



Research Article

Direct and Indirect Objects in Kinyarwanda: A Semantic Role Analysis

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Abstract

This analysis examines the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda, a Bantu language mainly spoken in Rwanda. The case grammar theory of Fillmore guides the study; it suggests that in addition to the syntax surface level, sentences are structured around verb's semantic roles. The analysis starts by establishing the complexity to distinguish some direct objects from indirect ones in the Kinyarwanda language. The scrutiny reveals that direct objects in Kinyarwanda have the semantic roles of instrument, location, phenomenon, patient and theme. It also proves the semantic ambiguity within the semantic roles of patient and theme. Regarding indirect objects, the research work proves that they are associated with the semantic roles of beneficiary and recipient in this language. The paper also shows how syntax and semantics are related in Kinyarwanda, specifically in relation to the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects. The analysis also highlights the similarities between Kinyarwanda and the Embosi language based on the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects. Finally, the research work points out the pragmatic dimension of the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda. It highlights how the context influences the meaning of semantic roles in terms of presupposition and implicature.

Keywords

Kinyarwanda, Semantic Roles, Direct Object, Indirect Object

1. Introduction

Kinyarwanda is a Bantu language spoken in Rwanda. It is member of the Rwanda-Rundi group (Nurse & Philippson [1]). The study sheds light on semantics, which is a branch of linguistics concerned with the study of the meanings of words and sentences abstracted from contextual dependency (Griffiths [2]). This study aims at examining the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda. It also contributes to the documentation of the Kinyarwanda language, which has few research works on semantic roles in general and the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in particular. This study interconnects syntax with semantics by showing how

the complements of the verbs are assigned a semantic role through the action expressed by the verb. The scrutiny addresses the following research questions: (1) What are the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda? (2) In which context does syntax interplay with semantics as far as direct and indirect objects are concerned? (3) Is the Embosi language similar to Kinyarwanda when considering the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects? (4) How does pragmatics influence the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in this language? Accordingly, the study explores background information, the semantic roles of direct and indirect

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objects in Kinyarwanda, the syntactic and semantic interconnection, a cross-linguistic analysis between Embosi and Kinyarwanda and the influence of pragmatics in the interpretation of the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects. To achieve this study, data were collected through key informants, questionnaires and interviews.

2. Theoretical Background

This section presents the Kinyarwanda language and provides an overview of semantic roles and the definitions of direct and indirect objects. This section also examines the complexity of the direct and indirect object distinction in Kinyarwanda, along with the case grammar theory of Fillmore [3] that is the approach used to carry the study out.

2.1. Kinyarwanda Language

The official language of Rwanda, Kinyarwanda is a Bantu language which is part of the Rwanda-Rundi group D60 (Nurse & Philippson [1]). This language is mutually intelligible with Kirundi and Ha, Bantu languages spoken respectively in Burundi and Tanzania (Ngoboka [4]; Kayigema, [5]; Mpayimana [6]; Banerjee [7]).

Indeed, the Kinyarwanda language has some varieties. Those varieties are Kigoyi, Kirera, Kinyagisaka, Kinyanduga, etc. The dialect Kinyanduga, also called the standard Kinyarwanda, is the one which is spoken in Kigali. It is considered as the national language of Rwanda. This dialect has an official orthography, and it is used in Rwandan official speeches by politicians, literature, media, science, music, school, etc. (Rwigamba & Nkusi & Ruzindana [8]; Ngoboka [4]; Mpayimana [6]).

Moreover, Kinyarwanda speakers are found all around Burundi, an East African country where people speaking Kirundi understand Kinyarwanda. Speakers of this language are also present in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the south of Uganda and the west of Tanzania (Mpayimana [6]; Muhirwe [9]; Rwigamba & Nkusi & Ruzindana [8]; Jordan [10]).

This paper is mainly based on Kinyadunga, the dialect of Kinyarwanda considered as the official language of Rwanda. The data are presented by using the official orthography of Kinyarwanda.

2.2. Semantic Roles

Semantic roles, also called thematic roles, refer to the role that the verb assigns to the entities which are its arguments. According to Fromkin & Rodman & Hyams [11], semantic role is about "(...) the kind of relation that holds between the arguments of the verb and the type of situation that the verb describes." They are concerned with how the arguments of the verb function according to the meaning of the event described by the verb (Akanya & Omachonu [12]).

Moreover, there are a great number of semantic roles, such as agent, force, theme, experiencer, instrument, patient, goal, source, location, recipient, beneficiary, etc. Nevertheless, this research work is only based on the semantic roles carried by direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda. The following section discusses the direct.

2.3. Direct Object

The direct object is the part of the sentence which expresses the entity or the object which undergoes the action of the verb (Kalgo [13]). It is one of the most important constituents of the sentence structure. According to Downing & Locke [14] and Kalgo [13], a direct object is characterised by the fact that it occurs with a transitive verb and can be passivised. Those authors assert that a direct object is realised by a noun phrase or a nominal group, pronouns, finite and non-finite clauses. This constituent is most of the time placed after the verb or after the indirect object in a ditransitive sentence (Downing & Locke [14]). The direct object of the verb is the answer to the question, "What? Or who (m) does the action of the verb" Let us consider the following illustrations.

(1a) Nkunda *umwembe*.

I-like mango

"I like *mango*"

(1b) Ufite *telefone*.

You-have phone.

"You have *the phone*."

It comes out from (1a) and (1b) that the direct objects are *umwembe* "*mango*" for (1a) and *telefone* "*the phone*" for (1b). They are the answers of the questions: "what do I like?" and "what do you have?". So, they are direct objects of those verbs.

Besides, direct objects in Kinyarwanda can be realised by noun phrases such as common nouns and proper nouns. Non-finite clauses can also realise direct objects. Let's examine the following illustrations.

(2a) Mfite *imyenda myinshi*.

I-have clothes many.

"I have *many clothes*."

(2b) Nkunda *Mariya* cyane.

I-love Mary much.

"I love *Mary* so much."

(2c) Uyu mugore akunda *kuririmba mu gitondo*.

This woman she-likes to-sing in morning.

"This woman likes *to sing in the morning*."

In fact, the direct object in (2a) is *imyenda myinshi* "*many clothes*" which is a noun phrase. In (2b), the direct object is *Mariya* "*Mary*", a proper noun. In (2c) the action verb is followed by a non-finite clause, *kuririmba mu gitondo* "*to sing in the morning*". Therefore, this non-finite clause is the direct object of the action verb.

Finally, direct objects can also be realised by pronouns in Kinyarwanda that are called object markers. Actually, in Kinyarwanda, when a pronoun is a complement of the verb, it becomes a bound morpheme attached between the subject

marker and the verb. It is not a free morpheme but a bound morpheme, which forms one word with the verb and the subject. Let's consider the following illustration.

(3) Namubonye.

I-him/her-see+ed.

"I have seen *him/her*."

It comes out from this illustration that the direct object of the action verb is the bound morpheme *mu* "him/her", which is the object marker. This pronoun answers to the question, "who have I seen?". This illustration shows the limitations of the idea which claims that the direct object follows the verb in a transitive sentence or the indirect object in a ditransitive sentence. Actually, in Kinyarwanda objects, pronouns always precede the verb and are bound morphemes attached to it. Consequently, direct objects in Kinyarwanda precede the verb when they are pronouns. The indirect object features are introduced in the following section.

2.4. Indirect Object

An indirect object is, according to Greenbaum & Nelson [15], "a person indirectly affected by the action described in the sentence. The person generally receives something or benefits from something (...)." It is one of the constituents of a sentence which describes the entity for whom or to whom the action of the verb is performed. In Kinyarwanda, an indirect object is typically realised by a noun phrase. Let us analyse the following illustrations.

(4a) Wahaye *umwana* telefone.

You-give+ed child phone.

"You gave *the child* the phone."

(4b) Roza yahaye *Donald* igitabo.

Rosa she-give+ed donald book.

"Rosa gave *Donald* the book."

(4c) Ingabire yaguriye *umwana* imyenda.

Ingabire she-buy+EXT+ed child clothes.

"Ingabire bought *the child* the clothes."

Actually, indirect objects in the examples (4a) and (4b) are *umwana* "the child" and *Donald*. Both objects receive something as a result of the action denoted by the verb. The action of the verb is performed on them.

Moreover, in the example (4c) the indirect object is *umwana* "the child". In fact, the action expressed by the verb is performed for this entity. Furthermore, apart from nouns, indirect objects, like direct objects, are also realised by object markers in Kinyarwanda. Consider:

(5a) Wamuhaye telefone.

You-him/her-give+ed phone.

"You gave *him/her* the phone."

(5b) Roza yamuhaye igitabo.

Rosa she-him/her-give+ed book.

"Rosa gave *him/her* the book."

(5c) Ingabire yamuguriye imyenda.

Ingabire she-him/her-buy+EXT+ed clothes.

"Ingabire bought *him/her* the clothes."

In the above illustrations, the indirect object is realised by the morpheme "*mu*" denoting the third person pronoun. As a direct object, when an indirect object is realised by a pronoun, this pronoun is a morpheme attached to the verb. In a sentence having two pronouns that realise direct objects and indirect objects, the direct object is mostly placed after the subject marker and followed by the indirect object. The illustration below highlights this argumentation.

(5d) ndazimuguriye.

I-them-him/her-bought+EXT+ed

"I have bought them for him/her."

Actually, in the above illustration the object marker *zi* "them" is a direct object. It is the answer to the question, "what do I bought?". The second object marker *mu* "him/her" is an indirect object. In fact, it is the entity for whom the action of buying takes place. Then, in this holophrastic construction, the direct object *zi* "them" is preceded by the subject marker and followed by the indirect object "*mu*". Differentiating direct objects from indirect objects in Kinyarwanda is complex. The next section discusses this issue.

2.5. The Complexity of Direct and Indirect Objects Distinction in Kinyarwanda

The distinction between direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda raises a great number of problems. In fact, both components of the sentence share the same syntactic features. That is why Kimenyi [16] declares, "formally there is no way to differentiate indirect objects and benefactives from direct objects. They exhibit the same properties that distinguish direct objects from other NPs (position, incorporation, reflexivisation and passivisation)." Moreover, Ngoboka [17] shows that through applicative transformations in Kinyarwanda, a verb could have more than two objects sharing the same characteristics of a direct object. Those facts make it difficult to distinguish direct and indirect objects in this language as far as syntax is concerned. Let us examine the illustration below:

(6a) Umugabo y-eerets-e *abána*. ([16])

man he-show-asp children

'The man showed (something) to *the children*.'

(6b) Umugabo y-a-gur-i-ye *umwaana* imyeenda. (Ngoboka, [17])

man SP-PST-buy-APPL-ASP child clothes

"The man bought the child clothes."

(6c) Umugabo y-a-gur-i-ye imyeenda *umwaana*. (Ngoboka, [17])

man SP-PST-buy-APPL-ASP clothes child

"The man bought clothes for the child."

(6d) Umubooyi y-a-men-eesh-eje-ho *umwaana amaazi in-dobo*. (Ngoboka, [17])

Cook SP-PST-pour-APPL-ASP-APPL child water bucket.

"The cook poured *water on the child with a bucket*."

It comes out from the above illustrations that object distinction in Kinyarwanda is complex. In fact, the example in (6a) proves that an indirect object can be the only argument of a

verb in Kinyarwanda without making the sentence ungrammatical. Besides, the examples in (6b) and (6c) show that the position of direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda is sometimes flexible. Both objects sometimes can precede each other. Therefore, it contradicts the idea, which claims that direct objects are preceded by indirect objects in ditransitive sentences. Finally, the example in (6d) demonstrates that a verb through the applicative process can have more than two objects which are not separated by a preposition. This premise is the reason why Kinyarwanda is said to be a symmetrical language.

As a matter of fact, in this language more than one object has the syntactic features of a direct object (Ngoboka 2005: 58). Consequently, distinguishing direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda is tremendous. Ngoboka [17] and Kimenyi [16] provide a thorough explanation of this fact's complexity. However, this research aims to explore the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda. It is carried out through Fillmore's case grammar theory.

2.6. Theoretical Approach

This research has been carried out through the case grammar theory of Fillmore [3], which revolutionised semantics by proposing that sentences are structured around a verb's deep cases, or semantic roles, rather than surface-level syntax alone. Introduced in his 1968 paper "The Case for Case," this approach posits that verbs carry "case frames," specifying obligatory roles like "agent" (the doer), "patient" (the affected entity), and others, which project onto grammatical functions such as subject or object. This framework bridges syntax and semantics, by emphasising how meaning influences linguistic structure.

The semantic roles are crucial for Fillmore's model. They mainly include Agentive (intentional actor), Instrumental (means or tool), Dative (recipient or beneficiary), Factitive (created object), Locative (location), and Objective (affected or experienced entity). These roles concern the different functions of participants in events. Indeed, for Fillmore, cases are descriptive aspects that are derived from participants' views about events.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

3.1. Semantic Roles of Direct Objects

The direct object has always been treated as the argument which is affected by the action of the verb. However, as Downing & Locke [14] state, direct object "is associated with a wide variety of semantic roles (...)." Consequently, a great number of semantic roles could be associated with direct objects. For this present research work, the following semantic roles have been selected: instrument, location, phenomenon, affected, patient, and theme. First of all, let us consider the semantic role of the instrument.

3.1.1. The Semantic Role of Instrument

The instrument is viewed as "(...) the medium by which the action or event denoted by the predicator is carried out." (Kim & Sells [18]). It refers to the participant used by the agent to carry out his action. In Kinyarwanda, the direct object can perform the instrumental role. Consider the following illustration.

(7a) Ari gukoresha icyuma.

He/she-is to-work+EXT knife

"(S)he is using *the knife*."

(7b) koresha uru rudodo udode aka gakanzu.

Use this thread to-sew this DIM-dress

"Use *this thread* to sew this little dress."

In the above illustrations, the direct object is icyuma "*the knife*" in (7a) and uru rdodo "*this thread*" in (7b). Both direct objects have the semantic role of instrument. Actually, they are the entities used by the agent. The semantic role of location is explained in the following section.

3.1.2. The Semantic Role of Location

Location as a semantic role refers to the argument which expresses the place where the action of the verb takes place (Riemer [19]). Direct objects can have the semantic role of location in Kinyarwanda. The following illustration highlights this assertion.

(8) Turambuka umuhanda.

We-cross road

"We cross *the road*."

In this illustration, the direct object umuhanda "*the road*" has the semantic role of location, particularly that of the path. Actually, it refers to the place where the action of crossing takes place. The following section discusses the semantic role of phenomenon.

3.1.3. The Semantic Role of Phenomenon

A phenomenon is viewed as an entity that is experienced by the action of the verb (Downing & Locke [14]). Kiba Ngapoula [20], referring to the phenomenon, declares, "It typically represents something that is observed or felt, such as a sound, sight, or event, and is often linked to verbs that describe perception or cognition." This semantic role is an argument which expresses the emotional state and perception that the verb action triggers in the subject. The illustration below clarifies this statement.

(9) Nagize ubwoba.

I-have+ed fear

"I felt *fear*."

In the above illustration, the direct object ubwoba "*fear*" in (9) is a phenomenon; it is the entity that is perceived by the subject. It refers to the emotional state of the subject. In Kinyarwanda, the direct object can also serve the semantic role of a patient.

3.1.4. The Semantic Role of Patient

The patient is the entity that undergoes the action of the verb,

which changes its state. This semantic role refers to the argument which is affected by the event denoted by the verb (Kiba Ngapoula [20]). This semantic role is sometimes qualified as affected. Let us consider the following example.

(10) Garase yishe *inyenzi*.

Grace (s)he-kill+ed cockroach

“Grace killed *the cockroach*”

In this example, the argument *inyenzi* “*the cockroach*” in (10) is a patient. It is the entity affected by the action of killing denoted by the verb. It is also the argument which undergoes a change of state from a living entity to a dying one. In Kinyarwanda, the direct object may have the semantic role of theme.

3.1.5. The Semantic Role of Theme

The theme is the entity which undergoes the action of the verb but this does not change its state. It is also, “(...) a participant which is characterised as changing its position or condition, or as being in a state or position.” (Kim & Sells [18]). It is the semantic role which describes the movement and state of an entity. The next illustrations highlight this assertion.

(11a) Ndi kuvoma *amazi*

I-am to-draw water

“I am drawing *water*.”

(11b) Mpereza *imiti*.

me-Give-EXT medicines

“Give me the *medicines*”

In the above illustrations, the direct object *amazi* “*water*” in (11a) is a theme. As a matter of fact, the action of drawing does not change its state. Although it has undergone a movement, it still remains water. The fact that it has been potentially taken from a well or a tap does not change its state of being water. That is why this argument has theme as a semantic role. Moreover, the argument *imiti* “*the medicines*” in (11b), which is also a theme. In fact, it refers to the entity that undergoes movement as a result of the action expressed by the verb. However, the event does not alter its state. The semantic roles of theme, along with that of patient, have always been considered as identical by some linguists. The next section introduces the ambiguities of some semantic roles.

3.2. Semantic Ambiguities in Direct Objects

The assignment of semantic roles sometimes leads to ambiguity. This is mostly due to different viewpoints some linguists could have on semantic roles. Firstly, the difference between the semantic roles of patient and theme gives rise to some ambiguities among linguists. Some researchers (Yule [21], Reimer [19]) use either one of these semantic roles or both simultaneously to mean the same thing, while others (Kim & Sells [18], Ngapoula [20]) differentiate both semantic roles. Therefore, the semantic role of theme (or patient) is considered by some of them as the entity affected by the event or undergoing a movement. On the contrary, the linguists who separate both semantic roles focus on either the change of state

for the patient or the non-change of state for the theme. For instance, the direct objects in examples 10 and (11) could be said to have the semantic role of theme or patient/theme by some linguists, while others could assign to them the semantic role of patient for 10 and that of theme for (11).

Additionally, the semantic role of theme sometimes overlaps with the semantic role of phenomenon. The semantic role of theme is said to be the entity that undergoes an action or a movement, but it is also considered as the entity that is perceived or experienced (Riemer [19]). Similarly, the phenomenon is also an entity that is perceived or experienced. This fact means that the direct object in (9) can be considered to have the semantic role of theme. Otherwise, the next section is about the semantic roles of indirect objects.

3.3. Semantic Roles of Indirect Objects

As Downing & Locke [15] states, “the indirect object is associated with two semantic roles: recipient (...), and the Beneficiary (...).” The indirect object is about the argument that either receives something or benefits from the action denoted by the verb. This definition contributes to the distinction between direct object and indirect object in Kinyarwanda. Let us consider the semantic role of beneficiary.

3.3.1. The Semantic Role of Beneficiary

The beneficiary is the argument for which the verb's action is performed. Cruse [22] views it as “an animate participant for whose sake an action is performed.” This semantic role refers to the entity that benefits from the event expressed by the verb (Kim & Sells [18]). The following illustration clarifies the argumentation.

(4c) Ingabire yaguriye *umwana* ibiryo.

Ingabire she-buy-EXT+ed child food

“Ingabire bought *the child* the food.”

In the above illustration, the argument *umwana* “*the child*” clearly seems to be the one which benefits from the action of the verb; it is therefore a beneficiary. He is the entity for whom the action of buying the food is performed. The indirect object is also associated with the semantic role of recipient.

3.3.2. The Semantic Role of Recipient

Kittilä [23] defines recipients as “(...) animate entities that receive something concrete transferred to their sphere of control or domain of possession.” Recipients are participants who receive something as a result of the action of the verb. Let's consider these illustrations.

(4b) Roza yahaye *Donald* igitabo

Rosa she-give+ed Donald book

“Rosa gave Donald the book.”

(12) Yohani yabwiye *Mikayile* ikintu.

John tell+ed Micheal something

“John told Micheal something.”

In the above illustration, the noun *Donald* in (4b) is the recipient. It is the participant who receives *igitabo*, “the book”,

as a result of the transfer denoted by the verb. In (12), the entity Mikayile “*Micheal*” is also a recipient. It is the argument of the verb which receives a piece of information or the entity to whom the action is directed to. The interaction between syntax and semantics, as far as direct and indirect objects are concerned, is mostly obvious when focusing on the position those complements have within a given sentence.

3.4. Semantic and Syntactic Interconnection

Direct and indirect objects occur in ditransitive sentences. The indirect object is usually placed before the direct object, which follows. However, in Kinyarwanda the position of those complements is sometimes flexible. One can precede the other and vice versa. Besides, the position of those complements can influence the meaning of the whole sentence. Consider the example (4a) and 13.

(4a) Wahaye *umwana* telefone.

You-give+ed child phone.

“You gave *the child* the phone.

(13) Wahaye *telephone* umwana.

You-give+ed phone child

“You give the child *the phone*.”

It comes out from the above illustrations that the examples (4a) and (13) are both grammatical and acceptable in Kinyarwanda. Both sentences mean the same thing. However, the choice of placing either the direct object or the indirect object in the first position has an impact on the meaning of the sentence. Firstly, in the example (4a), the fact that the indirect object *umwana* “*the child*” is placed before the direct object *telefone* “*the phone*” means that the speaker wants to underline the fact that the child is the one who receives the phone, not someone else. Secondly, in (13) the choice of placing the direct object *telefone* “*the phone*” before the indirect object *umwana* “*the child*” means that the locutor emphasises the fact that the thing that has been given is the phone, not anything else. So, the flexibility of the position of those complements lays stress either on the recipient or on the item being given.

Additionally, when the direct object undergoes a passivisation process, it becomes the subject of the verb. When this happens, the former subject is introduced by the preposition “*na*” and the suffix “*w*” is added to the verb to signal the passivisation (Kimenyi [16]). Let us examine the illustrations below.

(14a) Beretirida yariye *ibiryo*.

Beltilda eat+ed food

“Beltilda ate *the food*.

(14b) *Ibiryo* byariwe na Beretirida.

Food they-eat+PASS+ed by Beltilda.

“The food has been eaten by Beltilda.”

In the above illustrations, the direct object *ibiryo* “*the food*” in (14a) becomes the subject in (14b). Then, the subject Beretirida in (14a) is now a prepositional phrase introduced by the preposition “*na*” in (14b). An indirect object, like a direct object, also undergoes a passivisation process in Kinyarwanda

when it is a full noun phrase. Let us analyse the illustration (12) and its passive form (15).

12) Yohani yabwiye *Mikayile* ikintu.

John tell+ed Michel something

“John told Michel something.”

(15) Mikayile yabwiwe ikintu na Yohani.

Michel he-tell+PASS+ed things by John.

“Michel has been told something by John.”

Indeed, the indirect object of the verb Mikayile “*Michael*” in (12) is passivised in (15); therefore, it becomes the subject of the verb in (15). It is followed by the verb, then by the direct object *ikintu* “*something*” and a prepositional phrase which introduces the former subject Yohani “*John*” of example (12). It is worth noting that the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda share some similarities with those of the Embosi language. The next section highlights this assertion.

3.5. A Cross-linguistic Perspective

The Kinyarwanda language seems to share some similarities with Embosi, a Bantu language mainly spoken in the northern part of the Republic of Congo. This language is classified in the group C, particularly C25 (Guthrie [24]). The similarities it shares with the Kinyarwanda language include the notions of semantic roles. Considering the examples provided in Kinyarwanda, let us demonstrate the similarity between these languages through the translation of some of the provided illustrations. Actually, the Embosi language, as Kinyarwanda attests, has the semantic roles of instrument, phenomenon, theme and patient for direct object and recipient and beneficiary for indirect object. Let us examine the illustration below.

(7a) Adii asala mo *ibaa*.

He/she-is to-work+EXT with knife

“(S)he is using *the knife*.”

(9) Nga ibonda *bomo*.

I-feel+ed fear

“I felt *fear*.”

(10) Grace abomi *mpesi*.

Grace (s)he-kill+ed cockroach

“Grace killed *the cockroach*”

(11a) Nga idii itoa *ma*.

I-am to-draw water

“I am drawing *water*.”

(4c) Ingabire asombi *mwana* ikande.

Ingabire she-buy-EXT+ed child clothes

“Ingabire bought *the child* the clothes.”

(4b) Rose apɛ *Donald* buku.

Rose she-give-ed *Donald* book

“Rose gave *Donald* the book.”

It comes out from the above illustration that the direct object *ibaa* “*knife*” in (7a) has the semantic role of instrument. In fact, it is the argument used by the verb to perform an action. Additionally, the entity *bomo* “*fear*” in (9) is a phenomenon.

This participant is the one that is experienced or felt by the subject. Furthermore, the objects mpɛsi “the cockroach” (10) and ma “water” in (11a) have, respectively, the semantic roles of patient and theme. As a matter of fact, (10) is a patient, as it is the one affected by the action of the verb, which completely changes its state from a living entity to a non-living entity. (11a) is a theme because the participant is affected by the verb action that does not change its state.

Finally, the indirect objects in (4c) and (4b) have individually the semantic roles of beneficiary and recipient. In fact, the entity mwana “the child” in (4c) is a beneficiary, as it is the one that benefits from the action denoted by the verb. The argument Donald in (4b) is a recipient because it is the one that receives something thanks to the action expressed by the verb. Consequently, it is obvious that the Embosi language shares some features with Kinyarwanda as far as semantic roles are concerned. Thorough examination of semantic roles in Embosi can be necessary to expose differences that may exist between the two languages concerning direct and indirect objects. Otherwise, the context in which direct and indirect objects in Kinyarwanda are used can influence their meaning, leading to variations in interpretation based on factors such as speaker intent, cultural norms, and situational context.

3.6. The Pragmatics of Kinyarwanda Semantic Roles

Semantic roles focus on how a verb's action or event influences the meaning of its argument, while pragmatics examines how the context affects the relationship between the verb and its argument. Good communication between participants always requires an understanding of literal and non-literal language. The following analysis emphasises the contextual interpretation of the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects. Let us consider the following illustrations:

(7b) koresha uru rudodo udode aka gakanzu.

Use+EXT thread to-sew this DIM+dress

“Use *the thread* to sew this little dress.”

(12) Yohani yabwiye Mikayile ikintu.

John tell+ed Micheal something

“John told *micheal* something.”

Indeed, the semantic role of the direct object uru rudodo “the thread” in (7b) is an instrument. This argument refers to a piece of advice about using a specific thread stated by the speaker to the hearer. This wording is the literal meaning. However, a good understanding of this utterance must consider the context of use. It has to consider the pragmatic feature of presupposition. It is important to note that the speaker, by suggesting to the listener that she use the instrument “thread,” presupposes that the listener has a problem with her dress. She also takes for granted the fact that the listener uses a useless tool to fix his dress. The new information he attempts to convey to the listener is that she should use a specific type of thread as a tool for sewing her dress.

In addition, the indirect object Mikayile “Micheal” in (13)

is a recipient, and the direct object ikintu “something” in (13) is a theme. The meaning of the recipient role depends on the context. The entity Mikayile “Micheal” can simply denote someone to whom something has been said. This is the literal meaning. In contrast, the meaning of this utterance can go beyond this literal meaning by including the pragmatic concept of implicature. In fact, the speaker, by pointing out that Michael receives a piece of information, intends to prevent the listener from knowing that Michael receives a piece of information he is not normally supposed to know. Therefore, the meaning of the utterance goes beyond the literal meaning to imply that “be careful, John reveals to Micheal what happens.”

Additionally, the theme “ikintu,” meaning “something,” can refer to a story that John tells Michael. Nevertheless, as the argument is not clearly stated regarding the cooperative principle of Grice [25], the speaker flouts the maxim of quantity and manner. The speaker communicates less information than necessary, and its utterance is not clear. Therefore, this leads the listener to negotiate the meaning of the utterance. Depending on context, the speaker could refer to the truth that has been revealed to Micheal. Then, by uttering the sentence, the speaker attempts to mislead the listener. However, the speaker could also refer to something he invents to prank the listener. Consequently, when this happens, the speaker violates the maxim of quality by telling something he believes is false.

4. Conclusion

This research has demonstrated the interrelationship between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in Kinyarwanda, particularly when examining the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects. The scrutiny has revealed that direct objects in Kinyarwanda have the semantic roles of instrument, location, phenomenon, theme and patient, and indirect objects are associated with the semantic roles of beneficiary and recipient. Besides, the paper showed how syntax interacts with semantics and also proved that the Kinyarwanda language has the same semantic roles as Embosi as far as direct and indirect objects are concerned. Finally, the research study highlighted how the meaning of the semantic roles of direct and indirect objects extends beyond their literal interpretations by including the pragmatic concepts of presupposition and implicature.

However, this research study focused only on the semantic role of direct and indirect objects. Future research studies are advised to examine the semantic roles of other sentence constituents of Kinyarwanda sentences, such as subjects and other complements. Moreover, deeper research on the semantic roles of Kinyarwanda and Embosi objects can be relevant to show similarities and dissimilarities between both languages, thus contributing to the documentation of Bantu languages.

Abbreviations

APPL Applicative

ASP	Aspect
DIM	Diminutive
EXT	Extension
PASS	Passive
PST	Past
SP	Subject Prefix

Author Contributions

Kiba Ngapoula: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Laure Masabo Umutesi: Data curation, Investigation, Writing – original draft

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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