actual situations. Here are some Kirundi proverbs playing that role :

E.g.9. Amabanga abiri ntabangikana.

L.T. : Two businesses cannot be done simultaneously.
P.M. : It is impossible to meet two commitments at a time.

E.g.10. Amazi arashuha ntiyibagira ibumbeho.

L.T. : Water becomes hot but never forgets it was once cold.
P.M. : Whatever changes happen to a person, he cannot change completely.

The proverbs listed above express universal truths that serve as support to a given behaviour, an attitude, or a reaction in various circumstances. These proverbs are said when a person wants to justify or to prove the truthfulness of his opinion or any situation in hands. They sustain an action that has just happened by what is commonly known as ''la raison d'être'' in French.

IV.3.4. Proverbs Summing up a Discussion

> In this case, we agree with Rodegem (1983 : 45) who says that : *"un proverbe est un argument massu auquel personne ne résiste"*, translated as : *"A proverb is a convincing argument to which nobody can resist"*.

From this, we learn that when a proverb is uttered in a discussion, it constitutes the last convincing word. It summarizes a succession of events in only one utterance. Proverbs of this kind are often found at the end of a text and are rarely said before an explanation of their application.

E.g.11. Menshi arutwa na rimwe.

L.T. : Many words are less than one.

P.M. : The less said the better.

E.g.12. Abakebana ntibakeburana.

L.T. : Rivals do not advise one another.

P.M. : One must know to whom is talking.

E.g.13. Isoko si iyagiro.

L.T. : The market is not a place where to chat.

P.M. : It is not good to say everything when there are people who are not concerned.

IV.4. Analysis of Kirundi Proverbs According to their Negative Morphemes

IV.4.0. Introduction

This analysis helps us to highlight the contribution of social and cultural knowledge in the understanding of Kirundi proverbs in general and those related to our topic in particular. As our analysis aims at showing the oppositeness of meaning in Kirundi proverbs, we are mostly concerned with the study of Kirundi negative morphemes "**nti-**", "**-ta-**" and other natural words. Knowledge of these negative morphemes constitute the prerequisite knowledge to interpret and understand some Kirundi proverbs.

In Burundi as elsewhere in the world, proverbs are a means of expression and a medium of education. They are essentially characterised by their non-literal and metaphorical meaning. They have two levels of meaning, namely the explicit one and the implicit one.

In fact, while dealing with Kirundi proverbs, we have to analyse two levels of proverb-meanings : the linguistic level and the cultural level.

The linguistic level is the one which does not require a prior knowledge of culture. In a proverb, the linguistic level corresponds to the first denotation. Lexemes are simply interpreted in their dictionary meanings without taking them as images. This level of analysis is accessible to persons who do not master Kirundi proverbs and it also deviates from the true interpretation of proverbs.

The cultural level requires a knowledge of culture and society. Here, images and symbols find their proper place. The cultural level corresponds to the second denotation. In this case we have to understand what those images and symbols represent.

IV.4.1. The Negative Morpheme "NTI-"

This Kirundi negative morpheme "**nti-**" means "**not**" and serves to show that the constituents of a given proverb are opposed in meaning. This case is illustrated by a number of Kirundi proverbs such as :

E.g.1. Abagabo babiri ntibabana mu nzu.

L.T. : Two men do not live together in the same house.
P.M. : There is competition and rivalry between people with the same status.

Here, the negative morpheme "**nti-**" is responsible for the oppositeness of meaning in this proverb and it shows that there is an impossible cohabitation of two men in one house.

In fact, **abagabo** is a plural noun of **umugabo** which means, for Burundians, an adult man, wise, who is just and correct; in brief, who has good qualities. Then, the two men indeed would not logically be incompatible in the same house so as not to live together. Therefore, the term must be used differently from what it ordinarily means.

It means that a man with good qualities and manners lives with other men without quarrelling. This is also why our study on Kirundi negative morphemes finds its place. The use of the Kirundi negative morpheme "**nti-**" is to show that people have to give up the impossible cohabitation in their families.

In the example below, the negative morpheme "**nti-**" shows a logical consequence of the opposed words.

E.g.2. Abakebana ntibakeburana.

L.T.: Rivals do not advise one another.

P.M.: One must know to whom he is talking.

In this proverb, the metaphor that we can find is **abakebana** (rivals). From a social point of view, we define rivals as people who have quarrelled and opened conflict between them. In that word, there is an idea of hatred between two persons. We can say that these persons have a double intention : first, they can kill each other. The two instances (to hate and to kill) are compatible and one follows another. And socially speaking, we know that there are several consequences that follow this phenomenon of rivalry.

Normally, when two people are said to be rivals, they say cursing words and no one listens to the other when she or he is speaking and they always keep an eye on each other. They are simply enemies. The word **abakebana** in this proverb is metaphorically used to illustrate the image of a suspected person who intends to do bad things or even kill her or his rival. The conversation between two rivals may be the source of misfortune or death. This death may be prepared and executed by one of them. However, the negative morpheme "nti-'' in **ntibakeburana** is there to give an appropriate meaning to the proverb because if we drop it, we run the risk of having a non-sense proverb. That is, this proverb may lack logic or truth. For instance, if we say **abakebana barakeburana** (rivals advise one another) without the negative morpheme "**nti-**", this sentence becomes contradictory.

From a semantic viewpoint, this sentence is contradictory since some of its constituents are opposed in meaning : **gukeba** (to hate) and **gukebura** (to advise). This is why the negative morpheme "**nti-**" is very important in the proverb-construction. It turns a contradiction into a true statement.

To make this proverb-construction clear, let us consider another proverb :

E.g.3. Ikinege ntukiyagira aya beneso.

L.T. : With a unique child, do not talk about your brothers.

P.M. : Know to whom you are speaking.

The words that are opposed in meaning in this proverb are "**ikinege**" (a unique child) and "**beneso**" (your brothers). In addition to this, there is the Kirundi negative morpheme "**nti-**" in **nti-ukiyagira** which provides the meaning of the proverb.

In this proverb, the oppositeness of meaning is characterised by the use of the negative morpheme "**nti-**" otherwise the proverb would be **ikinege ukiyagira aya beneso** (with a unique child, talk about your brothers), which is not appropriate. A positive sentence describes a situation which is not acceptable socially. For the truthfulness of the proverb, we have to put or insert the negative morpheme "**nti-**".

Suppose that in this proverb, the word **ikinege** (a unique child) stands for a proposition P, the word **beneso** (your brothers) stands for the proposition non-P ($\neg$ P), P and $\neg$ P are opposed in meaning but when we add the negative morpheme "**nti-**" between the two, the proverb gets an image which allows the proverb as a whole to have a proper meaning.

Moreover, the hearer can understand the meaning of this proverb only after finding what **ikinege** stands for when it is opposed to **beneso**. In fact, **ikinege** is the symbol of loneliness. A lonely person cannot get along or contact with other people. And **beneso** stands for a group of persons who cooperate with each other and help one another. "To be alone" is opposed to "to be in a group".

The following proverb shows a kind of selfishness. This proverb is :

E.g.4. Aboro babiri ntibasangira umwerera.

L.T. : Two poor people do not share the drink that you give to convalescent.

P.M. : There is selfishness between people who run for the same thing. There is selfishness between beggars, applicants or petitioners.

Such a word as **aboro** (poor people) is naturally opposed to **abatunzi** (rich people). Aboro (poor people) and umwerera (a drink of sick persons) have no relation at all but they happen to be used in the same proverb. If we say "**Aboro babiri basangira umwerera**" (two poor people share drink of convalescent), this is an unusual situation which is expressed by an affirmative sentence. What gives this proverb a proper meaning is the use of the negative morpheme "**nti-**". The negative turns the situation into a more normal situation. Otherwise, **gusangira** and **umwerera** are opposed in meaning. The combination **gusangira umwerera** denotes an unusual situation. It becomes more unusual if it has **aboro** as subject.

In addition to this, **aboro** is a plural noun derived from a singular noun **umworo** meaning a poor person. This means that there is somebody who has few things or nothing and who lives under bad conditions by begging other people. So, such two poor people are quarrelling when they happen to get something they must share. Besides, **umwerera** is a drink reserved to "sick persons" in order to save their life. This drink **umwerera** is in a little quantity and prevents people from dying. If, then, it is little for one sick person, it is also too little for two sick persons to share it. Then, the lesser the drink becomes, the more jealousy it creates among the two sick persons.

For further clarifications about the use of the Kirundi negative morpheme "**nti-**" in Kirundi proverbs, let us take another proverb :

E.g.5. Agasonga k'uwundi ntikakubuza gutora itiro.

L.T.: The ache of somebody else does not prevent you from falling asleep.

P.M. : Someone's pain is never yours.

The words that are opposed in meaning are: **uwundi** (somebody else) and "**-ku-**" the second person singular morpheme in "ntika**ku**buza" (to mean you).

The negative morpheme "**nti-**" applies to a proposition that is rather implausible, that is, "Agasonga k'uwundi kakubuza gutora agatiro" (meaning the ache of somebody else prevents you from falling asleep). It turns that proposition into a more plausible one. The proverb shows people's indifference, carelessness, and irresponsibility. There is lack of solidarity, hospitality and mutual assistance. People should assist others when they are in danger.

In normal circumstances, when a person is sick or seriously ill, his neighbour should come to spend the whole night with him or her or take him to hospital if need be.

In few words, the use of the Kirundi negative morpheme "**nti-**" is of paramount importance in the Kirundi proverb-construction. It hides the meaning and understanding of Kirundi proverbs for he whoever is not a native-speaker of Kirundi language or simply a user of Kirundi proverbs.

IV.4.2. The Negative Word "si-"

The Kirundi negative word "**si-**" means "is not" or "are not". It is opposed to "**ni**" which means "**is**" or "**are**". **Ni** is used in equative sentences to show identity or in a sentence ascribing a property to the subject. **Si** is used to negate identity or to deny that the subject has a certain property. A number of Kirundi proverbs can illustrate this case :

E.g.1. Aho bantegeye siho bambonera.

L.T.: Where they trap me is not where they see me.

P.M.: They do not see me in the place where they wait for me.

The negative word "**si-**" is very important in the understanding of the meaning of this proverb. The verbs **gutega** (to trap) and **kubona** (to see) in this proverb are opposed in meaning due to the use of "**si-**" which serves to deny the expectation.

E.g.2. Amapfa muhanganye siyo agutwara (akwica) hagora inzeduka.

L.T.: The hungers that you are facing to are not the ones that kill you, what is dangerous is accident.

P.M.: Pay attention ! The enemy you know is not the one who is going to kill you.

From the lexical meanings of words, such verbs as **guhangana** (to face) and **inzeduka** (something happening accidently) are opposed but they are joined by the Kirundi negative word "**si-**" which denegates the expectation.

E.g.3. Isoko si iyagiro.

L.T.: The market is not a place where to chat.

P.M.: It is not good to say everything when there are people who are not concerned.

The words **isoko** (the market) and **iyagiro** (a place where to chat) are opposed in meaning because in a market there are several persons in such away that you cannot tell a secret. In fact, a secret is said between not more than two persons; otherwise it is not a secret. So, the use of the Kirundi negative word "**si-**" is to oppose the meanings of **isoko** and **iyagiro**. In a large market nothing is said as a secret.

E.g.4. Kuvuga menshi siko kuyamara.

L.T. : T o say much is not to say it all.

P.M. : The less said the better.

Thus, **kuvuga menshi** is opposed to **kuyamara** but they are connected by the negative word "**si**" and this offers a proper meaning to the whole proverb.

E.g.5. Intwengo y'umukeba si ikiyago.

L.T. : The laugh of an enemy is not a chat.

P.M.: Be aware of the person to whom you are speaking.

In this proverb, the oppositeness of meaning results from **Intwengo y'umukeba** and **ikiyago**. In general, there is no chat between a person and his or her enemy except that they can say cursing words to each other. The Kirundi negative word "**si-**" serves to join the laugh of an enemy and the chat.

All in all, the use of the negative word "**si-**" in Kirundi proverbs like "**nti-**" does show immediately the proverbial meaning of the whole proverb because we realise that there are words that should not normally be used in the same proverb. Umukeba (enemy) has no relation at all with ikiyago (a chat) because we chat with our friends not our enemies.

IV.4.3. The Negative Morpheme "-ta-".

The Kirundi negative morpheme "**-ta-**" is frequently used in Kirundi proverbs and serves to negate a proposition. Its role is to oppose the words in a proverb. Nevertheless, the whole proverb remains with its proper meaning. For instance, **kitagenda yavyaye ikigenda**, in itself, this proverb has two words opposed in meaning and that seem to be identical. These are **kitagenda** and **ikigenda**. These two words are different forms of the same lexeme "kugenda" separated by "**-ta-**".

In the proverb **amakuru atarimwo umukuru yama ari amazimwe** translated as 'the news announced in the absence of a responsible person are always rumors, the negative morpheme "-ta-" makes the words **amakuru** (the news) and **umukuru** (a head) be opposed. For example, if we were to drop the negative morpheme "-ta-", the proverb would have been deprived of logic or truth. Then, we would have had **amakuru arimwo umukuru yama ari amazimwe** translated as 'the news with a head are always rumors. Here, we run the risk of having a sentence which is grammatically correct but which is untrue at the cultural level. As we said earlier, a single change in a proverb makes the whole proverb change its proper meaning. This is a typical case. We also realise that **amakuru** (news) and **amazimwe** (rumors) are lexically opposed in meaning. **Amakuru** (news) are true pieces of information that we can spread everywhere in the world but **amazimwe** are always some kind of news which are not true and which are transmitted from ear to ear telling bad things about a particular person in a particular situation.

Like the preceding proverb, the proverb **Ibitakuraba uraba hasi**, translated as 'from what does not concern you, keep away', shows that a single change of word makes the whole proverb change its meaning. In this proverb, the change becomes **ibikuraba uraba hasi** which is unusual. It means that if we really drop the negative morpheme "**-ta-**" the proverb changes meaning. For a native-speaker of Kirundi language, this sentence lacks logic. So, the oppositeness of meaning results from the use of the negative morpheme "**-ta-**" which makes the proverb have a proper meaning.

IV.4.4. Oppositeness Built around Natural Words

The study of this oppositeness of meaning built around natural words follows the same processes as the preceding ones. Here we show the words that are lexically opposed without a Kirundi negative morpheme. This explanation can be illustrated by the following examples :

E.g.1. Abakundanye barankana.

L.T.: Those who love one another may hate one another.

P.M. : Best friends may become enemies.

This proverb is used to show that quarrels do exist among people who live near one another and even among friends. Here, the oppositeness is built around the words **abakundanye** (best friends) and **barankana** (hate one another). These two words are derived from the verbs **gukunda** (to love / to like) and **kwanka** (to hate / not to love). These verbs are lexically opposed.

E.g.2. Amajambo menshi arutwa na rimwe.

L.T.: Many words are less than one.

P.M.: The less said the better.

The words **menshi** (many) and **rimwe** (one) are lexically opposed in meaning. This proverb is used to give a piece of advice to people who are very talkative.

E.g.3. Gera hano aruta wogenda.

L.T.: Arrive here is better than better be going.

P.M.: Something is better than nothing.

This proverb shows formalist friendship. Thus, we realise that the oppositeness is built around the expressions **gera hano** (arrive here) and **wogenda** (better be going). These two expressions are lexically opposed in meaning.

E.g.4. Ntawusukiranya amata n'amateke.

L.T.: Nobody mixes milk and cush-cush.

P.M.: A good association is made between individuals who are equal.

The oppositeness of meaning is built around the words **amata** (milk) and **amateke** (cush-cush). For Burundians, milk is incompatible with cush-cush, especially when they are taken at the same time. Either you drink milk alone or you eat cush-cush only. Not the two at once.

E.g.5. Uwo mwakundanye muryana akabisi n'agahiye.

L.T.: With the one you love, you share what is raw and what is cooked.

P.M.: Among friends all things are shared.

In this proverb, the oppositeness of meaning is made between the words **akabisi** (what is raw) and **agahiye** (what is cooked). These two words are naturally and lexically opposed and they clearly show oppositeness of meaning within the same proverb.

E.g.6. Amunguranka niyo mazikesha.

L.T.: The more you search cattle, the less you get it.

P.M.: The higher one aims at, the lower he achieves.

This Kirundi proverb shows clearly the oppositeness of meaning resulting from the verbs **kungura** (to get more) and **gukesha** (to get less and less). One may take the two verbs as "directional opposites". In English the combination of the two words produces the figure of speech known as "antithesis".

From the examples cited above, we conclude that oppositeness is here made of words that are lexically opposed. Sometimes, they may be called "contradictions".

IV.4.5. Mixed Kirundi Negative Morphemes

IV.4.5.1. "Nti-" and "-ta-"

To mix these Kirundi negative morphemes is done on purpose. These morphemes are used together within a proverb and show the use of "**nti-**" and "**-ta-**" with other natural words. Let us illustrate this case by some examples :

E.g.1. Akatavuga ntigahenda akavuga.

L.T.: A person who does not talk does not lie the one who talks.

P.M.: It is no good lying to a person who is as intelligent as you.

The words **akatavuga** (does not talk) and **akavuga** (what talks) are opposed in meaning by the use of the negative morpheme "**-ta-**". The negative morpheme "**-ta-**" together with "**nti-**" make a double negation in the proverb and provide a cultural meaning to the proverb. The negative morpheme "**nti-**" serves to link the words **akatavuga** and **akavuga** that are naturally opposed in meaning. The two words are different forms of the same lexeme "**akavuga**" separated by "**-ta-**".

E.g.2. Utakugamishije imvura ikirwa ntakugamisha ihise.

L.T.: He who does not shelter you when it is still raining, does not shelter you when the rain is over.

P.M.: It is better to help your friend before he asks you to.

The words "**ikirwa**" (is still raining) and "**ihise**" (is over) are opposed. Here, mixing the negative morphemes "**nti-**" and "**-ta-**" with other natural words lead to what we can call "neither ... nor". This is to say that neither a person who does not shelter you when it is still raining nor can she / he shelter you when the rain is over? This means that she / he can not help you in any of the two circumstances .

E.g.3. Utabonye agasohoka ntabona akinjira.

L.T.: He who does not see what goes out, does not see what comes in.

P.M.: Receiving is the reward of giving.

The words **agasohoka** (what goes out) and **akinjira** (what comes in) are also lexically and naturally opposed in meaning. So, to mix the negative morphemes ("**-ta-**" and "**nti-**") with other natural words leads to neither..... nor.

E.g.4. Akatayabariwe ntikayamenya.

L.T.: He who is not told something does not know it.

P.M.: Pay attention when you are speaking, there is no need to inform unconcerned people.

This proverb is said when one is warning. So, the verbs **akatayabariwe** (who is not told) and **ntikayamenya** (does not know) are a kind of proverb – construction form by its very nature. The repetition of "**-ka-**" in those two words plays a vital role in the understanding of the proverb. One must know what "**-ka-**" stands for. It does not stand for a human being but maybe a thing or an animal.

E.g.5. Utakuzi ntakurusha inka.

L.T.: He who does not know you does not have more cows than you.

P.M.: It is no use showing a bad behaviour to a strange person.

From **utakuzi** (who does not know you) there is no relation with **ntakurusha inka** (does not have more cows than you). The repetition of "**-ku-**"in "utakuzi"and "ntakurusha" shows that the use of it is central to the meaning of the proverb.
The negative morphemes "**nti-**" and "**-ta-**" make the words forming that proverb look like opposed but they are not opposed as such.

In short, to mix the Kirundi negative morphemes "**nti-**" and "**-ta-**" and other natural words leads to a kind of proverb – construction form which is not easy to discover. The two actions or events follow each other. Sometimes, we can find some contradiction in them. That is, the two verbs or words are lexically opposed in meaning.

IV.4.5.2. "Nti-" and Other Natural Words

The use of the Kirundi negative morpheme "**nti-**" and other words opposed in meaning shows that one of two events must happen. For that, let us explain this case by some examples :

E.g.1. Umugabo abura ibanga ntabura ibara.

L.T.: A man misses a secret but not misfortune.

P.M.: If you say what you should have kept as a secret, be sure of the forthcoming consequences.

This proverb is said when accusing someone. From the analysis, the verbs **abura** (misses) and **ntabura** (does not miss) are grammatically opposed in meaning. This proverb shows that it is the one not the other of the two actions. Simply this means that if it is not the one, it is the other.

E.g.2. Umugore musangira amata ntimusangira amazi.

L.T.: A wife shares milk with you but not water.

P.M.: Women are unreliable. They search for comfort and easiness.

The verbs **musangira** (share with you) and **ntimusangira** (do not share) are grammatically opposed in meaning and this is due to the use of the negative morpheme "nti-" The words **amata** (milk) and **amazi** (water) are opposed in meaning according to the Burundian culture. In fact, **amata** symbolizes richness and **amazi** symbolizes poverty. The use of the negative morpheme "**nti-**" and the words milk and water show that it is milk not water. In addition to this, milk stands for anything precious while drinking water shows poverty. The cultural meaning is that a wife will harmoniously live with you while you are rich but as soon as you become poor her love for you will go as well.

E.g.3. Uwawe akwima amata ntakwima amahere.

L.M. : A relative of yours refuses you milk and not scabies.

P.M. : It is in case of misfortune that one remembers those he had rejected.

In this proverb, the verbs **akwima** (refuses) and **ntakwima** (does not refuse) are opposed. It follows from this that the words **amata** (milk) and **amahere** (scabies) become opposed in meaning due to the use of "**nti-**". The negative morpheme "**nti-**" used with the words milk and scabies implies logical succession of actions which, moreover, shows that it is one of the two, that is, scabies not milk.

This proverb is said when one is warning. So, the verbs **akatayabariwe** (who is not told) and **ntikayamenya** (does not know) are a kind of proverb – construction form by its very nature. The repetition of "**-ka-**" in those two words plays a vital role in the understanding of the proverb. One must know what "**-ka-**" stands for. It does not stand for a human being but maybe a thing or an animal.

E.g.5. Utakuzi ntakurusha inka.

L.T.: He who does not know you does not have more cows than you.

P.M.: It is no use showing a bad behaviour to a strange person.

From **utakuzi** (who does not know you) there is no relation with **ntakurusha inka** (does not have more cows than you). The repetition of "**-ku-**"in "utakuzi"and "ntakurusha" shows that the use of it is central to the meaning of the proverb.
The negative morphemes "**nti-**" and "**-ta-**" make the words forming that proverb look like opposed but they are not opposed as such.

In short, to mix the Kirundi negative morphemes "**nti-**" and "**-ta-**" and other natural words leads to a kind of proverb – construction form which is not easy to discover. The two actions or events follow each other. Sometimes, we can find some contradiction in them. That is, the two verbs or words are lexically opposed in meaning.

IV.4.5.2. "Nti-" and Other Natural Words

The use of the Kirundi negative morpheme "**nti-**" and other words opposed in meaning shows that one of two events must happen. For that, let us explain this case by some examples :

E.g.1. Umugabo abura ibanga ntabura ibara.

L.T.: A man misses a secret but not misfortune.

P.M.: If you say what you should have kept as a secret, be sure of the forthcoming consequences.

E.g.4. Uwariye uwiwe ntiyoreka murundi.

L.T.: One who has eaten his relative cannot spare someone else.

P.M. One who has made a relative suffer will not spare others.

Here, it is clear that the word **uwiwe** (his relative) is lexically opposed in meaning to **murundi** (someone else) with whom you do not have any relation or whom you see for the first time. Then **uwariye uwiwe** has as consequence **ntiyoreka murundi**.

E.g.5. Umugani ntuva ku giti uva ku muntu.

L.T. : A proverb does not come from a tree, it comes from a person.

P.M. : A proverb originates from a person.

The verbs **ntuva** (does not come from) and **uva** (comes from) are opposed in meaning and they are different forms of the same lexeme "uva". From this, **ku giti** and **ku muntu** are also opposed. From the statement **umugani ntuva ku giti**, we may have as consequence **uva ku muntu**. The negative morpheme "**nti-**" used with **ku giti** and **ku muntu** shows that it is not a tree but a person. These are kinds of expressions used when you do not want to attack / vex a person.

In short, we can say that the use of the negative morpheme "**nti-**" and other words within the same proverb shows that, among two actions (from a tree and from a person), one must be accomplished (that is, from a person).

IV.4.5.3. "Si-" and Other Natural Words.

The Kirundi negative morpheme "**si-**" used with other natural words in Kirundi proverbs, serves to show that some words separated by it are opposed in meaning. This is why the following Kirundi proverbs are going to be our case in study :

E.g.1. Intwengo y'umukeba si ikiyago.

L.T. : The laugh of an enemy is not a chat or conversation.

P.M. : Be aware of the person with whom you are chatting.

In Burundian culture, the meaning of **umukeba** is one's enemy. And the laugh of an enemy never makes you feel happy. It is a special kind of laugh which is full of irony. Consequently the laugh of an enemy is opposed to a (friendly) chat since we understand by **ikiyago** a good conversation among friends and the latter are talking about the same situation and in a friendly way. Then, **intwengo y'umukeba** and **ikiyago** separated by the negative morpheme "**si**" are opposed in meaning.

E.g.2. Isoko si iyagiro.

L.T. : The market is not a place where to chat.

P.M. : It is not good to say everything when there are people who are not concerned.

In fact, the word **isoko** (the market) is opposed to **iyagiro** (a place where people can make their conversation freely) because of the use of the negative morpheme "**si**" that separates them. Moreover, the market is a public place in which there are many and different persons and where nobody can tell a secret to another. When you are at a distance from the market, you only hear a vague noise, no single word can be heard. But, by **iyagiro** we understand an appropriate place where we can even sit to make a conversation and tell a secret to each other.

E.g.3. Umugabo si urucumu.

L.T. : A man is not a spear.

P.M. To be a man does not involve any support.

In this proverb, the oppositeness of meaning results from the Kirundi negative word "**si**" that opposes the words man and spear. To be a man (a person who has good qualities and manners) does not imply to be strong physically. This means that a man is characterised by his good ideas and respected because of his speech and good behaviour in general.

E.g.4. Akarimi kakurega siko kakuregura.

L.T. : The tongue that accuses you is not the one that excuses you.

P.M. : What people say when one is in trouble is not what they were saying when they were advising him.

The verbs **kurega** (to accuse) and **kuregura** (to excuse) are lexically and naturally opposed in meaning. The question we can ask ourselves is how these two verbs that are opposed in meaning are used in a same proverb. Here, we find the answer because there is the presence of the negative word "**si-**" in the same proverb that separates the two verbs.

E.g.5. Aho bantegeye siho bambonera.

L.T. : Where they trap me is not where they see me.

P.M. : They do not see me in the place where they were waiting for me.

Such verbs as **bantegeye** (they trap me) and **bambonera** (they see me) are used in the same proverb and are opposed in meaning because of the negative word "**si-**". Thus, the first proposition (**aho bantegeye**) denies the second one (**bambonera**).

In few words, the Kirundi negative morpheme "**si-**" used with other natural words serves to separate and oppose them in meaning. The first statement denies the second one.

IV.4.5.4. "-Ta-" and Other Natural Words

The Kirundi negative morpheme "**-ta-**" used with other natural words shows that among two actions or events if it is not the one, it is necessary the other and vice-versa. To illustrate this case, let us analyse the following proverbs :

E.g.1. Ubutarondeye inaga burondera umwuko.

L.T. : A pastry that does not stay on the cooking pot stays on the spatula.

P.M. : Who does not take after his or her mother takes after his or her father.

The Kirundi negative morpheme "**-ta-**" serves to oppose the verbs **ubutarondeye** and **burondera** and the words **inaga** (cooking pot) and **umwuko** (spatula). Here, we have one lexeme with two different forms. This means that if it does not stay in the cooking pot, it necessarily stays on the spatula. In other words, something which does not search for a cooking pot, necessary searches for a spatula. Moreover, the cooking pot symbolises women and the spatula symbolises men. As a result to give birth to girls or boys only depends on the will of God, and if it is either a boy or a girl, the parents have nothing to change. This is why, in whatever circumstances, a child must take after one of his parents.

E.g.2. Uwudasize izina asiga umugani.

L.T. : Who leaves no name leaves a proverb.

P.M. : A man who has no children to perpetuate his name leaves a proverb behind him.

The verbs **uwudasize** (who does not leave) and **asiga** (he leaves) opposed in meaning. The Kirundi negative morpheme "**-ta-**" is used to make the words **izina** (a name) and **umugani** (a proverb) be opposed.

E.g.3. Uwenga abisha aguha aruta uwenga aryosha ataguha.

L.T. : A brewer making bad beer but gives you to taste is better than the one making a good beer but does not give you.

P.M. : For all what you did for a friend of yours, nothing is bad for him.

The negative morpheme "**-ta-**" is used in this proverb on purpose. The words **abisha** and **aryosha** are independently opposed in meaning. The verbs **aguha** (gives you) and **ataguha** (does not give you) are opposed too. This is a form of comparison but it also shows the oppositeness of meaning that is involved . We also notice that "aguha" and "ataguha" are two forms of the same lexeme "guha".

All in all, the Kirundi negative morpheme "**-ta-**" used with other words implies that for two actions or events, if it is not the one, it is necessary the other and vice-versa. In most cases, it serves to oppose the following words. For example, such words as : **ubutarondeye – burondera, uwudasize – asiga, aguha – ataguha**, etc. are a case in point. This shows that if it were not the Kirundi negative morpheme "**-ta-**" which is used inside the proverb, the words would have been identical.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Throughout this work, we have tried to deal with oppositeness of meaning in Kirundi proverbs. However, Most of Kirundi proverbs we analysed are constructed with words that are opposed. So, our study focused on oppositeness of meaning in Kirundi proverbs. Therefore, the following lines summarize briefly what has been achieved in this work and some difficulties we encountered.

The first chapter comprises a general introduction to the problem and some preliminaries related to our study. First we talk about the background to the topic and state the problem. To this we add the purpose of the study which is to show that two or more words that are opposed in meaning are compatible within the same proverb and do not change the meaning of the whole proverb. Moreover, this chapter also gives reasons why we prefer to work on Kirundi, not on English or any other language.

The second chapter deals with literature review. It presents to the reader the available studies which have something to do with ours. These studies include : Murekambanze (1989), Gashikanyi (1989), Nikobamye (1997), Sindayikengera (1997) and Nduwamungu (1998). We realized that there is a lack of sources related to proverbs which are available to the writer.

The third chapter consists of the theoretical notions and methodology. The latter are considered of capital importance when one is dealing with the analysis of proverbs. In this chapter, we focus on notions such as semantics, the concept of meaning and oppositeness of meaning known by linguists as antonymy. In the same chapter, another emphasis is put on the methodology used to collect and analyse the Kirundi proverbs. We indicate the sources from which we draw our data. These sources are respectively Rodegem (1969) and BEPES (1984). We also point out the problems we had in translating the Kirundi proverbs into English and the time we spent in analysing them. The methodology chapter also contains the analysis procedures.

The fourth chapter is the heart of the study. It concerns the analysis of Kirundi proverbs. This analysis serves to show the Kirundi negative morphemes used in Kirundi proverbs. To these are added mixed Kirundi negative morphemes used within the same proverb and other words opposed in meaning. This study of Kirundi proverbs leads us to our goal apart from some difficulties we encountered.

The most difficult problem we encountered is related to translation. In fact, there are some Kirundi proverbs with words which are difficult and even impossible to translate. This is an obstacle since each proverb must be translated into English because our work will not be read by Kirundi native speakers only. We have tried to provide an approximate translation. And we hope that we have not changed the general meaning of those Kirundi proverbs.

Despite these difficulties we encountered and some weaknesses that this work may present, we think that we attained our goal and that the results are satisfactory. In addition, this thesis is an invitation to further studies. Deep research is open for those who want to know more about Kirundi proverbs and more about Kirundi. In particular, we recommend that a further deep research look at the syntactic structure of Kirundi proverbs which contribute to the full understanding of them.

APPENDIX

1. Abagabo babiri ntibabana mu nzu.

T. : There is competition and rivalry between people with the same status.

2. Abakebana ntibakeburana.

T. : One must know to whom he is talking.

3. Abakundanye barankana.

T. : Best friends may become enemies.

4. Aboro babiri ntibasangira umwerera.

T. : There is selfishness between people who run for the same thing. There is selfishness between beggars, applicants or petitioners.

5. Agahararo ntikabuza agaharuruko.

T. : Love sometimes ceases or changes.

6. Agasonga k'uwundi ntikakubuza gutora itiro.

T. : Someone's pain is never yours.

7. Agato kanka mu jisho ntikanka mu kanwa.

T. : We have to accept what they give us.

8. Agatumbwe gaca ku rihiye.

T. : Young children die before old parents.

9. Aho bantegeye siho bambonera.

T.: They do not see me in the place where they wait for me.

10. Aho zikiniye siho zikamirwa.

T. : You cannot force someone to help you.

11. Akarimi kakurega siko kakuregura.

T. : What people say when one is in trouble is not what they were saying when they were advising him.

12. Akatavuga ntigahenda akavuga.

T.: It is no good lying a person who is as intelligent as you.

13. Akatayabariwe ntikayamenya.

T.: Pay attention when you are speaking, there is no need to inform unconcerned people.

14. Amabanga abiri ntabangikana.

T. : It is impossible to meet two commitments at a time.

15. Amajambo menshi arutwa na rimwe.

T.: The less said the better.

16. Amakuru atarimwo umukuru yama ari amazimwe.

T.: Be sincere and tell the truth.

17. Amapfa muhanganye siyo agutwara (akwica) hagora inzeduka.

T.: Pay attention your true enemy is not the one who is going to kill you.

18. Amazi arashuha ntiyibagira ibumbeho.

T. : Whatever changes happen to a person, he cannot change completely.

19. Amungura nka niyo mazikesha.

T.: The higher one aims at, the lower he achieves.

20. Gera hano aruta wogenda.

T.: Something is better than nothing.

21. Ibitakuraba uraba hasi.

T. : Of what does not concern you, speak neither good nor evil.

22. Ikinege ntukiyagira aya beneso.

L. : Know to whom you are speaking.

23. Intwengo y'umukeba si ikiyago.

T. : Be aware of the person with whom you are chatting.

24. Isoko si iyagiro

T. : It is not good to say everything when there are people who are not concerned.

25. Kitagenda yavyaye ikigenda.

T. : That does not walk has given birth to that walks.

26. Kuvuga menshi siko kuyamara.

T. : The less said the better.

27. Menshi arutwa na rimwe.

T. : Say what is necessary or the less said the better.

28. Ntawusukiranya amata n'amateke.

T. : A good association is made between individuals who are equal.

29. Sindya aka aba yariye akandi.

T. : If a person is satisfied with food, he or she starts to select what is good for him or her.

30. Ubutarondeye inaga burondera umwuko.

T. : Who does not take after his or her mother takes after his or her father.

31. Umugabo abura ibanga ntabura ibara.

T.: If you say what you would have kept as a secret, be sure of the forthcoming consequences.

32. Umugabo ni uwurya utwiwe n'utwabandi.

T.: Dishonesty or stealing are worthy things.

33. Umugabo si urucumu.

P.M. : To be a man does not involve any support.

34. Umugabo yihindukiza mu kirago ntiyihindukiza mw'ijambo.

T.: A responsible man keeps his word.

35. Umugani ntuva ku giti uva ku muntu.

T. : A proverb originates from a person.

36. Umugore musangira amata ntimusangira amazi.

T.: Women are unreliable. They search for comfort and easiness.

37. Umuvyara ntakubwira ngo tinya ingwe.

T. : Avoid jokings in some circumstances.

38. Utabonye agasohoka ntabona akinjira.

T.: Receiving is the reward of giving

39. Utagira urugo ntagira igabo.

T. : We have to obey to all the persons who are superior to us.

40. Utakugamishije imvura ikirwa ntakugamisha ihise.

T.: It is better to help your friend before he asks you to.

41. Utakuzi ntakurusha inka.

T.: It is no use misbehaving in front of a strange person.

42. Uwawe akwima amata ntakwima amahere.

T. : It is in case of misfortune that one remembers those he had rejected.

43. Uwariye uwiwe ntiyoreka murundi.

T. One who has made a relative suffer will not spare others.

44. Uwenga abisha aguha aruta uwenga aryosha ataguha.

T : For all what you did for a friend of yours, nothing is bad for him.

45. Uwo mwakundanye muryana akabisi n'agahiye.

T.: Among friends all things are shared.

46. Uwudasize izina asiga umugani.

T. : A man who has no children to perpetuate his name leaves a proverb behind him.

47. Wenda nabi ugata, uvyara nabi ntuta.

T. : When one's wife misbehaves, divorce is possible but if one's children misbehave one is condemned to keep them.

48. Wotana n'umwana atagutuka akaguturira.

T. : It is risky to have secrets with a non-serious person.

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