

Causes of Inappropriate Use of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan Media

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Abstract: This study focused on causes of inappropriate use of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan Media by the use of the explanatory design. The target population was 225 media stakeholders. The sample size involved 10 employees at the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency, 20 students who were studying journalism at the University of Rwanda and 20 Rwandans who regularly followed different Kinyarwanda entertainment programs through the RBA. The study employed semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to acquire qualitative data and a questionnaire for quantitative data. The analysis focused on themes related to the topic. It was also accomplished through descriptive statistics. The study discovered numerous causes of the misuse of Kinyarwanda in Rwandan media. Such the causes include failure to teach Kinyarwanda as a compulsory subject in secondary school, absence of a staff in charge of monitoring the appropriate use of Kinyarwanda in the entertainment programs and the recruitment which does not consider mastery of Kinyarwanda. Based on the findings, the study recommends the Ministry of Education in Rwanda to revise the teaching and learning policy of Kinyarwanda in schools and incorporate Kinyarwanda subject as a compulsory subject. Each Kinyarwanda entertainment program should have a staff in charge of monitoring the appropriate use of Kinyarwanda. The researchers further recommend that media institutions should employ qualified journalists in Kinyarwanda entertainment programs.

Keywords: Causes; misuse; Kinyarwanda; Rwandan media; entertainment programs.

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Introduction

Kinyarwanda is the mother tongue of Rwandans; it is also the sole language that is national among the four official languages recognized by the Rwandan administration. (Government of Rwanda, 2017). According to Rusanganwa (2006), Kinyarwanda is spoken in the Republic of Rwanda as well as in neighboring countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania. Furthermore, the language is broadcasted over BBC, VOA and Deutsche Welle. In the same

way, Gasarabwe (1992) cited in Rusanganwa (2006) estimated that Kinyarwanda is spoken and understood by more than 20 million people all over the world. In this vein, Niyomugabo (2015) stated that Kinyarwanda is spoken by almost all citizens of Rwanda. Hence, none can hesitate to say that Kinyarwanda is an endoglossic language because it is the mother tongue of almost all Rwandans and it is spoken by almost every Rwandan citizen (Niyirora, 2010). Therefore, Kinyarwanda needs to be

enhanced due to the fact that it is spoken by a big number of people in the world.

Among other things, Kinyarwanda plays an invaluable role in unifying Rwandans including young and old, rural and urban citizens. It is used by every Rwandan in every location despite the existence of its dialects that also characterize its richness. Kinyarwanda is a language that presents cultural, social and philosophical aspects of Rwandans. Samuelson and Freedman (2010) argued that Rwanda has only one autochthonous language which makes it unique unlike most African nations which are multilingual. Therefore, Kinyarwanda is a unifier. As high as 99.4% of the population in Rwanda can speak Kinyarwanda (Rosendal, 2009) and approximately 90% speak only Kinyarwanda (Munyankesha, 2004).

The role of a language was observed by Karmakar (2020) who argued that human communication and cooperation are completely dependent on language, which is the basic condition to differentiate human beings from animals. Furthermore, human cultural development, language behavior and cultural transmission depend on language. Before the rise of capital economy and globalization, the basic mode of human existence was based on the setting of local language and culture. Basing on the philosophy of Karmakar, it is understandable that Rwandans ought to listen to a journalist speaking Kinyarwanda with appropriate stylistic and grammatical expressions. Therefore, improving the ability to speak Kinyarwanda for Rwandan journalists, particularly to those who work in the entertainment department is one of the ways to educate the whole public/ Rwandans and foreigners about the appropriate use of Kinyarwanda. Thus, a journalist working in Kinyarwanda section has to be proficient enough in Kinyarwanda mainly while delivering public speeches in which s/he must know first the audience, what to say, how to say it and where to say it (Sekamana, 2022).

Historically, in traditional Rwanda, citizens of Rwanda used to make effort to speak Kinyarwanda appropriately through conversations and tales (Guca imigani), riddles (ibisakuzo), poems (imivugo), pastoral songs (amazina y'inika), wedding ceremonies,...etc. Their language was original and rhetorical in conversations and everyone was careful while speaking and behaving for fear of being accused of misusing the language. Each one had to know how to speak in public as a norm.

Bazimaziki (2019) argues that in traditional Rwanda, speaking in public was an invaluable opportunity for expressing one's ideas, delivering messages, expressing and displaying one's ability for a Rwandan. Speaking Kinyarwanda in public was a measurement to know how well one is fluent or proficient in it. In the above context, the author further wrote:

Generally, the main literary genres are prose, poetry and drama which have their types each. These reflect humans through language. How well one is fluent or proficient in it will affect their understanding of these literary genre and the more one is interested in them, the more s/he can improve their language proficiency. Literature and language are tools to each other and the improvement of language skills will depend on how the learners use the two hence any of the three main literary genres can fit for the four skills mentioned above.

Nowadays, Kinyarwanda is spoken alongside other foreign languages and the Rwandan culture has been subject to interference from cultures from outside Rwanda. As a result, speaking Kinyarwanda well is no longer a pride but rather an indication that the speaker is still lagging. However, speaking Kinyarwanda appropriately is gradually being replaced by inaccuracies in this language and mixtures of foreign languages, stammering in public, inappropriate spoken forms of the language, distorted language, etc. (Sekamana, 2022). In Rwanda, English is taken as the leading language considered being high "H" whereas Kinyarwanda is low "L" meaning the "diglossia." In this perspective, Sibomana (2015) revealed that in Rwanda, English is the dominant language (not in statistics but in ideology) and this situation may jeopardize the future of Kinyarwanda.

Unfortunately, the correct speech that used to characterize public speaking in Rwandan tradition is no longer the objective; rather inaccuracy uses of the language are common among the Rwandan entertainment programs. The evidence is that some of the programs in Kinyarwanda are run by journalists who are only good at entertaining and warming up the audience but do not master this language (Sekamana, 2022). It is very embarrassing today when you listen to or follow entertainment broadcasting in Kinyarwanda on the radio, television

and other social media channels, you immediately notice that Kinyarwanda is being endangered through changing its grammar, code mixing and code switching.

When someone listens, watches or follows entertainment broadcasting in Kinyarwanda on the radio, television or other social media tools, he person immediately notices that Kinyarwanda is totally abused or endangered by presenters. It is obvious that entertainment programs broadcast on radio or television pay less attention to the correct use of Kinyarwanda. These are negatively affecting the evolution and integrity of the national language as the misuse of spoken Kinyarwanda in the entertainment media is what will pose a threat to the original Kinyarwanda for these entertaining programs are followed by many Rwandans from different categories, mainly the youth who all are supposed to know their national language appropriately. For that reason, the consequences of the inappropriate use of Kinyarwanda in Rwandan media especially in entertainment programs from the Kinyarwanda section will negatively affect the Rwandan population in general (Sekamana, 2022). This study sought to identify causes of the inappropriate use of Kinyarwanda in Rwandan media.

Appropriate vs Inappropriate Use of Language

Niyomugabo and Twilingiyimana (2012) described inappropriate language use as the lack of ability to use the model language despite one's will. In the same vein, Munyakazi (1992) argued that in both spoken and written forms, the person considered skilled in language is the one that uses appropriate terms, exactly expressing ideas he or she wants to communicate to his or her audience. Yuen (1970) argues that expressing one's self is very essential and the most important thing. This has value in an effective speech delivery because a voice is the key to fluency in a language. Once one's expression is not clear, grammar and vocabulary can also be wrong. For Wardhaugh (2006), linguists believe that proficiency in a language or languages is a real skill. It is knowledge of the rules and principles governing the art of speech and the use of sounds, words or phrases.

There are important elements to consider in speaking skills for the speaker to use language appropriately. Appropriate language use is the center for effective communication because it allows the speaker to satisfy the receivers through

the channel they deliberately chosen. Once the speaker uses the language inappropriately or uses inappropriate terms deliberately or not, they will be said to go astray from the appropriate use of the language. Nkejabahizi (2018) argued that human speech has three important elements: the message or what it contains, how it is said and the purpose or how it satisfies the listener. These three elements are at the center of the appropriate language use for any language. On the other hand, someone who violates the principles governing the use of appropriate language has deliberately decided to use inappropriate language.

Furthermore, Niyomugabo and Twilingiyimana (2012) revealed that factors associated with speaking Kinyarwanda inappropriately are mainly based on: not being familiar with speaking and writing in Kinyarwanda, the intention to better explain things in Kinyarwanda, lack of enough knowledge in Kinyarwanda, not giving value to Kinyarwanda as a result of embarrassment, being arrogant or feeling modern, laziness to find appropriate terms, history according to which some Rwandans were born and grew abroad, the lack of Kinyarwanda words to explain some key terms and the lack of readiness in program delivery.

Niyomugabo and Twilingiyimanaa (2012) further highlight that cause of inappropriate use of language in the media is based on: Poor knowledge of Kinyarwanda, disregarding Kinyarwanda, modernity, being distracted by the audience especially the youth, historical effects according to which some journalists were born abroad, lack of enough mobilization on inappropriate language use in the media, poor language education, laziness among journalists, exaggerated modernity and globalization effects, lack of clear understanding of the nature of Kinyarwanda and lack of enough training in Kinyarwanda. Other causes are the lack of enough mastery in Kinyarwanda among journalists, lack of reading materials in Kinyarwanda, the fact that journalists do not do what they were trained for, the habit of mixing languages, poverty in Kinyarwanda language, forgetting some of the Kinyarwanda words, lack of dictionaries in Kinyarwanda and parents' reluctance to teach their children how to speak Kinyarwanda appropriately.

Methodology

This section presents the types of data that were collected, the methods used and methodological tools used to collect data, population and sampling,

validity and reliability and statistical treatment of data.

Research Design

This is a case study which employed the explanatory design to look into causes of inappropriate use of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media.

Population and Sampling

At the beginning, the target population for this study was 225 people, including 25 employees at the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency, 100 students who were studying journalism at the University of Rwanda and 100 Rwandans who regularly followed different Kinyarwanda entertainment programs. At the end, the sample size of 50 individuals was attained. These include 10 employees at the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA), 20 students who were studying journalism at the University of Rwanda and 20 Rwandans who regularly followed different Kinyarwanda entertainment programs through the RBA.

Research Instruments

The study employed semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to acquire qualitative data and a questionnaire for quantitative data.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant was informed about the study and had to confirm or disconfirm his/her availability and commitment to participate in the study. The researchers guaranteed confidentiality of the information and preserved the anonymity of

participants by not using their names in the questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the researchers critically checked the instruments against the objectives of the study to ensure that all important information is captured through the process of data collection. Reliability was achieved through triangulation of data by the use multiple sources. According to Patton (1999), in the mixed approach, triangulation involves the use of multiple sources of data to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being investigated.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The analysis focused on themes related to the topic. It was also accomplished through descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

The study sought to report causes of inappropriate use of Kinyarwanda language in the Rwandan media. The results section was guided by specific research questions.

Research Question 1: Is the misuse of Kinyarwanda related to the teaching and learning methodologies in high schools?

This research question wanted the journalists and journalist students to indicate whether teaching methodologies in high schools contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media.

Table 1: Misuse of Kinyarwanda and the Teaching of in High Schools

Respondents	Yes		No		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Journalism Students	13	65	7	35	20	100
Journalists	5	62.5	3	37.5	8	100

Table 2: Misuse of Kinyarwanda and Availability of Staff in Charge of Monitoring

Respondents	Yes		No		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Journalists	8	100	0	0	8	100

Table one indicates that out of 20 journalist students, thirteen (65%) perceived that the teaching methodology in high schools contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda while only seven respondents (35%) disagreed. Likewise, five (62.5%) journalists agreed while only three (37.5%) disagreed. Therefore, the majority of respondents agreed that poor teaching methodologies in high schools contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda language in the Rwandan entertainment programs.

They reported that Kinyarwanda subject is not taught in some schools while in other schools it is taught irresponsibly. At the end, the products are those who become journalists in the future. One journalist reports that “teaching and learning Kinyarwanda are not helpful enough. The only way of enhancing and supporting Kinyarwanda in Rwandan media is to revise the teaching and learning methodology.” Niyomugabo (2015) asserted that the learner centered pedagogy in

teaching Kinyarwanda is mostly needed in Rwandan schools for effective results to be realized. Learners should be at the center of all activities happening in classroom and the role of the teacher should be to guide the learners in the teaching and learning process.

Research Question 2: Is the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media related to lack of staff in charge of monitoring the use of appropriate Kinyarwanda in entertainment programs?

This research question called for journalists to express whether the misuse of Kinyarwanda is related to lack of a staff in charge of monitoring the use of appropriate Kinyarwanda in entertainment programs.

Table two indicates that all eight journalists agreed that the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media programs is related to lack of staff in charge of monitoring the use of appropriate Kinyarwanda in entertainment programs. One journalist reported that “media heads of programs who are not concerned with what journalists speak makes the journalists uninterested in using the local language properly. Thus radio or television entertainment broadcasts continually employ Kinyarwanda which is distorted.” Besides, other journalists indicated that the problem is related to the way the presenters seek to energize the program by mixing

Kinyarwanda with other languages for the program to be enjoyable. It is therefore clear that journalist do not pay attention to proper use of the Kinyarwanda language but they rather focuses on the enjoyment of the broadcast since no one is interested in ensuring that the language is used properly. Another journalist revealed that lack of staff in charge of monitoring the use of appropriate Kinyarwanda in entertainment programs causes journalists to lose the desire to use proper vocabulary established in their field. Instead, mostly they use foreign languages with Kinyarwanda to make their work easy. Therefore, the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media is related to lack of staff in charge of monitoring the use of appropriate Kinyarwanda in entertainment programs?

Research Question 3: Is the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media related to the incompetent teaching methodology of Kinyarwanda in universities and higher learning institutions?

This research question wanted the journalist students, journalists and heads of programs to indicate whether the teaching methodology in universities and higher learning institutions contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan entertainment.

Table 3: Misuse of Kinyarwanda and Universities and Higher Learning Institutions

Respondents	Yes		No		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Journalism Students	19	95	1	5	20	100
Journalists	8	100	0	0	8	100
Heads of Programs	2	100	0	0	2	100

Table 4: Misuse of Kinyarwanda and Recruitment

Respondents	Yes		No		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Journalists	2	100	0	0	2	100
Heads of Programs	8	100	0	0	8	100
Rwandan People	18	90	2	10	20	100

Table three indicates that out of 19 journalist students, 95% admitted that the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media entertainment programs is related to the incompetent teaching methodology of Kinyarwanda in higher learning institutions. The same was expressed by all journalists and all heads of programs. Therefore, the majority of respondents agreed that teaching methodologies in higher learning institutions contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan entertainment programs. One the

journalists pointed out that the teaching methodology of Kinyarwanda has to be reformed by delivering Kinyarwanda course appropriately so that students get enough time to pay attention to proper use of Kinyarwanda. Besides, one head of programs suggested that the teaching of Kinyarwanda in universities needs to be improved for journalists to use it properly. On the other hand, one respondent revealed that Kinyarwanda lessons in universities are allocated limited time such that practical knowledge gained is little. Therefore, students do

not learn Kinyarwanda in a way that would equip them with practical skills.

Research Question 4: Is the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan media related to recruitment which ignores the knowledge of proper Kinyarwanda?

This research question wanted journalists, heads of programs and the Rwandan people to indicate whether recruitment which ignores the knowledge of proper Kinyarwanda contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan entertainment.

Table four indicates that two (100%) journalists, eight (100) heads of programs and 18 (90%) Rwandan people agreed that recruitment contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan entertainment. Therefore, the majority of respondents agreed that recruitment procedures contributed to the misuse of Kinyarwanda. One journalist, for instance, reported that “recruitment of entertainment journalists does not adequately consider the candidates’ proper background in Kinyarwanda, but rather focuses on how well the candidate would make broadcasts enjoyable.” According to Ahmad (2018), recruitment pattern should be in line with the company's expectations as human resources are an important factor in achieving companies’ business targets. When this principle is followed, the competitiveness of an organization in question will be enhanced. Therefore, those responsible should make sure that proper recruitment procedures are followed so as to attain candidates who will work according to the company’s expectations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that there are a number of factors that cause inappropriate use of Kinyarwanda language in the Rwandan media. Such the causes include failure to teach Kinyarwanda as a compulsory subject in secondary school, absence of a staff in charge of monitoring the appropriate use of Kinyarwanda in the entertainment programs and poor recruitment procedures which do not consider the candidates’ mastery of Kinyarwanda.

Based on the findings, the study recommends the Ministry of Education in Rwanda to revise the teaching and learning policy of Kinyarwanda in schools and incorporate Kinyarwanda as a compulsory subject. Each entertainment program in Kinyarwanda should have a staff in charge of monitoring the appropriate use of the language. The

researchers further recommend that media institutions should employ qualified journalists in for entertainment programs in Kinyarwanda language.

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