

# Runyakitara: Uganda's 'New' Language

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While Uganda includes speakers of widely diverse Sudanic, Nilotic and Bantu languages, none of the languages is spoken by more than 20% of the population. Until recently, speakers of Luganda have constituted the largest 'minority'; these speakers possessed special political privileges during the British colonial period. The status of Luganda has been challenged in the 1990s by the emergence of Runyakitara, a language based on a combination of the western Uganda lacustrine languages of Runyankore, Runyoro, Rutoro and Rukiga. This paper discusses the construction of Runyakitara in the context of the current political situation in Uganda. Along with the role and status of indigenous languages, the functions and status of Swahili and English are discussed. The reinvigoration of indigenous languages and the relative decline of Swahili in Uganda are shown to be related to the power and solidarity of functions that these languages fulfil in society.

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the emergence of Runyakitara as a 'new' language in Uganda in the 1980s. The formation of Runyakitara through the realignment of four western Bantu varieties illustrates the potential for the use of language as a resource in ethnic competition (Paulston, 1994; Wardhaugh, 1987). According to Wardhaugh (1987: 42):

... ethnic identification is a tool available to those who see its usefulness for winning concessions of various kinds in the struggles for power that are characteristic of social organizations.

The amalgamation of the four languages has the effect of joining four ethnic groups into one, creating the kind of political and economic clout that frequently motivates language shift, according to Edwards (1985). It will be shown that Runyakitara and other hitherto 'secondary' indigenous languages have recently been revitalised at the expense of both Luganda and Swahili, while English has retained its function as official language and language of wider communication both inside and outside of Uganda.

## The Sociolinguistic Setting

Uganda is a nation with a particularly complex group of speech communities, including speakers of codes from three widely disparate language families. As shown in Figure 1, in the northwest, there are speakers of Sudanic languages such as Lugbara and Madi. Speakers of Eastern Nilotic languages such as Ateso and Karimojong live in the northeast, while in the central northern region there are speakers of western Nilotic languages. These are labelled Acholi and Lango by linguists but known locally as Lwo. At least 12 Bantu languages are spoken in the southern portion of the country (Myers-Scotton, 1988). Language families also overlap geographically in complex ways, so that, for example, there are



languages from three groups in the northwest corner: Madi and Lugbara from Nilo-Saharan, Kakwa from eastern Nilotic and Alur from Western Nilotic.

In terms of numbers of codes, Ladefoged *et al.*'s (1972) study on languages in Uganda includes a map with more than 60 languages and dialects. Figure 1 includes what Criper and Ladefoged (1971) identified as the principal languages of Uganda. Table 1 contains the relative percentages of speakers of these languages in Uganda's population (Criper & Ladefoged, 1971: 148), which is currently at 20 million. As shown in the table, none of these languages is spoken by a majority of Ugandans. In fact, until recently, the largest group of speakers constituted just 16% of the country's population; these are speakers of Luganda. The status of Luganda as the language spoken by the largest group in Uganda has been challenged in the 1990s by the emergence of Runyakitara, a language based on a combination of the Western Uganda interlacustrine codes of Runyankore, Runyoro, Rutoro and Rukiga. Speakers of these four languages together constitute more than 20% of Uganda's population.

**Table 1** Population figures for major languages spoken in Uganda

<b>Bantu (64%)</b>	
RUNYANKORE	8.1
RUKIGA	7.1
RUNYARUANDA	5.9
RUTOORO	3.3
RUNYORO	2.9
RURUNDI	2.0
RUKONJO	1.7
RWAMBA	0.5
LUGANDA	16.3
LUSOGA	7.8
LUMASAMBA	5.1
LUGWERE	1.7
LUNYOLE	1.4
LUSAMIA/LUGWE	1.3
<b>Western Nilotic (15%)</b>	
LANGO	5.6
ACHOLI	4.4
ALUR	1.9
DHOPADHOLA	1.6
KUMAM	1.0
<b>Eastern Nilotic (11%)</b>	
Ateso	8.1
Ngakarimojong	2.0
Kakwa	0.6
Sebei	0.6
<b>Central Sudanic/Nilo-Saharan (5%)</b>	
Lugbara	3.7
Madi	1.2

Source: Criper and Ladefoged, 1971: 148.

I became interested in this topic while doing sociolinguistic field work in Kampala in 1995. At the Makerere University guest house, I met a number of external examiners, including Reverend Father Bonaventure Kasaija of Fort Portal in western Uganda. Kasaija was examining students in a language that was not mentioned in any of the materials I had read in preparation for linguistic work in Uganda — the ‘Runyakitara’ language. I began the research on this language by interviewing individuals at the university and continued by consulting a variety of written materials, including sources from anthropology and history as well as linguistics.

### **Historical Perspectives: The Kitara Kingdom**

In fact, history is the place to discover the origin of the term ‘Runyakitara’. ‘Kitara’ was the name of a large empire which thrived in the lacustrine region from the fifteenth century onwards. According to Figure 2, from a history of the area by Nyakatura (1973: 21), Kitara actually spread far beyond the current area claimed by Runyakitara speakers. Steinhart (1978: 2) describes the empire as ‘the oldest, largest and grandest of them all’. Ndebesa (1994: iii) writes:

Kitara Empire at its zenith is said to have included most of central and western Uganda, some parts of north-western Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, some parts of eastern Zaire and a small portion of Kenya along the shores of Lake Victoria.

The empire declined over time as a result of dynastic rivalries and wars of succession (Apuuli, 1994; Kiwanuka, 1968). By the nineteenth century the reduced Kitara kingdom was known as Bunyoro, a term that actually originated in Buganda (Byakutaaga, 1990; Ndoleriire, 1990). The arrival of the British accelerated the decline of the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom. Because the Bunyoro resisted colonialism, the British systematically dismembered what was left of the kingdom, parcelling out the territory and deposing the leadership (Beattie, 1960; Kiwanuka, 1968). In contrast to the Bunyoro, the Baganda were perceived by the British as receptive to colonisation. The Baganda, fearing invasion from the Sudan, saw the British as the lesser of two evils at the time of colonisation. In the end, the ruler of the Baganda was also deposed by the British, but the Baganda people did not fare as badly as those in western Uganda. Not only did Luganda receive key western counties, but the Baganda were also put in administrative roles throughout the country. The first mission schools were established in Buganda, so speakers of Luganda had a head start in Western-style education (Richards 1969: 44).

### **Western Bantu Varieties in the Colonial Period**

At the beginning of the colonial era, Runyoro was recognised as one of the many secondary indigenous languages of Uganda, with the dialect spoken in Mwenge recognised as the standard for western Uganda. However, seeds of separation had been sown when the missionaries committed the dialects in the region to different orthographies. The Christian Missionary Society developed the written versions of Runyoro, publishing a Bible in the language in 1913. The White Fathers Catholic mission developed the orthographies for Runyankore



and Rukiga. For example, in the Runyoro Bible, long vowels and consonants were indicated by diacritics while, in Runyankore, double letters were used (Bamgbose, 1991; Rugongoya, 1994).

The creation of separate orthographies for mutually intelligible language varieties was a common practice of competing missionary groups (Chimhundu, 1992; Fourie, 1997). Van den Bersselaar (1997: 273) notes an inadvertent consequence of this practice:

Nowadays it is generally accepted that missionaries helped to shape and create not only the 'modern' Africa societies of today but also the 'traditional' ones of yesterday. Research into the history of ethnicity in Africa has suggested that missionaries contributed to the creation of ethnic groups and languages even when they were only trying to describe ethnic groups and reduce their existing vernaculars into written languages.

Once the competing orthographies for the western Uganda varieties had been established, it became difficult to later reconsolidate them. Attempts to establish a standard orthography, begun at the Virika Conference in 1946 in Fort Portal, actually led to strong agitation by representatives of Nkore and Kigezi to split off their languages. Ndoleriire (1990: 38) reports speakers were afraid 'the new orthography would bring about the death of their language' and the written materials in it. In 1952 and 1954, spellings were established for Runyankore and Rukiga on the one hand and Runyoro and Rutooro on the other. The hyphenated name Runyoro-Rutooro came about when speakers from Tooro pointed out that the standard dialect of Runyoro came from their area. Thus, Figure 1 from the work of Ladefoged *et al.*, (1972) indicates four separate languages in Western Uganda. From north to south, they are Runyoro, Rutooro, Runyankore and Rukiga.

### Establishing a New Language

While the first half of the twentieth century saw more and more splintering of the western Uganda Bantu varieties, after Independence the pendulum started swinging toward merger rather than separation. Kalema (interviewee) reports that Runyankore scholars Pio Zirimu and Benedicto Mubangizi were among the advocates for reconsolidation. Their support was particularly crucial, because speakers of Runyankore were the least enthusiastic about the merger (Kasajja: interviewee).

In the 1990s the movement to amalgamate the western Ugandan languages inspired two conferences at Makerere University. At the first in 1990, supporters gathered to push for the teaching of the western Ugandan languages at the university level. One of the key decisions was what to call the unified language. The planners rejected the name Runyoro, which has double negative connotations. First, the name originated externally from Buganda and, second, it was the name of one of the four languages, which needed to be perceived as contributing equally to the new language. Some of the names suggested included Runyabantu, Rucwezi (recalling one of the earlier kingdoms), Rugweizooba ('where the sun sets' in the west) and Runyotonkoki — a mixture of Nyoro, Tooro, Nkore and Kiga (Gumashabe: interviewee). It is not surprising that the scholars chose

Runyakitara — a name which recalls the earlier unity of the western region as well as the earlier political dominance of the people living there at the time.

At the second conference in October 1994, the name Runyakitara was permanently adopted. By 1995, there were five lecturers and one teaching assistant working in Runyakitara, which can be one of two major subjects for students focusing on languages at the university. This number balanced well against the five instructors of Luganda at Makerere. Besides Swahili, Runyakitara and Luganda are the only two non-western languages treated at the university level. Also in 1995 the Runyakitara Association of Uganda was established with the aim of promoting 'the use of the Runyakitara language ...'. The articles of the constitution for this group concentrate on efforts to standardise the language and develop its use in written contexts. These efforts include unifying the spelling, encouraging its use in journalism and literature, and facilitating the translation of scholarly works from other languages into Runyakitara (Constitution, 1995).

### The Four Rs: One Language or Four?

It is clear that over the first half of the century, the language known as Runyoro was involved in a four-way split, dividing into Runyoro, Rutooro, Runyankore and Rukiga. In the 1990s, the move has been to reconsolidate the four languages into one. What is the linguistic evidence for characterising these varieties as languages or dialects? As Mansour (1993: 73) reminds us, during the colonial period '... the criteria used to label languages and group people into ethnic or "tribal" groups were undefined and often questionable'. Looking at more recent Bantu classifications, Heine (1973) includes Nyoro/Nkore as a member of the Interlacustrine group which also features Ganda, Luhya, Gusii, Rwanda/Rundi and Konjo. Nurse and Philippson's (1980) Interlacustrine group has a Rutara group which includes Nyoro, Toro, Nkore, Kiga, Naymbo, Haya, Zinza and Kererwe.

There are statements by linguists which support both points of view regarding the language versus dialect issue. According to Morris and Kirwan, writing in 1957 (p. xi):

Runyankore and its neighbouring and very similar tongue, Rukiga, are often dismissed as dialects of Runyoro, differing from that language merely in certain aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary and idiom. In fact, the difference between the language spoken in Toro and Bunyoro and that spoken in Ankole and Kigezi is considerable and covers not only the pronunciation of certain letters and combinations of letters of the alphabet, but also a wide vocabulary which is used exclusively in the two southern districts and considerable differences in grammar.

In contrast, Ladefoged *et al.*, who conducted mutual intelligibility studies of the languages in Uganda in 1972, pointed out the similarity of these western Bantu varieties, writing, 'It is even possible to regard all these four languages as a single unit ...' (1972: 17). They note that Radio Uganda did not distinguish between the languages in its programming, including discussions 'in which speakers of Runyankore, Rukiga, Rutooro and Runyoro talk to one another each using his own language' (1972: 21). This policy has not changed. July 1997

Kampala newspapers note one set of radio programmes for western Uganda and these are listed as being broadcast in the 4 Rs. In August 1996, Voice of Tooro, a new private radio station, was to be established. The spokesman for the station reported that 'We shall transmit in Rutooro, Runyankole, Rukiga, Runyoro and Rwamba to cater for the people living in the mountains'. (*New Vision*, 6 July, p. 30) While the spokesman did not use the term 'Runyakitara', the implication is certainly that speakers of the languages listed will understand each other.

Clearly, it is necessary to look beyond linguistic criteria for an explanation of the split and then reunification of western Ugandan Bantu varieties. According to Tengan (1994: 129), such a fluctuation is not at all unusual in the African context.

A major characteristic of the African cultural system is its open structure which allow adaptations of incoming cultural elements and which sometimes lead to the development of totally new language and cultural elements within the system ... languages are often perceived to be in constant relationships and interactions leading to language transformations, mixtures and changes as the different languages themselves move within time and space.

To grasp the origins of the Runyakitara language transformation, let us place Runyakitara within the context of the current language situation in Uganda. For that discussion, two languages need to be added into the equation.

### International and Regional Lingua Francas in Uganda

As Fardon and Furniss (1994) point out, maps focusing on ethnicity obscure the linguistic complexity and multilingualism in post colonial settings. English and Swahili, two languages which have been historically important in Uganda, do not even show up on the maps. English came to Uganda first with British missionaries in 1877 and then with the British government in 1894 (Criper & Ladefoged, 1971). English has been retained as the sole official language since Independence in 1962. Uganda is not alone in choosing its exolect as the only official language; Brann (1985) lists 30 African nations which have similar policies. English offers a number of disadvantages, the most troublesome for many being that it represents an alien culture. However, on the plus side, English provides cultural neutrality, high prestige, ready-made educational materials and a vehicle for international communication.

Swahili has been an important language in Uganda since the nineteenth century, serving as official language for the entire country from 1900 to 1912, and as official lingua franca for the military up to this time. While English is the language of wider communication on the international level, Swahili is the key lingua franca at the regional level, as it is spoken widely in Uganda's neighbour countries Tanzania, Kenya and Zaire. Mukama (1987, 1990, 1991) has argued persuasively the benefits of promoting Swahili as a national language in Uganda. Swahili would facilitate communication of Ugandans in their country and region. Myers-Scotton's (1972) study in Kampala showed that Swahili was the Ugandan lingua franca with the largest number of speakers. As a Bantu language, Swahili



is more quickly and easily mastered by Bantu speakers than English. It is also a neutral language which could further national unity.

However, as Myers-Scotton (1988) notes, many Ugandans hold negative attitudes toward Swahili. The negative attitudes originated in the early days of colonialism when Christian missionaries associated Swahili with Islam and worked to minimise its role in Uganda. Speakers of Luganda wanted to retain the special status of their language within Uganda and so discouraged the development of Swahili. The Baganda also feared that if Swahili became prominent in Uganda, European settlers might be encouraged to come into the country, as they had in Kenya.

Although Swahili is still tested at O-levels and taught at the university, it has actually been banned from instruction in primary and secondary schools since 1952. Therefore, many Ugandans view Swahili as a second-class language because it is learned informally rather than at school. Despite the fact that people at all socioeconomic levels use Swahili for interethnic communication, the language has become associated with uneducated people in low-status jobs. As the official language of the army and police, Swahili also has negative associations with recent times of unrest.

### **The Special Status of Luganda**

One of the main reasons that Swahili is seen as less important in Uganda than in other East African countries is that the indigenous language Luganda has fulfilled many of the functions that Swahili performs in other East African states. In fact, Mukama (1991: 334) argues that in Uganda:

The crux of the language issue is still the problem of the position of Luganda vis-a-vis the other indigenous languages on the one hand, and Luganda vis-a-vis Swahili on the other ... Language policy will ... have to address the problem of the interrelationship between Luganda and other indigenous languages, Luganda and Swahili, or even between Luganda and English.

The special relationship which the British established with Buganda during colonial times was particularly irksome to western Ugandans. Buganda received key western counties, the Lost Counties which included those with the tombs of Bunyoro royalty. Luganda was used as the language of administration and education during the colonial period. By the 1930s, Luganda was widely known in the southern and central part of the protectorate, where it was learned as a second language by many who came to the region for work on cotton and coffee plantations (Heine, 1970). It was the dominant indigenous language on Radio Uganda.

### **Why has Runyakitara emerged in the 1990s?**

Even at Uganda's independence in 1962, the Kingdom of Buganda was given federal status and special privileges. As long as Buganda had special status in Uganda, there was little incentive for other ethnic groups to give up local autonomy to combine into larger units. The Baganda finally lost their special status in 1967; however, a period of political unrest ensued in which language

issues were far less important than those of people meeting basic needs. Only recently has there been sufficient political stability to allow for a reanalysis of language policy issues.

Western Bantu speakers have taken advantage of this period of stability to promote ethnic and linguistic unity. This promotion meets most of the conditions posited by Esman (1977) to explain the resurgence of an ethnic group. First, people in western Uganda have a group identity based on their shared history and linguistic code. Second, they have 'a set of grievances based on perceived political, economic, or cultural deprivations or discriminations within the overall system' (Esman, 1977: 388) In this case, the grievances are against the privileges the Buganda received during and after the colonial period. Further, they have expectations that change is possible, based on the decline in authority of those formerly in political power.

The recent efforts of western Bantu speakers to amalgamate and strengthen their linguistic codes represent what Paulston (1994: 92) characterises as 'language revitalization — imparting new vigour to a language still in limited or restricted use, most commonly by increased use through the expansion of domains'. Fardon and Furniss (1994) point out that the more domains in which a language functions, the stronger the language. Furthermore, stronger languages empower their speakers within the speech community. According to Webb (1994: 187):

Revalorizing a language ... means making it a desirable and effective tool for educational development, economic opportunity, political participation, social mobility, and cultural practice.

Runyakitara speakers are not the only group seeking an enhanced role for their language, at the expense of Luganda. In 1986 Busoga Language Societies were formed to push for the separation of Lusoga from Luganda, to enhance the status and use of the language (Mukama, 1990). Their efforts have resulted in separate representation on Radio Uganda. In fact, government radio schedules in 1995 included programming in 25 languages, up from seven at independence in 1969 and 14 in 1967 (Matovu, 1990). Other languages added to the roster include Rukonjo, Rwamba, Lugwere and Lusamia.

The language situation in Uganda illustrates how language revitalisation can be pursued by quite different strategies, depending on the historical context of the languages involved. The Runyakitara group have worked to challenge the claimed numerical supremacy of Luganda speakers by joining forces. If Runyakitara speakers overlook political boundaries and further embrace speakers of Ruhaya and Rukerewe of Tanzania and Ruhema in Zaire, their numbers will actually supersede those of Luganda speakers. In contrast, speakers of Lusoga and other codes previously included as dialects of Luganda have taken advantage of the loss of political power among the Buganda to separate themselves and thus establish their identities as distinct and independent voices in the speech community. Unification on the one hand and fragmentation on the other both emanate from a reaction against the Buganda.

## Current Language Policy in Uganda

These efforts at revitalising indigenous languages came at a time when Uganda was rethinking its official language policy at the national level. Abidi (1989: 47) articulates some of the frustrations with the policy of maintaining English as the sole official language:

In Uganda, we are passing through a stage where we read what others want us to read. The publishing industry is in ruins, printing facilities negligible, book trade in gloomy shape, yet writing talent in abundance — what a paradox. School children learn more about foreign countries than their own. They have no books in local languages. There is no institution working for the development of Uganda's local language publications. Schools have no priorities to teach local tradition and culture. In this situation, we are preparing our children to think in a foreign language.

Representatives to a new Constitutional Convention began deliberating in March 1994 and their sessions included many discussions of language policies which might alleviate the frustrations noted by Abidi. During the 14 months of the convention, several proposals were brought forth. One was to make Luganda a national language. Proponents argued that Luganda has a long history as an academic language, a literary language and as the language of government administration. They also argued the language is already known by many Ugandans. It is ironic that the very strengths of Luganda are seen as impediments by speakers of other languages. As Hoben noted in 1984 (4):

... since Independence, speakers of other languages in Uganda have adamantly opposed any consideration of [Luganda] as a possible national language — which might give the Baganda ethnic group a linguistic and therefore political or economic, edge, again.

With the recent moves to strengthen other indigenous languages, opposition to Luganda as a national language has been even more intense.

At several times during the convention, proposals were put forth to make Swahili a national language. Proponents argued that Swahili is the most appropriate language for interethnic communication within Uganda and the region. However, support for Swahili proved to be insubstantial. The last time the Swahili proposal was made, just a month before the Constitution was enacted, *New Vision* (2 August 1995, p. 8) reported that 'the CAS had left the question on whether Uganda should not have a national language open, following bitter disagreements during the consideration stage'.

In the end, the Constitution writers retained English as the sole official language of Uganda, but encouraged speakers to use whatever language they desired when addressing parliament. This had the effect of maintaining the strength of English while encouraging the use of Uganda's indigenous languages. Neither Luganda nor Swahili gained any official role in the new constitution, despite their long history as languages of wider communication within Uganda. Luganda and Swahili were rejected because neither language fulfils sufficient solidarity or power roles for the majority of Ugandans. Mansour (1994: 101)

writes of language: 'its ability to express and evoke solidarity and its power function are at the root of all ambivalent attitudes toward coexisting languages'.

In a country with so many ethnic groups in competition for limited resources, an ethnic group works to maintain its identity by maintaining its language and expanding its domain. By giving up the individual status of Runyoro, Rutooro, Runyankore and Rukiga, speakers of the new Runyakitara were able to expand the power function of their group, and at the same time recapture the ethnic solidarity and glory of the ancient kingdom of Kitara. Speakers from other ethnic groups in Uganda are also seen to be working hard to maintain and enhance indigenous languages. Viewed by these speakers as a co-indigenous language, Luganda certainly has no place in their language portfolio.

On the other hand, English has the status of power language in Uganda, with its reputation as an international language of education and wider communication. Educated Ugandans see English as part of their social identity as educated persons and citizens of the world. Myers-Scotton (1990: 25) has discussed the strategy of 'elite closure' by which those in power maintain their privileges by designating 'a linguistic variety known largely only by the elite as necessary for participation in situations which yield power'. It is the educated Ugandans who make the language policy decisions in Uganda. President Museveni gave the Presidential address on 5 June 1996 in English (*New Vision* pp. 4 and 20), and on 2 July, members of Uganda's 5th Parliament since independence took their oath of office in English. Indeed, according to the newly enacted Parliamentary Elections statute, it is a requirement that a candidate for Uganda's parliament has at least A-level education (*New Vision*, 10 June 1996, p. 4). This makes skill in English crucial for taking on political leadership in the country. In contrast, speakers of Swahili are a relatively powerless constituency. For most, Swahili is a second language with low status; it therefore serves neither the identity function nor the power function. We can predict that in the future, Swahili and Luganda will continue to be spoken by many, but receive no official role. Speakers of indigenous languages will continue to promote their languages, with success depending on the numbers and political power of the speakers.

### The Future of Runyakitara

It is likely that Runyakitara will continue to expand its domains, particularly those which will equalise its position with Luganda. According to Mukama (interviewee), the momentum to promote Runyakitara is still high, and if it continues, the language could become equal to, or even supersede, Luganda in its descriptive base and functional domains. Both languages have recently produced textbooks on science and social studies in response to the government's programme for universal primary education. Efforts to standardise the orthography of Runyakitara will continue at a conference planned in Kampala in 1998 (Byakutaaga: interviewee). Runyakitara has not yet become a language of wider communication, a role which Luganda and Swahili have claimed in Uganda since the colonial period. However, the status of Runyakitara as a language in the university and its use as the language of a new government paper *Orumuri* may be leading it in that direction. The language is also being used by institutionalised theatre groups which perform regularly in the National Theatre in Kampala.

It will be useful for future researchers on the development of Runyakitara to measure its strength and status by applying Allard and Landry's (1992) model for measuring ethnolinguistic vitality. In this model, the effects of social, socio-psychological and psychological variables are considered in determining individuals' beliefs about languages in their speech community. The analysis includes measuring the relative demographic, political, economic and cultural capital of each ethnolinguistic group. This model should prove useful in analysing attitudes and strengths of languages in very complex speech communities such as Uganda.

The promotion of Runyakitara has thus far come largely from the Makerere University community. Proponents of the language belong to the group that Fishman (1972) has termed 'protoélites' — highly educated people who serve as initial catalysts for language spread and development. Wardhaugh (1987: 51) notes that:

Protoélites, however, may not be at all representative of those for whom they claim to speak. They are likely to consist mainly of intellectuals who may have goals that are very different from the masses they strive to mobilise.

The ultimate future of Runyakitara in Uganda will depend on the judgement of western Ugandans regarding the value of consolidation. Will they perceive economic and social benefits from giving up their separate identities as Runyankore, Runyoro, Rutoro and Rukiga speakers? Will they be motivated to label themselves 'Runyakitara' speakers? Will there be a groundswell of requests to Radio Uganda, asking that programming be labelled 'Runyakitara' rather than the '4 Rs'. Eastman (1992: 95) writes:

I believe it is necessary to know what people think about a language in order to predict whether it will work as officials intend it to. Users of political, social and educational systems choose languages they value.

In Edwards' (1994: 120) discussion of language revival, he also emphasises the importance of the attitudes of the speakers, writing 'The will to revive a language rests, then, upon a desire to alter or reorientate group and individual identity'. In the end, it will be the resolve of western Ugandans to say 'I speak Runyakitara' which will determine the future of the 'new' language.

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## Interviewees

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- Reverend Father Bonaventure Kasajja, Chancery Office Virika, Fort Portal.
- Gilbert Gumashabe, Lecturer, Institute of Languages, Makerere University.
- John Kalema, Kampala.
- Ruth Mukama, Professor, Institute of Languages, Makerere University.