

PECULIARITIES OF LOANWORD ALLOCATION TO THE NOUN CLASS

Assignment of Loanwords to Nominal Classes

Kinyarwanda hosted a wide range of foreign words. The loanwords were accommodated in a different linguistic system of noun classes. The criteria for allocating a loanword to a noun class are frequently debatable. Some classes seem to be more hospitable than others. Some loanwords enter the noun class system before the others, and these are said to be established loans and nonce borrowings. The latter are “lexical items from another language that have not (yet) been used with sufficient frequency to be regarded as established loans” (cf. Poplack, Sankoff, and Miller 1988).

Like other Bantu languages, loanwords in Kinyarwanda are allocated to the nominal classes in various ways. They may be allocated to noun classes according to semantic characteristics (animates or inanimates) or morphophonological ones (initial syllable, stem, and consonants beginning the stem).

Katamba (1993: 235) indicates that “nouns are assigned to different classes, often on a minimally semantic basis, depending on whether they refer to a human/animate, or on the basis of salient properties of the entity denoted by a noun such as its shape or size [...]”

With reference to Kiswahili, Zawawi (1979: 59) finds out that there are two major ways a loanword may be assimilated to a noun class:

Frequently, if the first syllable of the word is reminiscent of a native class prefix the noun is treated as belonging to the corresponding class [...]
When there is no similarity between prefixes and initial syllables, or where certain semantic features override such similarities, a common

technique of assimilation in Swahili is to assign loan nouns to N-Class (Classes 5 and 9), the invariable class where the class prefix is normally zero before polysyllabic stems beginning with a voiceless consonant [...]

In Kinyarwanda classes 1 and 9 (plus their plural counterparts) have hosted more loanwords than any other nominal class. Loanwords denoting animates are allocated to classes 1/2, while classes 9/6 accommodate most loanwords denoting inanimates.

Prefix markers play a very important role in this process. Most linguists agree that loanwords which have an initial syllable which resemble a recognizable class prefix are allocated to classes other than 9 and 5. Those which have no identifiable prefixes generally go to classes 9 and 5 because they have zero noun prefix.

According to Contini (1995) most loanwords denoting inanimates (with no recognizable class prefix) are allocated to classes 5 and 9 in Kiswahili:

The fact that Classes 5 and 9 most commonly have a zero prefix might lead one to expect that these classes would be especially hospitable to loanwords, particularly words whose initial syllable does not resemble a recognizable class prefix, a point that has been made by several Swahili scholars. Zawawi (1979:127) suggests that such nouns may first be incorporated into Class 9, and may later be recategorized as Class 5 (the latter has the advantage of distinguishing singular from plural).

Unlike loanwords in Kiswahili, loanwords in Kinyarwanda with a non recognizable noun prefix are mainly allocated to class 9 and rarely to class 5. Other loanwords denoting inanimates with non recognizable noun prefix may go to classes 3 /4, 7/8, 11/10, and 14. The allocation does not always follow the general protocol of noun classification. For example, class 14 generally denotes abstract concepts. However, some loanwords which express concrete reality or locations may be allocated to this class, for example, *u-bu-ringiti*, “blanket”; *u Bu-suwisi*, “Switzerland”. Class 9, whose counterpart is generally class 10, couples with class 6 for English and French loanwords, the most predominant augment in loanwords being i-.

Apart from loanwords denoting animates which are allocated to classes 1 and 2, the allocation of loanwords does not usually follow the semantic groupings but rather the phonological characteristics of the nominal prefix.

In this regard, the researcher supports Ngorosho (1979:6) when she says that “loanwords are generally placed in the noun class that fits their phonological form rather than the class that might fit their semantic characteristics.”.

The same view is shared by Demuth (2000:220). He states that “loanwords can be incorporated into the noun class system on a phonological basis if both the consonant and the vowel of the first syllable (of the noun class prefix) correspond to a possible noun class prefix.”

Thus, there may be a loanword which shows irregular pairing, for example, class 5: *i-koti*, “coat” pairs with class 6: *a-ma-koti*, “coats”; while concrete loanwords, nouns of class 14: *u-bu-ringiti*, “blanket” has no pairing. Class 14 is generally a class denoting abstract nouns. Class 11: *u-ru-papuro*, “paper” pairs with class 10, *i-m-papuro*, “papers”. Classes 12 and 13 which denote diminutives may host loanwords like *a-ka-bati*, “cupboard”, and *u-tu-bati*, “cupboard”, whereas they do not express any idea of smallness, contempt, or appreciation.

The loanword *u-bu-ringiti* is incorporated into class 14 because of the vowel insertion (epithetic vowel) requirements. *U-ru-papuro* and *i-m-papuro* are allocated to classes 11 and 10 because of the assimilation rules, while *a-ka-bati* and *u-tu-bati* follow Dahl’s phonological law (a nominal stem beginning with a voiced consonant sound, /β/, has a noun prefix beginning with a voiceless consonant sound, /k/ in singular and /t/ in plural).

Table 1 Allocation of loanwords to noun classes

Class	Augment	Noun prefix	Stem/root	Source word	English
1	<i>u-</i>	<i>-mu-</i>	<i>-shoferi</i>	<i>chauffeur</i>	driver
2	<i>a-</i>	<i>-ba-</i>	<i>-shoferi</i>	<i>chauffeurs</i>	drivers
3	<i>u-</i>	<i>-mu-</i>	<i>-dari</i>	<i>médaille</i>	medal
4	<i>i-</i>	<i>-mi-</i>	<i>-dari</i>	<i>médailles</i>	medals
5	<i>i-</i>	<i>-κ-/ri-</i>	<i>-koti</i>	coat	coat
6	<i>a-</i>	<i>-ma-</i>	<i>-koti</i>	coats	coats
7	<i>i-</i>	<i>-ki-</i>	<i>-nini</i>	<i>quinine</i>	quinine, tablet
8	<i>i-</i>	<i>-bi-</i>	<i>-nini</i>	<i>quinines</i>	quinines, tablets
9	<i>i-</i>	<i>-κ-</i>	<i>-kipe</i>	<i>équipe</i>	team
10	<i>i-</i>	<i>-N-</i>	<i>-papuro</i>	<i>papiers</i>	sheets of paper
11	<i>u-</i>	<i>-ru-</i>	<i>-papuro</i>	<i>papier</i>	sheet of paper
12	<i>a-</i> <i>a-</i>	<i>-ka-</i> <i>-ga-</i>	<i>-bati</i> <i>-sashe</i>	cupboard <i>sachet</i>	cupboard shopping bag
13	<i>a-</i> <i>u-</i>	<i>-tu-</i> <i>-du-</i>	<i>-bati</i> <i>-sashe</i>	cupboards sachet	cupboards shopping bags
14	<i>u-</i>	<i>-bu-</i>	<i>-nani</i>	<i>Bonne Année</i>	New Year Day
15	---	<i>gu-</i>	<i>-kilika</i>	click (verb)	click (verb)
	---	<i>ku-</i>	<i>-verisa</i>	<i>verser</i>	deposit (verb)
16	---	---	---	---	---
17	---	<i>Mu</i>	<i>Burusiya</i>	<i>en Russie</i>	in Russia
18	---	<i>Ku</i>	<i>ibanki</i>	<i>à la banque</i>	to the bank

The allocation of loanwords as shown in the table above could be expanded as follows¹:

- (1) Class 1/2 denotes animates (terms related to human beings: kinship, titles, professions, etc). In general the agreement nominal prefix markers are *-mu-* in

¹ Some examples given in the details, especially nonce borrowings, are indebted from Rose (1995): 4.1 Liste générale français-kinyarwanda.

singular (cl 1) and *-ba-* in plural (cl 2). Many French loanwords have been allocated to this class of animates.

Loanword	French	English
<i>u-mu-ny-afurika</i>	<i>africain</i>	African
<i>a-ba-ny-afurika</i>	<i>africains</i>	Africans
<i>u-mu-goronome</i>	<i>agronome</i>	agriculture engineer
<i>a-ba-goronome</i>	<i>agronomes</i>	agriculture engineers
<i>(u-mu)-ambasaderi</i>	<i>ambassadeur</i>	ambassador
<i>(a)-ba-mbasaderi</i>	<i>ambassadeurs</i>	ambassadors
<i>u-mu-divantisiti</i>	<i>adventiste</i>	Adventist
<i>a-ba-divantisiti</i>	<i>adventistes</i>	Adventists
<i>(u-mu)-konseye</i>	<i>conseiller</i>	advisor
<i>(a)-ba-konseye</i>	<i>conseillers</i>	advisors
<i>u-mu-arabu</i>	<i>arabe</i>	Arab
<i>a-ba-arabu</i>	<i>arabes</i>	Arabs
<i>u-mu-seribateri</i>	<i>célibataire</i>	single, bachelor, spinster
<i>a-ba-seribateri</i>	<i>célibataires</i>	single, bachelors, spinsters
<i>u-mu-fiyanse</i>	<i>fiancé/e</i>	fiancé/e
<i>a-ba-fiyanse</i>	<i>fiancés</i>	fiancés
<i>u-mu-polisi</i>	<i>policier</i>	policeman
<i>a-ba-polisi</i>	<i>policier</i>	policemen
<i>u-mu-suruveya</i>	<i>surveillant</i>	supervisor
<i>a-ba-suruveya</i>	<i>surveillants</i>	supervisors

- (2) Class 3/4 generally denotes plants, ditches, natural phenomena (fire, wind, light, darkness, rainbow, lightning), rivers, bundles, farms, and some parts of the body (hair, heart, liver, head, back, temple, navel). However, some loanwords (including some abstract nouns) which do not fall into this semantic group, may be found in this class. The agreement nominal prefix markers are *-mu-* in singular (class 3) and *-mi-* in plural (class 4).

Loanword	French	English
<i>u-mu-batizo</i>	<i>baptême</i>	baptism
<i>i-mi-batizo</i>	<i>baptêmes</i>	baptisms
<i>u-mu-dari</i>	<i>médaille</i>	medal
<i>i-mi-dari</i>	<i>médailles</i>	medals
<i>u-mu-deri</i>	<i>modèle</i>	model, fashion
<i>i-mi-deri</i>	<i>modèles</i>	models, fashions
<i>u-mu-leti</i>	<i>omelette</i>	omelette
<i>i-mi-leti</i>	<i>omelettes</i>	omelettes
<i>u-mu-nota</i>	<i>minute</i>	minute
<i>i-mi-nota</i>	<i>minutes</i>	minutes
<i>u-mu-sigiti</i>	<i>mosquée</i>	mosque
<i>i-mi-sigiti</i>	<i>mosquée</i>	mosques
<i>u-mu-vino</i>	<i>vin</i>	wine
<i>i-mi-vino</i>	<i>vins</i>	wines
<i>u-mu-zika</i>	<i>musique</i>	music
<i>i-mi-zika</i>	<i>musique</i>	kinds of music

- (3) Class 5/6 denotes paired parts of the body such as eye, ear, breast, cheek, nose/nostrils. With loanwords, there is no fixed rule as such. The agreement nominal prefix markers in singular (class 5) are -ri- or -κ- and -ma- in plural (class 6). Few French and English loanwords have been allocated to class 5, simply because there was no need of borrowing words denoting parts of the body. Loanwords allocated to class 5 refer to other realities.

Loanword	French	English
<i>i-φ-koti</i>	<i>veste</i>	coat
<i>a-ma-koti</i>	<i>vestes</i>	coats
<i>i-φ-rimbi</i>	<i>limbe</i>	limbo, graveyard
<i>a-ma-rimbi</i>	<i>limbes</i>	graveyards

<i>i-φ-lonji</i>	<i>orange</i>	orange
<i>a-ma-ronji</i>	<i>oranges</i>	oranges
<i>i-φ-nota</i>	<i>note</i>	school grade
<i>a-ma-nota</i>	<i>notes</i>	school grades
<i>i-φ-note</i>	<i>note</i>	musical note
<i>a-ma-note</i>	<i>notes</i>	musical notes

- (4) Class 7/8 generally denotes things, plants, trees, languages, and pejoratives. However, some loanwords which do not fall into this semantic grouping may also be found in this class. For example, the word *ibitaro*, “hospital”, which has the same singular and plural form, falls into class 8 (the plural of class 7). The agreement nominal prefix markers are *-gi-/-ki-/-ci-* in singular (class 7) and generally *-bi-* in plural (class 8).

Loanword	French	English
<i>i-gi-tansi</i>	<i>quittance</i>	receipt
<i>i-bi-tansi</i>	<i>quittances</i>	receipts
<i>i-gi-tari</i>	<i>hectare</i>	hectare
<i>i-bi-tari</i>	<i>hectares</i>	hectars
<i>i-ki-nini</i>	<i>quinine</i>	quinine, tablet
<i>i-bi-nini</i>	<i>quinines</i>	quinines, tables
<i>i-ki-ringiti</i>	<i>couverture</i>	blanket
<i>i-bi-ringiti</i>	<i>couverture</i>	blankets
<i>i-ki-nyoteri</i>	<i>clignoteur</i>	indicator
<i>i-bi-nyoteri</i>	<i>clignoteur</i>	indicators
<i>i-ki-zamini</i>	<i>examen</i>	exam
<i>i-bi-zamini</i>	<i>examens</i>	exam
<i>i-ki-lometero</i>	<i>kilomètre</i>	kilometre
<i>i-bi-lometero</i>	<i>kilomètres</i>	kilometres
<i>i-cy-arabu</i>	<i>arabe</i>	Arabic
<i>i-cy-esipanyole</i>	<i>espagnol</i>	Spanish

<i>i-cy-ongereza</i>	<i>anglais</i>	English
<i>i-gi-faransa</i>	<i>français</i>	French
<i>i-gi-heburayo</i>	<i>hébreu</i>	Hebrew
<i>i-gi-porutigali</i>	<i>portugais</i>	Portuguese
<i>i-gi-shinwa</i>	<i>chinois</i>	Chinese
<i>i-gi-taliyani</i>	<i>italien</i>	Italian
<i>i-ki-latini</i>	<i>latin</i>	<i>Latin</i>
<i>i-ki-giriki</i>	<i>grec</i>	<i>Greek</i>

- (5) Class 9/6 or 9/10 is the most hospitable class. All non-identifiable nominal prefixes with the first syllable of the source word are assigned to this class. In general, class 9 includes nouns denoting most animals, some household effects and natural phenomena. Loanwords denoting things, plants, and some animals which were not known before the colonial period, have been integrated into class 9.

Uncountable nouns denoting mass and liquids, which normally fall in class 6, have also been hosted in class 9.

Loanword	French	English
<i>i-kaye</i> (class 9)	<i>cahier</i>	notebook
<i>a-ma-kaye</i> (class 6)	<i>cahiers</i>	notebooks
<i>i-karoti</i> (class 9)	<i>carotte</i>	carrot
<i>za karoti</i> (class 10)	<i>carottes</i>	carrots
<i>i-sarubeti</i> (class 9)	<i>salopette</i>	dungarees
<i>a-ma-sarubeti</i> (class 6)	<i>salopettes</i>	dungarees
<i>i-bayoneti</i> (class 9)	<i>baïllonnette</i>	bayonet
<i>a-ma-bayoneti</i> (class 6)	<i>baïllonnette</i>	bayonet
<i>i-baro</i> (class 9/6)	<i>ballot</i>	bundle
<i>a-ma-balo</i> (class 6)	<i>ballots</i>	bundles
<i>dovi</i> (class 9)	<i>devis</i>	estimate

<i>za dovi</i> (class 10)	<i>devis</i>	estimate
<i>i-dendo</i> (class 9)	<i>dindon</i>	turkey cock
<i>za dendo</i> (class 10)	<i>dindons</i>	turkey cocks
<i>i-tabuliye</i> (class 9)	<i>tablier</i>	apron
<i>a-ma-tabuliye</i> (class 6)	<i>tabliers</i>	aprons
<i>gare</i> (class 9)	<i>gare</i>	bus station
<i>za gare</i> (class 10)	<i>gares</i>	bus stations
<i>pureyavi</i> (class 9)	<i>préavis</i>	notice
<i>za pureyavi</i> (class 10)	<i>préavis</i>	notice
<i>segiteri</i> (class 9)	<i>secteur</i>	sector
<i>a-ma-segiteri</i> (cl 6)	<i>secteurs</i>	sectors
<i>peteroli</i> (class 9)	<i>pétrole</i>	oil

- (6) Class 11 denotes thin and long entities, some languages, some body parts, augmentatives, depreciation and pejorative items. It usually pairs with class 10, and exceptionally with class 6. Apart from augmentative and pejorative items, which may be formed by adding the prefix marker -ru-, only three fully integrated French loanwords which have been hosted by class 11 have been identified:

Loanword	French	English
<i>u-ru-papuro</i> (class 11)	<i>papier</i>	sheet of paper
<i>i-m-papuro</i> (class 10)	<i>papiers</i>	sheets of paper
<i>u-ru-faranga</i> (class 11)	<i>franc</i>	franc
<i>a-ma-faranga</i> (class 6)	<i>francs</i>	<i>francs</i>
<i>u-ru-shinge</i> (class 11)	<i>seringue</i>	needle
<i>i-n-shinge</i> (class 10)	<i>seringues</i>	needles

- (7) Classes 12 and 13 denote diminutives with the idea of contempt, smallness, and appreciation. The prefix marker of the diminutive -ka-/ga- (class 12) in singular and -tu-/du- (class 13) in plural. The augment preceding the diminutive prefix marker is generally a- in singular and u- in plural. However, some loanwords behave very strangely. For example, the word *akabati*, “cupboard”, agrees with

the diminutive concord nominal prefixes whereas the concept is not that of a diminutive. Morphologically speaking, the loanword *akabati* behaves like a diminutive, but semantically it is not. The word *akabare*, from *cabaret*, “pub”, has also morphological features of a diminutive, but in the real sense it is not. Let us consider the word *akabati* in the following sentences:

Class 12: *A-ka-bati ka-anjye ka-nini ka-mwe ga-pima ibiro mirongwitanu*: “My big cupboard weighs 50 kilos”.

Class 13: *U-tu-bati tu-anjye tu-nini tu-biri du-pima ibiro ijana*: “My two big cupboards weigh 100 kilos”.

In the above sentences, there is no idea of smallness, contempt, nor appreciation. The loanword has been integrated into cl 12 simply because the initial syllable of the source word “cupboard” /'kʌbəd/ resembles an identifiable diminutive prefix marker -ka- (usually preceded by the augment a-). However, loanwords whose initial syllable does not resemble the noun prefix marker will be allocated to class 9 (zero prefix noun marker). As for the word *ikaroti*, *carotte* /karɔt/, “carrot” /'kærət/, although the initial syllable resembles the noun prefix marker of the diminutive, it has not been integrated into class 12.

Class 9: *I-ϕ-karoti ya-anjye nini ya-guzwe neza cyane*: “My big carrot has sold very well”.

Class 10: *Za karoti za-anjye za-guzwe neza cyane*: “My big carrots have sold very well”.

Class 9: *I-ϕ-kaye* (from the French *cahier*) *ya-anjye nini ya-guzwe neza cyane*:

“My big note book has sold very well”.

Class 6: *A-ma-kaye* (from the French *cahiers*) *ya-anjye ma-nini ya-guzwe neza cyane*:

“My big note books have sold very well”.

In order to decide whether the loanword belongs to a given nominal class, the agreement of nominal prefix markers have been considered. Although the loanwords,

akabati, “cupboard, and *akabare*, *cabaret*, “pub”, do not embody any idea of smallness or depreciation, they are to be classified into class 12 because of their concord morphemes. On the other hand, any borrowable concrete noun may be used as a diminutive.

Loanword	French	English
<i>a-ga-shantiye</i>	<i>petit chantier</i>	small building site
<i>u-du-shantiye</i>	<i>petits chantiers</i>	small building sites
<i>a-ga-shapule</i>	<i>petit chapelet</i>	small rosary
<i>u-du-shapule</i>	<i>petits chapelets</i>	small rosaries
<i>a-ga-kanifu</i>	<i>petit canif</i>	small penknife
<i>u-du-kanifu</i>	<i>petits canifs</i>	small penknives
<i>a-ga-kabutura</i>	<i>petite culotte</i>	small shorts
<i>u-du-kabutura</i>	<i>petites culottes</i>	small shorts
<i>a-ga-kasho</i>	<i>petit cachot</i>	small jail
<i>u-du-kasho</i>	<i>petits cachots</i>	small jails
<i>a-ka-base</i>	<i>petit bassin</i>	small basin
<i>u-tu-base</i>	<i>petits bassins</i>	small basins
<i>a-ka-butike</i>	<i>petite boutique</i>	small shop
<i>a-ka-butike</i>	<i>petites boutiques</i>	small shops
<i>a-ka-gato</i>	<i>petit gâteau</i>	small cake
<i>u-tu-gato</i>	<i>petits gâteaux</i>	small cakes
<i>a-ka-mangazine</i>	<i>petit magasin</i>	small store/warehouse
<i>u-tu-mangazine</i>	<i>petits magasins</i>	small stores/warehouses
<i>a-ka-valize</i>	<i>petite valise</i>	small suitcase
<i>u-tu-valize</i>	<i>petites valises</i>	small suitcases

The above diminutives come from the following loanwords: *i-shantiye*, “building site”; *i-shapule*, “rosary”; *i-kanifu*, “knife”; *i-kabutura*, “shorts”; *i-kasho*, “jail”; *i-base*, “basin”; *i-butike*, “shop”; *i-gato*, “cake”; *i-mangazine*, “store”; *ivalize*, “suitcase”.

- (8) Class 14 generally denotes abstract nouns. As previously said, abstract items are hardly borrowable. Not many abstract loanwords have been integrated in this class, except those denoting religious concepts. Curiously enough, concrete nouns of foreign origin can be found in this class. Most foreign words denoting countries are also found in class 14.

Loanword	French	English
<i>u-bu-kirisito</i>	<i>chrétienté</i>	Christianity
<i>u-bu-nani</i>	<i>Bonne Année</i>	New Year Day
<i>u-bu-padiri</i>	<i>praîtrise</i>	priesthood
<i>u-bu-pagani</i>	<i>paganisme</i>	paganism
<i>u-bu-ringiti</i>	<i>couverture</i>	blanket
<i>(i-bi-ringiti, class 8)</i>	<i>couvertures</i>	blankets
<i>u-bu-saseridoti</i>	<i>sacerdoce</i>	priesthood
<i>u-bu-roso</i>	<i>brosse</i>	brush
<i>u Bu-holandi</i>	<i>Hollande</i>	The Netherlands
<i>u Bu-suwisi</i>	<i>Suisse</i>	Switzerland
<i>u Bu-taliyani</i>	<i>Italie</i>	Italy
<i>u Burusiya</i>	<i>Russie</i>	Russia
<i>u Bubiligi</i>	<i>Belgique</i>	Belgium
<i>u Bufaransa</i>	<i>France</i>	France

- (9) Class 15 denotes nouns of some parts of the body, months of the year, and all infinitives. Loanwords of recent integration in this class are French verbal forms. The distinctive nominal prefix marker is *gu-/ku-*

Loanword	French	English
<i>gu-fotora</i>	<i>photocopier</i>	to photocopy
<i>gu-fotora</i>	<i>photographier</i>	to take a picture
<i>gu-kaveringa</i>	<i>couvrir</i>	to cover
<i>gu-kilika</i>	<i>faire un clic</i>	to click

<i>gu-kilinyota</i>	<i>clignoter</i>	to blink
<i>gu-koloriya</i>	<i>colorier</i>	to colour
<i>gu-kopera</i>	<i>copier</i>	to cheat (an exam)
<i>gu-sabota</i>	<i>saboter</i>	to botch
<i>gu-sharija</i>	<i>charger</i>	to charge (a battery)
<i>gu-sinya</i>	<i>signer</i>	to sign
<i>gu-sona</i>	<i>sonner</i>	to ring
<i>gu-tirisha</i>	<i>tricher</i>	to cheat
<i>ku-batiza</i>	<i>baptizer</i>	to baptize
<i>ku-buransha</i>	<i>brancher</i>	to plug
<i>ku-defila</i>	<i>défiler</i>	to march
<i>ku-defuriza</i>	<i>défriser</i>	to straighten (hair)
<i>ku-depoza</i>	<i>déposer</i>	to deposit
<i>ku-nota</i>	<i>noter</i>	to take notes
<i>ku-verisa</i>	<i>verser</i>	to deposit on one's bank account
<i>ku-vibura</i>	<i>vibrer</i>	to vibrate

- (10) As for locatives, there are no loanwords in class 16 (the distinctive prefix marker, -ha-, indicates a location). But classes 17 and 18 have hosted toponyms of foreign origins. They are preceded by the prepositions *mu* (*muri*, generally before a location beginning with a vowel), “in”/ “to” for countries, and *i*, “in”/ “to” for cities.

Loanword	French	English
<i>mu Buholandi</i>	<i>en Hollande</i>	in/to The Netherlands
<i>mu Bwongereza</i>	<i>en Anglettere</i>	in/to England
<i>mu Bufaransa</i>	<i>en France</i>	in/to France
<i>mu Busuwisi</i>	<i>en Suisse</i>	in/to Switzerland
<i>mu Butaliyani</i>	<i>en Italie</i>	in/to Italy
<i>muri Amerika</i>	<i>en Amérique</i>	in/to America
<i>muri Afurika y’Epfo</i>	<i>en Afrique du Sud</i>	in South Africa
<i>muri Hongiriya</i>	<i>en Hongrie</i>	in/to Hungary

<i>muri Egiputa</i>	<i>en Egypte</i>	in'to Egypt
<i>i Kayiro</i>	<i>au Caire</i>	in/to Cairo
<i>i Londere</i>	<i>à Londres</i>	in/to London
<i>i Buruseli</i>	<i>à Bruxelles</i>	in/to Brussels
<i>i Nyuyoke</i>	<i>à New York</i>	in/to New York
<i>i Roma</i>	<i>à Rome</i>	in/to Rome
<i>i Liyo</i>	<i>à Lyon</i>	in/to Lyon

Morphological aspects of loanwords

The morphological adaptation of loanwords is generally operated in one of the four ways: addition, deletion, derivation, and reduplication. Loanwords take Kinyarwanda morphological features when they are allocated to noun classes.

Addition

In general, a loanword adds an augment and an affix (usually by prefixing or/and suffixing) to the stem of a word. This is the most frequent method of integration. Although a loanword may be integrated into the borrowing language, it does not always find full acceptance in the host language system. Thus, it can preserve or lose original segments and create new ones. This is the case observed in loanwords having the nominal prefix *-ma-* of class 6 or *za* attested in plural nouns of class 10. The morpheme *za-* is usually an adjectival or pronominal prefix. The nominal prefixes **-ma-** and **za** are good cases to illustrate the addition process in loanword adaptation in Kinyarwanda. The two morphemes are used alternatively, but with fully assimilated loanwords, *-ma-* (always preceded by an augment, *-a*) tends to predominate over *za* (no augment before it).

Examples:

The following sentences consider one agreement from the native words of class 10 and class 6.

I-nka za-njye za-rishije: "My cows have grazed".

A-ma-tama ma-nini a-maze ku-byimb-uk-a: “Big cheeks are no longer swollen”.

The agreement in two loanwords (*avoka/ivoka*: avocado; *bisi*: bus) in the same noun class introduces an alternative morpheme. Thus, two options are observed:

1. *Za voka zireze*: “Avocadoes are ripe”.
2. *A-ma-voka areze*: “Avocadoes are ripe”.
1. *Za bisi zatinze*: “Buses have delayed”.
2. *A-ma-bisi yatinze*: “Buses have delayed”.

The word *ivoka*, “an avocado”, will be *amavoka* or *za voka* in plural. The plural word *za voka* has no augment, which should normally be *i-*, if class markers of noun class 10 are taken into account. This shows that some loanwords have ambivalent forms when they haven't yet been fully adopted by the nominal class system.

However, the plural forms below show that some loanwords have found full acceptance in the host language:

Kinyarwanda	French	English
<i>a-ba-voka</i>	<i>avocats</i>	lawyers
<i>a-ba-biligi</i>	<i>belges</i>	Belgians
<i>a-ba-faransa</i>	<i>français</i> (people)	French
<i>a-ma-foto</i>	<i>photos</i>	photos/pictures
<i>gu-foto-ra</i>	<i>photocopier</i>	photocopy
<i>gu-foto-ra</i>	<i>photographier</i>	take a picture
<i>gu-sabota</i>	<i>saboter</i>	to botch
<i>i-foto</i>	<i>photo</i>	photo/picture
<i>i-gi-faransa</i>	<i>français</i> (language)	French
<i>i-m-papuro</i>	<i>papiers</i>	papers
<i>ku-defiriza</i>	<i>défriser</i>	straighten (hair)
<i>ku-depoza</i>	<i>deposer</i>	deposit/ hand out
<i>u-mu-avoka</i>	<i>avocat</i>	lawyer

<i>u-mu-biligi</i>	<i>belge</i>	Belgian
<i>u-mu-faransa</i>	<i>français</i> (people)	French
<i>u-ru-papuro</i>	<i>papier</i>	paper

Deletion

One element of the source word is omitted to simplify the spelling or the pronunciation, especially when the original form is hard to pronounce or to write to fit the host language system.

Examples:

Kinyarwanda	French	English
<i>gu-fotora</i>	<i>photocopier, photographier</i>	photocopy/take a picture
<i>u-mu-fana</i>	<i>fanatique</i>	fanatic
<i>ruwiri</i>	<i>l'huile</i>	cooking oil
<i>Leta</i>	<i>l'Etat</i>	the State
<i>isinya</i>	<i>signature</i>	signature
<i>ku-iy-aranja</i>	<i>s'arranger</i>	to manage
<i>Loni</i>	<i>l'ONU</i>	The UN

Observations:

Loanwords which have not been fully adopted are written and pronounced with or without initial nominal morphemes: augment or nominal prefix. However, in the long run they will definitely take a stand and get one. This explains the fact that loanwords are still searching for adoption in the nominal class of the host language before being totally integrated.

In the section above, there has been deletion of the apostrophe and the elided article (*article élidé l'*) has resulted in the formation of the segments *ru, le, lo*, in *ruwiri, leta, loni*, respectively. The article and the apostrophe have been merged.

The structure of a loanword does not often conform to the original Kinyarwanda. Some omit the augment, while others keep it, or simply use it alternatively.

- (1) Some loanwords omit the augment:

Examples:

Kinyarwanda	French	English
<i>moto</i>	<i>motocyclette</i>	motorcycle
<i>radio</i>	<i>radio</i>	radio
<i>madame</i>	<i>madame</i>	madam
<i>mazutu</i>	<i>mazout</i>	diesel
<i>telefone</i>	<i>téléphone</i>	telephone
<i>kashe</i>	<i>cachet</i>	seal, stamp
<i>gasutamo</i>	<i>douane</i>	custom
<i>kokeliche</i>	<i>coqueliche</i>	whooping-cough
<i>kiliziliya</i>	<i>église</i>	Church
<i>politiki</i>	<i>politique</i>	politics, political, policy
<i>ruwiri</i>	<i>l'huile</i>	cooking oil, especially peanut oil
<i>ruswa</i>	<i>reçois</i>	bribe, corruption
<i>sinya</i>	<i>signature</i>	signature

- (2) Some loanwords delete the nominal prefix in singular. Plural forms take the alternative intrusive morpheme za- or -ma-

Examples:

Kinyarwanda	French	English
<i>(i)-ϕ-feri</i>	<i>frein</i>	brake
<i>(i)- ϕ-radiyo</i>	<i>radio</i>	radio
<i>(i)- ϕ-bariyeri</i>	<i>barrière</i>	barrier, road-block
<i>(umu)-ϕ-muzika</i>	<i>musique</i>	music
<i>(umu) -ϕ-diregiteri</i>	<i>directeur</i>	director
<i>(i)- ϕ-kote</i>	<i>veste</i>	coat
<i>(i)- ϕ-winga</i>	<i>raie</i>	wing, hair ray/stripe
<i>(i)- ϕ-kiliziya</i>	<i>église</i>	Church (from the Greek <i>ecclesia</i>)

Derivation

According to Hockett (1958: 417), derivation is the part of morphology which “deals with the structure of the stems”.

Some verbal loanwords are formed by derivational suffixes (verbal extensions). These are to be distinguished from formal suffixes which have no meaning in themselves. Verbal extensions whereby derivational suffixes are added to the verbal root help to form many other verbs. In Kinyarwanda, there are 7 types of derivational suffixes, which help in the formation of verbs. Integrated verbal loanwords have accepted this process of derivation. To form a verb, you need a nominal prefix showing the infinitive *gu-* or *ku-*, followed by a verbal root beginning by a consonant. Thus, the structure will be: Nominal Prefix + Verbal Root + (Extensions) + Final Vowel.

For example the verbal loanword *gu-fotor-a* originates from the French *photographier*, “to take a picture/photograph”, or *photocopier*, “to make a photocopy”. Verbal loanwords accept the process of derivation by adding a suffix to the verbal root.

- (1) *-ir-/er-*: a suffix indicating application (to do something for somebody), for example, *gu-fotor-era*, “to take a photograph for somebody”/ “photocopy for somebody”
- (2) *-an-*: a suffix indicating reciprocity, for example, *gu-fotor-an-a*, “to take a picture each other”.
- (3) *-ish-/esh-*: causative suffix (to have something done by somebody else, to cause to do, to make somebody do something), for example, *gu-fotor-esh-a*: “to have a document photocopied”, “to have a photograph taken”.
- (4) *-ik-/ek-*: a suffix expressing ability: to be able to, for example, *gu-fotor-ek-a*, “easy/able to be photographed or photocopied”.
- (5) *-u-*: a suffix indicating the passive voice, for example, *gu-fotor-w-a*, “to be taken a photograph”.
- (6) *-ur-*: a suffix indicating a reversive action, for example, *gu-pakur-ur-a*, “to unload”.

- (7) *-agur-*: a suffix indicating a repetitive action, for example, *gu-siny-agur-a*, “to sign several times”.

The way derivation operates in Kinyarwanda nominal morphology is entirely based on prefixing and suffixing. In English or French, derivation is more complex. Derivation, compounding and deletion, are sometimes related.

Scalise (1986:11) states that “words can be found that have undergone derivation and then compounding, but not compounding then derivation” [...] and that deletion operation can eliminate only a dummy element, or a formative explicitly mentioned in the structure index (for examples, *you* in imperatives), or the designated representative of a category [...]

Reduplication

The stem or the part of the loanword is repeated in the same way Kinyarwanda adjectival or nominal stems are reduplicated, for example, in the word *ki-re-ki-re*, “a tall thing”; *u-ru-ntu-ru-ntu*, “human intrigue”. The stem is reduplicated to show the action of signing a document several times, respectively.

Nurse and Philippson (2003: 88) explain that “in all kinds of non-verbal words, reduplication is particularly frequent with monosyllabic stems, which indicates a rhythmic preference for polysyllabic stems. Semantically, reduplication often appears to indicate smallness and/or repetition or intention.”

For example, the colour adjective *buru-ru* comes from the French word “*bleu*” (blue). The last syllable of the stem is reduplicated. Interestingly enough, Rwandans borrowed only the word *bururu* to denote the blue colour, unlike other colours which existed before the contact with the external world. This would imply that originally the word to denote the “blue” reality did not exist, and that it was neither strongly perceived nor known. Such a reality was not exploited. However, according to the conversation I had

had with old Rwandan people, they would use the word *juru*, “sky”, to denote the blue colour, especially the light-blue colour.

With verbal loanwords, some morphemes are reduplicated. For example, the repetitive action *gu-sinya-siny-a*, “to sign several times”, comes from the loanword *gu-sinya-a*, *signer*, meaning “to sign”. The newly borrowed verb *gu-kilik-a*, “to click”, is often reduplicated to show the repetitive action of clicking several times on a computer, *gu-kilika-kilika*, in a way which may lead to defective functioning.

Morphological changes of French loanwords

Most French loanwords have undergone deep morphological changes in Kinyarwanda. This explains their seniority or the chronology of these loans. The common nominal structure of a Kinyarwanda word is: augment-nominal prefix-stem. The verb and other parts of speech do not have any augment. The infinitive has a nominal prefix, a root, a suffix (optional), and a final vowel (always -a). Most loanwords comply with this structure. Here are just a few examples below to indicate some morphological changes. The adaptation from the lending language to the borrowing one is a long process. It does not happen haphazardly. It makes its way in the daily conversation, the media, and the print.

Examples:

(1) *calendrier* → *kalendari* (plural: *za kalendari*), “calendar”

The loanword *(i)-ϕ-kalendari* follows the structure CVC. It is sometimes written with an augment. The nominal prefix is *-ϕ-*.

(2) *francs* → *a-ma-faranga* (singular: *i-faranga*), “francs”

The word has fully been integrated. It has taken the augment *a-*, which usually precedes class 6 prefix marker *-ma-*, the identifying mark of nouns denoting masses and liquids, and plural nouns denoting some parts of the human body. The stem is *-faranga*. The singular is *i-ϕ-faranga* or *u-ru-faranga*.

- (3) *essuie-mains* → *esuwime* (plural: *a-ma-esuwime*), “hand towel”

This compound word has lost most of its morphological features. The word *essuie* has become *esu-*, and *mains*, *-me*. It has the augment *i-*, the nominal prefix $-\phi-$. The stem becomes *-swime*.

- (4) *belge* → *u-mu-biligi* (plural: *a-ba-biligi*), “Belgians”

The word has fully been adapted into the Kinyarwanda structure. It has the augment *u-* in singular and *a-* in plural, the nominal prefix *-mu-* for noun class 1 (*-ba-* for the plural), and the stem *-biligi*.

- (5) *carte* → *i-karita* (plural: *a-ma-karita*), “maps”

This word has been fully integrated. It has the augment *i-*, the nominal prefix $-\phi-$ of the noun class 9, the stem *-karita*. The plural takes the nominal prefix marker *-ma-* of class 6.

- (6) *reçois* → *ruswa* (plural: *zaruswa*), “bribe”, “corruption”

The word has totally changed its original form *reç-ois*, “take”, but it has not fully been integrated. It has been hosted by class 9. Unlike most loanwords, which have fully been integrated, it has no augment nor a nominal prefix. It means tip, bribe, or corruption.

- (7) *papier* → *u-ru-papuro* (plural: *i-m-papuro*), “sheet of paper”

The word has fully been integrated. It has the augment *u-*, the nominal prefix *-ru-* of class 11. The stem *-papuro* still retains the features of the source word, *papier*, “paper”.

- (8) *cahier* → *i-kaye* (plural: *a-ma-kaye*), “notebooks”

This word has also been fully integrated. It has the augment *i-*, the nominal prefix $-\phi-$ of noun class 9, the stem *-kaye*. The plural takes *-ma-* of the noun class 6.

- (9) *sucre* → *i-sukari* (uncountable), “sugar”

The word has fully been integrated. It has the augment of class 9. The nominal prefix is $-\phi-$. The stem is *-sukari*.

- (10) *fraudeur* → *u-mu-foroderi* (plural: *a-ba-foroderi*), “smuggler”

The word has taken all the forms of a Kinyarwanda word. It has the augment *u-*, the nominal prefix *-mu-*, and the stem *-foroderi*.

Morphological changes of English loanwords

English loanwords are the most recent borrowed words (nonce borrowings) in Kinyarwanda. This is due to the influence English has had as an international language for the last three centuries. Early English loanwords came into Kinyarwanda via Kiswahili.

Examples:

- (1) *lift* → *i-rifuti* (plural: *a-ma-rifuti*)

The word has been integrated into class 9, which usually couples with class 10. The plural for *irifuti* is *amarifuti* (class 6). In general class 5, which denotes pairing nouns (*i- ϕ -bere*, *a-ma-bere*, “a breast”, “breasts”; *i-ji-sho*, *a-ma-so*, “eye”, “eyes”, couples with class 6. But with loanwords class 9 very often couples with class 6. The word has the augment *i-*, the nominal prefix $-\phi-$, the stem *-rifuti*.

- (2) *boy* → *u-mu-boyi* (plural: *a-ba-boyi*)

The word has fully been adapted to Kinyarwanda morphology. The augment *u-* in singular (plural *-a-*) denotes common nouns of persons. The nominal prefix is *-mu-* in singular and *-ba-* in plural. The stem *-boyi-* has retained the original form of the source language.

- (3) *cake* → *i-keke* (plural: *za keke*)

The word has been integrated into class 9. The plural is either *a-ma-kek-e* (class 6) or *zakeke* (class 10). The nominal prefix morpheme *za* is an intrusive segment because it is attested in loanwords only. The word “cake”/keik/ is mispronounced /keke/. Thus, the spelling *ikeke* (influenced by the pronounced). The diphthong /ei/ is reduced to a single vowel sound /e/ in the stem *-keke*. Words such as paper /peipə/, later /leitə/, maker /meikə/, tape /teip/, lake/leik/, are also mispronounced */pepa/, */leta/, */mekə/, */teke/, */tepe/, */leke/.

- (4) star → *u-mu-sitare* (plural: *a-ba-sitare*)

This word may be confused with *umusitari* from Kiswahili (*mustari*, plural: *mistari*) meaning a “geometrical line”. The loanword *umusitare* has fully been integrated. It has the augment *u-* and the nominal prefix *-mu-* which marks common names of persons. The stem is *-sitare*.

- (5) casualty → *u-mu-kajoliti* (plural *a-ba-kajoliti*)

The loanword *umukajoliti* has taken all the morphemes of the Kinyarwanda noun class system. The augment *u-* and the nominal prefix *-mu-* designate common names of persons. Long stems such as *-kajuwaliti* are very rare in Kinyarwanda. You hardly find a stem of more than three syllables.

- (6) goal → *i-gori* (plural: *a-ma-gori*)

The loanword *igori*, “football match score”, has been hosted by class 5 (singular) and class 6 (plural). It has the augment *i-*, the nominal prefix *-ϕ-*, the stem *-gori*. Usually most loanwords denoting things are hosted in class 9 (singular) and class 6 or 10 (plural).

- (7) note → *i-note* (plural: *i-note*, *a-ma-note*)

The word *inote* may denote a bank note or a musical instrument. Apart from the augment *i-*, the whole word has been preserved. *i-note* belongs to class 9 (singular) and 10 (plural). When cl 9 couples with class 6, the word becomes *amanote* and means “musical notes”.

(8) steam → *i-sitimu* (plural: *a-ma-sitimu*)

The word *i-sitimu* which came into Kinyarwanda via Kiswahili has been fully integrated into class 9 (singular). The plural *a-ma-sitimu* belongs to class 6.

(9) bucket → *i-m-begeti* (plural: *i-m-begeti*)

The word bucket which lent its form to *i-(m)-begeti* has completely changed its form in Kinyarwanda. The word *i-n-dobo* is used alongside *i-m-begeti* and they are both doublets. It is hardly identifiable as a loanword from English. It has been hosted by classes 9/10.

Some loanwords change their original form completely and they are hardly identifiable with their source.

Examples:

(1) *Kunyuzura*: a verb from the adjective “new”, which means to initiate a new comer in a learning institution, especially in a secondary school, university, or in the army. It has totally adapted to the nominal morphological derivation of Kinyarwanda.

(2) *Icyongereza*: “English language”

(3) *Umwongereza*: “an English national”

(4) *Abongereza*: “English nationals”