

SWAHILI e , ka , AND nge  
AS SIGNALS OF MEANINGS\*

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Swahili e , ka , and nge are hypothesized to be signals with meanings that deal with the degree of probability of an event taking place. All three forms grammatically assign a lack of certainty to the event. This is termed *questioning* the event. More specifically, e signals that although the event is questioned it is still relatively likely; nge signals questioned and relatively low likelihood; ka signals simply questioned and is neutral to higher or lower likelihood. Human inferential capacity allows a wide range of messages to be conveyed by the signaling of these unitary meanings in various contexts. Traditional analyses of these forms fail to distinguish between meaning and message and in so doing either (1) posit as meaning a part of the message range (as with ka ) or (2) categorize the messages into types and posit each type as a meaning (as with e and nge ). Limitations of traditional theory thus inhibit the postulation of the underlying unitary meaning necessary to explain the actual distribution of a form.

1. Introduction

The approach to language presented in this paper is based upon the posi-

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tion that the structure of human language is determined by its function as an instrument of communication. To view language as such a system supposes its basic units to be signals paired with meanings. Since the number of signal-meaning pairs in a language is perforce finite while the communicative potential of a language is unlimited, there must be some mediating apparatus that allows unlimited *messages* to be communicated by a finite number of *meanings*. This mediator between meaning and message is *inference*, i.e. the problem solving ability of human intelligence, in particular the ability to go beyond given information to draw plausible conclusions. A hearer will examine and integrate all available information, not only the meaning of a signal but also, very importantly, its linguistic and extralinguistic context, to arrive at what he infers is the message intended by the speaker in the signaling of that meaning.

The analytical goal of such an approach is to postulate unitary meanings for signals and to show how these meanings are appropriate to explain the actual distribution of the signals in a text, i.e. to show how *all* the messages conveyed by a signal are manifestations of a signal's unitary meaning.

Traditional procedure, too, has been to analyze forms in search of a unitary meaning. However, faced with the wide range of messages conveyed by a signal in a variety of contexts, the tendency has been to carve this range into conceptually different "uses". This usually has one of two alternative results. The first alternative is that each use is postulated as a meaning, resulting in an (often unstated) claim of homonymy. The second alternative is that the statistically most frequent use is postulated as the single meaning of a form, and data that would belie that postulation is ignored or suppressed.

It is because traditional approaches have no explicit recognition of the problem of how finite signals can communicate an unlimited number of messages that they lack the theoretical motive for the distinction between meaning and message. Only the message is accessible to a traditional analysis and thus its categorization of a form's semantic content is almost necessarily multiple. Such approaches make their goal the analysis of the message *after* it has been understood rather than *how* it is that the message *gets* understood. This is why in the field of semantics generally the tendency is to

deal with the problems of the philosopher as to the analysis of ideas, i.e. the messages, rather than the analysis of the structure of language, i.e. the meanings and their relations.

Traditional analyses of Swahili proceed as described above. Treatment of the final vowel e is an example of the first alternative just mentioned that of multiple meanings. The final vowel e is called the "subjunctive", a cover term for a list of "uses" to which e is put: second of two commands, purpose, polite commands, etc. Treatment of the marker ka is an example of the second alternative of ignoring all but the most frequent "use". Traditionally, ka is limited to the meaning "consecutive" in spite of abundant counterexamples. The weakness of these approaches is further shown by their complete inability to explain how ka and e in conjunction (traditionally "ka in the subjunctive") can convey the message "non-past action involving movement away from speaker".

This paper postulates new, unitary meanings for e and ka (as well as for nge , traditionally described by the cover term "conditional"). These meanings deal with the strength of a speaker's claim as to the probability of an event's taking place (the event being that named by the verb stem to which the e , ka or nge is attached). Let us look now at these newly hypothesized meanings and the nature of their interaction with context.

## 2. nge : LOW LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE

The marker nge<sup>1</sup> signals the meaning that the event with which it is associated (specified by the verb stem) has a relatively low likelihood or low probability of occurrence. This single meaning is exploited to convey different messages depending on the context in which the meaning is signaled, e.g.

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this paper we will consider nge and another "conditional" marker, ngali , to be synonymous, at least in relation to the other forms analyzed here. That is, both signal low probability relative to e , as discussed below in the text. Only nge will be mentioned. The difference between nge and ngali , transparently not one of time as is sometimes suggested, is the basis of a forthcoming paper.

- (1) TuNGEsoma sana, tuNGEfaulu mtihani kesho.  
 we-NGE-study hard we-NGE-succeed test tomorrow<sup>2</sup>  
 'If we were to study hard, we'd do well on the test tomorrow.'
- (2) TuNGEsoma sana, tuNGEfaulu mtihani jana.  
 we-NGE-study hard we-NGE-succeed test yesterday  
 'If we had studied hard, we would have done well on the test yesterday.'

(1) and (2) differ only in the words *kesho* 'tomorrow' and *jana* 'yesterday' which supply otherwise identical utterances with the respective contexts of future and past. It is human experience that we know more about the past than we do about the future. Here we see linguistic use made of this fact that the past is relatively known and the future relatively unknown.

The meaning LOW LIKELIHOOD in the context of the future, e.g. in (1), results in the message of a low probability of the event, a plausible inference given the general uncertainty of the future. On the other hand, a speaker *can* have certain knowledge of a past event. In (2) the speaker assesses a low probability of a past and therefore knowable event. Were the event actually to have occurred, such a low probability would not have been assessed by the speaker. The hearer's conclusion will be that the speaker is claiming that the event did not in fact take place, but had in the past a low probability of doing so. Let me expand on this.

The *actual* occurrence of an event is, in general, more salient than the *possible* occurrence of an event. Therefore, given the *choice* of reporting either an occurrence or a possible occurrence speakers will generally report the occurrence. When a *possible* occurrence is reported, we infer that the speaker did not have such a choice (because if he did, he would report the actual occurrence). In a future context, a speaker does not have this choice—he cannot report an actual occurrence—because of ignorance of things to come; in a past context the speaker hasn't the choice because he does have a knowledge of things past—he knows what did or didn't happen.

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<sup>2</sup>The literal translations are meant to illuminate the signal(s) under discussion and not to provide the reader with a course in Swahili morphology.

So the meaning LOW LIKELIHOOD in a future context results in the message that the speaker is claiming a low probability for the event that is yet to occur. LOW LIKELIHOOD in a past context results in the hearer concluding that the event did not occur but had in the past a possibility of doing so.

### 3. e : HIGH LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE

As nge signals a relatively LOW LIKELIHOOD, e , the traditional "subjunctive", signals a relatively HIGH LIKELIHOOD, a high probability of occurrence.

It should be made clear that the high probability of e is not a certainty, not a probability of "one". An occurrence which is grammatically assigned a lack of certainty we will call an occurrence which is *questioned*. Thus, e signals that an occurrence is questioned, but the likelihood of occurrence is still relatively high ( nge also signals that an occurrence is questioned but that the likelihood is low.)

As mentioned above, the traditional grammars of Swahili explain that there are various uses to which e is put, e.g. polite commands, purpose, and the second of two commands. I suggest that these "uses" are simply traditional categorizations of the wide range of messages that, depending on the context, may be inferred from the meaning of e , HIGH LIKELIHOOD. To be sure, these traditional uses are conceptually different, but linguistically there is no basis for distinguishing them. Philosophically they are distinguishable, but linguistically they are all plausible exploitations of a single meaning, HIGH LIKELIHOOD.

In a certain context, we find e in messages of "polite command":

(3) UnqojE  
you-wait-Ē

'Please wait/you should wait.'

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I therefore do not chop the final ə of a Bantu verb nor various verbal endings as the "applicative", "reciprocal", etc. for their separate presence might confuse the reader not thoroughly familiar with Swahili grammar, while those of course who are familiar with it do not need my assistance. The abbreviation "imv", of course, stands for "imperative"; traditional tense names are used, e.g. "future", "past", etc., for ease of presentation, although I do not necessarily claim that these are their meanings.

When a speaker gives a "command", what he does linguistically is to make a prediction about an action to be performed by someone else. The more certain the prediction, the stronger the command. The less certain the prediction, the weaker, or more polite the command. The element of "politeness" in (3) arises from the speaker's less-than-certain assessment of execution of an event to be performed by someone other than the speaker. In not claiming the certainty of the occurrence the speaker allows for some degree of volition on the part of the person who is to do the action (though the *high* likelihood assessed urges its completion). This lack of certainty "softens" the command by implying that the speaker has less than absolute control over the situation. Such an absolute control would be implied by the use of a form that does not call an occurrence into question, e.g.

(4) Utangoja.  
you-future-wait  
'You will wait.'

(5) Ngoja!  
wait(imv)  
'Wait!'

In different contexts, we find *e* in messages of "purpose", e.g.

(6) Atakuja dukani anunuE ndizi.  
he-future-come store-loc he-buy-E bananas  
'He will come to the store *so that he may buy* bananas.'

and as the second of two commands, e.g.

(7) Njoo u!E.  
Come (imv) you-eat-  
'Come *and eat*.'

In these contexts, *e* is always attached to a verb stem naming an event that takes place after some earlier event, and, to a greater or lesser degree, as a result of that earlier, first occurrence. The first occurrence is always the prerequisite for the second occurrence. The second occurrence is thus contingent upon the first. This strengthens the relationship between the two occurrences. Compare (6) and (7) above, in which the second

occurrence has been questioned, that is, grammatically assigned a lack of certainty, to (8) and (9) below, in which the second occurrence is not questioned.

- (8) Atakuja dukani. Atanunua ndizi.  
 he-future-come store-loc he-future-buy bananas  
 'He will come to the store. *He will buy* bananas.'
- (9) Njoo. Kula.  
 come(imv) eat (imv)  
 'Come! *Eat!*'

In (8) and (9) the second occurrences are not questioned and the effect, according to informants, is one of disjointedness, of more separate, more unrelated actions as compared to (6) and (7). In (6) the actor must go to the store before he can buy bananas and in (7) he must come before he can eat: these are related, closely connected actions, the second contingent upon the first. Because some condition must be fulfilled before the second occurrence may be executed, these contingent occurrences have a greater possibility of not taking place than they would have were they not contingent upon anything, as the events are in (8) and (9). A speaker shows this possibility of non-occurrence by questioning these related, second occurrences, grammatically assigning a lack of certainty and therefore dependence with the presence of e . However, this possibility of non-occurrence is not great, and so e , with the meaning "the occurrence is questioned but HIGHLY LIKELY", is appropriate.

This strategy of exploiting the meaning of e was traditionally categorized as either "purpose" or "the second of two commands" on the basis of whether the first occurrence was a command or non-command, though the linguistic strategy is the same regardless of the antecedent's identity.

#### 4. ka : OCCURRENCE QUESTIONED, NEUTRAL TO HIGH/LOW LIKELIHOOD

We have seen that nge signals that an occurrence is questioned and relatively LESS LIKELY, e that an occurrence is questioned but relatively MORE LIKELY. Sometimes a speaker will not need to, or want to specify "more" or "less" likely. The morpheme ka signals simply that an occurrence is QUESTIONED, without specifying the relative likelihood. This

might be visualized by the following scheme:

(10)	ka:	}	e: HIGH LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE
	OCCURRENCE IS QUESTIONED, NEUTRAL TO HIGH/LOW LIKELIHOOD	}	nge: LOW LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE

The Swahili grammars only refer to  $ka^3$  as showing action consecutive to the time expressed in the preceding verb, e.g.

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<sup>3</sup>In the Standard Swahili spoken and written in the south of the Swahili speaking area there is a homonymous form, which I will call "southern" *ka*, as opposed to the *ka* discussed in the text, found throughout the Swahili speaking area, which I will contrastively call "general" *ka*. Southern *ka* by itself occupies the two morphological slots often referred to as the "subject prefix" and "tense marker" slots (as does the "tense" *hu*) and is only used for third person singular subjects, e.g. ( *yeye* ) *kafika* 'he arrived' (from *fika* 'arrive') but ( *mimi* ) \**kafika* 'I arrived'. So synchronically, southern *ka* may thus be viewed as a portmanteau signaling "past time" and "third person singular subject". (Elicitation and textual analysis strongly suggest that southern *ka* further signals that the action of the lexical verb to which it is attached should be viewed as one of special importance or higher relevance within the discourse.) I surmise that the origins of southern *ka* are to be sought in the Vumba and Mtang'ata dialects of Swahili, spoken around the Kenya-Tanzania border at the coast, for which Lambert [1957] and Whiteley [1956] report that the past tense is signaled by the following, which we will here call "non-standard past tense morphology": (1) "vowel harmony" (complete assimilation of the final vowel to the stem-final vowel, though with regular exceptions); (2) absence of "tense marker"; and (3) a particular set of "subject prefixes" the third person singular being *ka*. In other words, the third person singular past in these dialects is, save for vowel harmony, morphologically the same as southern *ka*, e.g. Vumba *kafiki* 'he arrived' (and the vowel harmony is sometimes not in evidence, e.g. with passives). Whiteley [1958] reports that Pemba dialects also show this *ka* prefix in the past (though in most dialects with an overt tense marker and no vowel harmony). This non-standard past tense morphology is not documented north of Wasini Island (located in the extreme south of Kenya), and my own research on the Tikuu (also known as Bajuni or Gunya) and Amu dialects in the north of Kenya shows no evidence of its presence. Benji Wald [personal communication] informs me that neither is it in evidence in Mombasa Swahili. And indeed, the Standard Swahili spoken in these more northern areas shows only "general" *ka*, with no utilization or even comprehension of southern *ka*. That is to say, southern *ka* is in evidence only in the Standard Swahili spoken in the south, an area where local dialects show the non-standard past tense morphology, and not in the north, where the local dialects do not.

- (11) Nilikwenda sokoni, niKANunua ndizi sita, niKAla tatu,  
I-past-go market-loc I-KA-buy bananas six I-KA-eat three  
niKampa mwenzangu tatu.  
I-KA-him-give companion-mine three

'I went to market *and bought* six bananas, *ate* three, *and gave* my companion three.'

This very common exploitation of the meaning of *ka* will be discussed shortly. First, let us examine a body of data in which *ka* does not denote consecutive action at all.

The following three examples (taken from modern Kenyan and Tanzanian plays) are of non-consecutive action, past and non-past, questioned by the presence of *ka*.

- (12) Two thieves have robbed a man. In the course of the robbery, one kills a policeman. The accomplice says to the killer:  
Wewe mjinga sana kwa sababu gani uKAmwua yule askari? (NL:19)  
for reason what you-KA-him-kill that policeman

'You're a fool. Why *should you have killed* that policeman?'

- (13) A mother has thrown her daughter out of the house. A friend of the daughter comes to see the mother:

Friend: Mie ameniambia kama mmemfukuza alipo kuja kwangu kulala.

Mother: Amfukuze nani? Kuna mzee aKAmfukuza mtoto  
there-is parent she-KA-throw-out child

wake? (WU:22)  
hers

Friend: She told me that you had thrown her out when she came to my place to sleep.

Mother: Who threw her out? Is there a parent *who would throw out* her own child?

- (14) A man is speaking to himself after having killed, in a ritual game, a demon-man who laughed as he died. 'Did he want me to kill him?' he asks himself. 'Why did he laugh?' Then he says:

Alikuwa anacheka huku anakufa! Kuna mtu aKAcheka huku  
there-is man he-KA-laugh time

anakufa? Alijua, sio alijua, aliamini kama hafi. (MT:8)  
he-present-die

'He was laughing as he died! Is there a man *who would laugh* as he died? He knew, no, not he knew, he believed he wasn't dying.'

Examination of the texts shows that the above events with *ka* ('kill', 'throw out' and 'laugh') have indeed occurred and further that their occurrence was considered by the speaker to be bizarre, quite contrary to normal expectations. In tests substituting *ka* in the above sentences with *li*, the non-questioned past tense, informants stress the effect *ka* has upon the message as one of surprise and incredulity, e.g. various possible translations of (12) suggested by informants were 'what the hell did you kill that policeman for?', 'what really drove you to do such a crazy thing?'. Even though it is known to the speaker (and hearer) that the event has indeed taken place, the speaker, by using *ka*, is acting as if there was some question as to whether the event occurred. He does this to suggest that the event might well not, indeed should not, have occurred and to express surprise that in fact it has.

In these instances it is *ka*, as opposed to *nge* or *e*, that is appropriate to show questioning, for *ka* is neutral to and does therefore not necessarily signal either high or low probability. *nge* is inappropriate because, as we have discussed, its low probability in a past context would almost certainly imply to the hearer that the event had not occurred. Also inappropriate is *e* because its high probability meaning would not express the show of uncertainty suggested by *ka*.

The following example of *ka* showing questioning is taken from Tanzanian President Nyerere's tract on socialism. Notice which events are questioned by *ka*, which, that is, the speaker is making a weaker claim that it will occur than if the *ka* were not present.

- (15) Maskini wanaweza kuwa na roho za kibepari --- wanyonyaji wa binadamu  
wenzake. Vile vile, tajiri anaweza aKAwa na roho ya  
same manner rich he-present-can he-KA-be with spirit of  
Ujamaa; anaweza aKAthamini mali yake kwa sababu tu  
socialism he-present-can he-KA-value wealth his for reason only  
inaweza kutumiwa kuwasaidia binadamu wenzake...  
it-present-can to-be-use-ps to-them-help human companions his  
Nimesema kuwa tajiri anaweza aKAwa mpenda Ujamaa.  
I-perfective-say to-be rich he-present he-KA-be adherent socialism  
Lakini kumpata tajiri mpenda Ujamaa ni shida sana. Kwa kweli uta-  
jiri na Ujamaa hupingana.

'Poor men can have the souls of capitalists --- parasites on their fellow men. Likewise, a rich man can *have* a socialist spirit; he can *value* his wealth only because it can be used to help his fellow man... I have said that a rich man can *be* one who embraces socialism. But finding a rich man who loves socialism is quite unlikely. In truth wealth and socialism do not get along.'

Dr. Nyerere stresses the less-than-certain, i.e. "questioned" nature of the proposition that a rich man could be the soul of socialist wealth sharing. He states in so many words that it is unlikely and marks by *ka* as questioned occurrences that a rich man could *have* a socialist spirit, *value* his wealth only to help others, *be* one who embraces socialism. Notice in the opening sentence that Dr. Nyerere does not similarly question the proposition that poor men can be capitalists at heart and covet the wealth of others.

Another exploitation of *ka* 's meaning, OCCURRENCE IS QUESTIONED, also unnoticed by grammarians, is exemplified by the following:

- (16) A wife has found her husband seducing another woman. She cries as the scene fades. The next act of the play opens with the husband and wife having sat together for some time without speaking. The husband paces nervously, the wife is dejected, lost in her own thoughts. The wife clears her throat.  
 Husband: (quickly) 'Yes?' Wife: 'I didn't say anything.'  
 Husband: 'I thought you said something.' Silence.  
 The wife stares fixedly, calls her husband's name.  
 Husband: (slowly) 'Yes?' The wife says:

Wife: Naona... mimi naona (pole pole)... ingalikua  
 I-present-feel I I-present-feel slow slow it-ngali-be  
 bora uKAniacha.  
 better you-KA-me-leave

Husband: (Anageuka haraka) NikuachE?  
 he-present-turn quick I-you-leave-E

Wife: Ndio, uniachE (WU:39)  
 yes you-me-leave-E

Wife: I feel...I feel (spoken slowly)... it might be better *if you were to leave me*.

Husband: (turns quickly) *I should leave you?*

Wife: Yes, *you should leave me*.

The speaker (the wife) is making what amounts to a prediction about an

action to be performed by another (her husband) and the situation is therefore a command context exactly parallel to examples (3)-(5) discussed above in the section on *e* as polite command. Remember that a prediction of someone else's actions that is questioned though HIGHLY LIKELY (that is, with *e*) is more deferential than a non-questioned prediction because in not claiming the surety of the occurrence one allows for volition and situational control on the part of the person who will perform the action. (Yet the *high* likelihood assessed urges the execution of the event.) The wife's use of *ka* in (16) shows even more deference.

The wife begins, approaching the situation as tentatively as possible ('It might be better'<sup>4</sup>), followed by *ka*, the signal for QUESTIONED, on the action that she is gently urging her husband to do ('if you were to leave me'—notice in the Swahili there is no lexical 'if' or 'were'; these are glosses of *ka*'s contribution to the message). Elicitation from informants suggests that *ka* is appropriate here, and *nge* and *e* are not, because *nge* would result in a claimed probability too low to allow interpretation as "urging" or even "suggesting" while *e* would signal so high a probability as to preclude the tentativeness with which the wife broaches this extremely delicate subject. Notice how once the subject *has* been broached and the husband, in his surprise asks with *e*, the high probability form, if she is saying 'I should leave you?', the wife then responds with *e*, as if saying, now that it's out in the open, 'yes, you should leave me'.

Let us now return to those instances of *ka* that are discussed by the grammars, exemplified by (11), repeated here:

- (11) Nilikwenda sokoni, niKANunua ndizi sita, niKAla tatu,  
 I-past-go market-loc I-KA-buy bananas six I-KA-eat three  
niKAmpa mwenzangu tatu.  
 I-KA-him-give companion-mine three

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<sup>4</sup>As stated in fn. 1, both *ngali* (found in the example under discussion) as well as *nge* signal low probability relative to *e*'s high probability. We may note then that example (16) shows a clear, step-by-step correlation of signaled degrees of probability to the deference-tentativeness found in the message: *ngali* (low probability, high deference), *ka* (neutral to high/low probability, therefore appropriate for what might be called relatively "mid" deference), *e* (high probability, less deference-tentativeness).

'I went to market *and* bought six bananas, ate three, *and* gave my companion three.'

In contexts such as these, the action of the verb with *ka* is always in some way dependent upon another occurrence and will not take place if the other does not. In (11) we may view 'going to market' as a necessary prior condition to the 'buying of six bananas' which is in turn a necessary prior condition to 'eating three', and so on. The action of the verb with *ka* is thus a result of another, prerequisite action. This is the same kind of relationship discussed in regard to *e* in examples (6) and (7), in which the messages inferred from the questioning of a second occurrence, and thus claiming a contingency relation, were "purpose" and the "second of two commands". Here also, the speaker questions the action of the verb by including *ka*, i.e. grammatically assigning the action a lack of certainty. In these instances the lack of certainty about the action of the verb with *ka* is only to the extent that the action is contingent upon a previous occurrence and will not take place if that one does not. However, in this past context the hearer can infer that the prerequisite action has indeed been performed ('I went to market') and that the action of the verb with *ka*, contingent upon it, also has. So the speaker does not intend a message that leaves the occurrence of the verb with *ka* in doubt but rather, by suggesting that the occurrence was contingent upon another event, known to have occurred, he shows that the actions were related, conjoined events. Compare (11) above, in which the buying and eating are grammatically questioned and therefore contingent events, with (11') below, in which these actions are not grammatically questioned.

(11') Ni||kwenda sokoni. Ni||inunua ndizi sita. Ni||ikula tatu,  
 I-past-go market-loc I-past-buy bananas six I-past-eat three  
 Ni||impa mwenzangu tatu.  
 I-past-him-give companion-mine three.

'I went to market. I bought six bananas. I ate three. I gave my companion three.'

In (11') the buying, eating and giving are not grammatically questioned as they are in (11) and are perceived by informants as more separate, unrelated events.

This effect of contingency and a therefore closer feeling of relation comes from the fact that some condition must be fulfilled before the action of the verb with *ka* may occur (not the case in (11')). Because some condition must first be fulfilled, the contingent occurrence has a greater possibility of not taking place than if it were not contingent upon anything (as are the events in (11')). This possibility of non-occurrence is signaled by the presence of *ka*. However, as noted before, the hearer infers that the prior condition has indeed been met, and that the action of the verb with *ka*, contingent upon it, also has actually occurred.

It is this exploitation of the meaning of *ka* that led to the traditional definition of *ka* as the "consecutive tense". Yet even with *this* exploitation of *ka* any consecutiveness is simply a consequence of the contingency relationship being claimed and not part of *ka*'s constant meaning. There is certainly no consecutiveness in the previously discussed examples (12)-(16).

5. ka-e : LOWER LIKELIHOOD THAN e ALONE.

The morphemes *ka* (OCCURRENCE QUESTIONED) and *e* (OCCURRENCE QUESTIONED but HIGHLY LIKELY) may co-occur on the same verb stem. The semantic effect of such co-occurrence appears to be additive, the event being named by the verb being questioned twice. Thus, we may view the situation as being in effect a questioning of *e*, a lowering of the likelihood that would be assessed were only *e* present on the verb. We might visualize this by adding *ka-e* to the scheme presented before in (10):

- (17)
- |                                |   |                                    |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| ka:                            | } | e : HIGH LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE  |
| OCCURRENCE IS QUESTIONED,      |   | ka-e : LOWER LIKELIHOOD THAN       |
| NEUTRAL TO HIGH/LOW LIKELIHOOD |   | e ALONE                            |
|                                |   | nge : LOW LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE |

We find this combination of *ka* and *e* (*ka-e*) in contexts which we can characterize (for second and third person actors) as involving movement away from the speaker. The combination *ka-e* contrasts with *e* alone for in comparable situations we normally find *e* attached to verbs whose execution requires either no movement relative to the speaker or movement toward the speaker. Compare the following:

- (18) Atakwenda dukani aKAnunuE ndizi. ( ka-e : movement away)  
 he-future-go store-loc he-KA-buy bananas  
 'He will go to the store to buy bananas.'
- (19) Atakuja dukani anunuE ndizi. ( e alone: movement towards)  
 he-future-come store-loc he-buy-E bananas  
 'He will come to the store to buy bananas.'
- (20) Nenda uKAIE. ( ka-e : movement away)  
 go (imv) you-KA-eat-E  
 'Go and eat.'
- (21) Njoo uIE. ( e alone: movement towards)  
 come (imv) you-eat-E  
 'Come and eat.'
- (22) Njoo uKAIE. ( ka-e : movement away)  
 come (imv) you-KA-eat-E  
 'Come, and then go eat.'
- (23) A match is on the floor between speaker and hearer:
- (a) Inama ukiokotE kibiriti. ( e alone: no movement)  
 bend down (imv) you-it-pick up-E match  
 'Bend down and pick up the match.'
- (b) \*Inama uKAKiokotE kibiriti. (\*ka-e : no movement)  
 bend down (imv) you-KA-it-pick up-E match  
 'Bend down and pick up the match.'

The above examples of e alone are of the type discussed in the section on e concerning "purpose" and the "second of two commands". The important point here is that they contrast with the ka-e examples in terms of movement relative to the speaker. ka-e signals more questioning than does e alone. In terms of different messages conveyed, the distinction is habitually "movement away from speaker" versus "no movement from speaker".

The degree of questioning of any event is going to be influenced by how much information the speaker can have about that event (remember the differences in message caused by the contexts 'past'—more known—versus 'future'—less known). A speaker will habitually claim, about an event to be performed by another, a greater certainty ( e alone) if he is in the

place where the action is to be performed (the case with an action involving no movement away from the speaker) and a lesser certainty (ka-e) if he is not in the place where the action is to be performed (the case with an action that involves movement away from the speaker).

A speaker may, however, claim the higher certainty about another's actions even though he is *not* in the place where the action is to be performed, i.e. the action will involve movement away from the speaker, yet despite his relatively less knowledgeable position he claims the higher degree of certainty (e alone) instead of the slightly lower degree (ka-e) often associated with such contexts, e.g.

- (24) Atakwenda dukani anunuE ndizi.  
 he-future-go store-loc he-buy-E bananas

'He will go to the store *so that he may buy/with the express purpose of buying* bananas.'

The effect on the message is a claim of 'strong purpose': when the actor goes to the store, the speaker claims, it is highly probable (e alone) that he will buy. This is very appropriate for situations where the speaker claims knowledge of the actor's strong intentions, strong enough to counter-balance the lack of knowledge of certainty that goes with the speaker's not being in the location where the event is to be performed.

So other things being equal, a speaker will claim a lower certainty (ka-e) from a less knowledgeable position (not in location of event) and a higher certainty (e alone) from a more knowledgeable position (in location of event). But if the speaker wants to show he has extra information that has a bearing on the probability of the event (an actor is more likely to do something if he strongly intends it than if he does not), he can claim the higher certainty (e alone) from an otherwise less knowledgeable position (not in location of event).

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has presented a new analysis of the Swahili forms e, ka, and nge, an analysis that recognizes the necessity for making a distinction between a form's *meaning*, i.e. its semantic constant, and the range of possible *messages* that a hearer can infer from the form's presence in var-

ious contexts.<sup>5</sup>

All instances of the occurrence of these forms in speech are seen to be the direct consequence of a form's constant meaning, and the appropriateness of its semantic contribution to the intended message as a whole. Thus we have an analysis that is more than just the listing of a form's uses, and further, that does not merely cite one of these uses as the semantic constant. Rather, it has been hypothesized that there is an invariant meaning attached to the form, through which we may come to an understanding of its varied uses.

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<sup>5</sup>This approach to linguistic analysis derives from the theoretical framework known as "form-content" grammar, an approach to the semantics of grammatical systems originally developed by Professor William Diver at Columbia University. For a general introduction to the theory, see Diver [1975: Introduction]; Garcia [1975: Ch. 2]. For a detailed application of the theory, cf. Garcia [1975]. Other studies of Swahili within this framework are Port [1972], Contini [1974, 1976, 1979], and Hawkinson [1979].

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