ED 116 469   FL 007 344

AUTHOR   Hawkinson, Annie K.
TITLE   Nominal Possession in Swahili: Its Role in
              Communication.
PUB DATE   Apr 75
NOTE   47p.; Paper presented at African Linguistics Meeting
              (5th, April 1975) and at the California Linguistics
              Association Meeting (May 1975); Not available in hard
              copy due to marginal legibility of original
              document

EDRS PRICE   MF-$0.76 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS   *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Context Clues;
              Descriptive Linguistics; Language Patterns; Language
              Research; Language Usage; Linguistic Theory;
              Morphology (Languages); *Nominals; *Semantics;
              Sentence Structure; *Swahili; Syntax

ABSTRACT
         This paper defines the grammatical role of a particle
in Swahili in terms of the semantic information which it contributes
to all utterances in which it occurs. The particle -A occurs in the
syntactic configuration Noun 1 -A Noun 2 and has been traditionally
described as reflecting relations of possession and attribution
between the two nouns in construct. By identifying the
meaning-carrying function of this particle in communication, it
becomes possible to understand how speakers are able to employ a
single linguistic form to convey a wide variety of messages. In
explaining these possibilities, context is crucial. A premise of the
paper is that the differences observed in the various contexts of -A
enable speakers to communicate different messages with the single
form. "Context" in this usage may be linguistic or non-linguistic.
According to differences in context, the meaning of -A is manipulated
to express what initially appears to be totally different
relationships between the two nouns linked by -A. However, it is
shown that the form has essentially one communicative value, meaning,
and that the different messages result from inferences on the part of
speakers and hearers alike about the precise nature of the message
conveyed by -A in a given context. (Author/CLK)

Nominal Possession in Swahili: Its Role in Communication

By Annie K. Hawkinson
University of California,
Berkeley

1.0 Introduction

In this paper we intend to examine how the particle -A in Swahili, traditionally described as a possessive or associative particle, is used in communication. The discussion will be aimed at identifying the semantic role which -A plays in Swahili grammar; that is, what meaningful information, if any, does -A convey in the communication of messages? Through such an analysis, we may come to understand how it is possible for users of the language to express a side variety of communicated messages with a single linguistic element.[1]

1.1 The data used in this inquiry was collected over a period of six months in Mombasa, Kenya; a town whose main population speaks Swahili as a first language.[2] As there are very few written works in this dialect, texts from more standardized varieties will be referred to as well. Given the impreciseness of the semantic information contributed by -A in communication, it is assumed that dialectal differences will not alter the nature of the central thesis to be presented here. Variations in contextual influences may indeed follow dialectal boundaries.

2.0 Traditional Analyses

In Swahili, the following syntactic configuration is frequently found: $NOUN_1$ Pronominal $Concord_1$--A $NOUN_2$. In traditional grammars, -A has usually been glossed 'of' in English translation. The descriptions of this particle to be presented in detail are those found in two major works on Swahili: <u>Swahili Language Handbook</u> by E.C. Polomé(1967) and <u>Swahili Grammar</u> by E.O. Ashton(1944).

2.1 Ashton describes the morphological form -A in terms of two basic usage types: Possessive (p.55) and the -A of Relationship (p.145). In the possessive construction, $NOUN_1$ is the possessed nominal and $NOUN_2$ is the possessor:

(1) Mtoto w--a mwanamke   Literal: 'Child of woman'
     Child / woman   Gloss: 'The/A woman's child'

In its use as the -A of Relationship several construction types are noted:

a. -A+NOUN: Examples given in the text show that the noun of this construction may represent a variety of features:

(i) a feature attributed to the noun to which it is attached(N_1):

(2) Mtoto w--a furaha   Literal: 'Child of Happiness'
     Child   happiness   Gloss: 'The/A happy child'

(ii) a measured quantity of N_1:

(3) Kikombe cha kahawa   Literal: 'Cup of coffee'
     Cup   coffee   Gloss: 'Cup containing coffee' OR 'The/A coffee cup'

(iii) a portion of N_1:

(4) Kipande ch--a mkate   Literal: 'Piece of bread'
     Piece   bread

(iv) the material which N_1 is made out of:

(5) Kiti ch--a mti   Literal: 'Chair of tree'
     Chair   tree   Gloss: 'The/A wooden chair'

(v) the direction which N_1 is aimed at:

(6) A-li-m-piga kofi l--a shavu. (p.145) Lit: 'Blow of cheek'
     He-pst-him-hit blow   cheek   Gl: 'He hit him a blow on the cheek'

(vi) information which N_1 concerns:

(7) Habari z--a serikali   Lit: 'News of government'
     News   government   Gl: 'News about the government' OR 'The government's news'/ 'News from the government'

b. -A+VERBAL INFINITIVE:

(8) Chakula ch--a ku-tosha   Lit: 'Food of to-suffice'
     Food   to-suffice   Gl: 'Sufficient food' OR
                                  'Food to suffice'

(9) Sindano y--a ku-shon-e-a   Lit: 'Needle of to-sew-with'
     Needle   to-sew-with   Gl: 'Sewing needle' OR 'The/A
                                  needle to sew with'

(10) Uzi w--a ku-uz-w-a   Lit: 'Thread of to-be-sold'
     Thread   to-sell-passive   Gl: 'Thread for selling'

c. -A+CARDINAL NUMBER:

(11) Nyumba y--a tano   Lit: 'House of five'
     House   five   Gl: 'Fifth house'

d. -A+ADVERB:

(12) Mashamba y--a mbali   Lit: 'Farms of distance'
     Farms   distance   Gl: 'Distant farms'

(13) Nyimbo z--a kizungu   Lit: 'Songs of foreign origin'
     Songs   foreign origin   Gl: 'Foreign songs'

(14) Njia z--a mji-ni   Lit: 'Roads of town-in'
                        Gl: 'Town roads' OR
                             'Roads in town' (Roads
                             which are in town)

2.2 Polomé describes -A as a 'connective particle' (p.132) and assigns to it the following uses:

a. Possession: As above (1)

b. Characterization: As (2)-(11)

c. With pronominal complements implying locative relations:

(15) Waalimu w--a pale   Lit: 'Teachers of that place'(p.134)
     Teachers   that place   Gl: 'Teachers of that region'

(16) Habari z--a kwetu   Lit: 'News of our place' (p.134)
     News   our place   Gl: 'Local news' OR 'News of/
                                     from home'

d. With invariable complements:

(17) Safari y--a mbali   Lit: 'Safari of distance' (cf.12)
                        Gl: 'Distant safari' OR 'Long safari'

2.3 The uses of -A extend further however:

(18) Ni-na zawadi y--a Hasan.   Lit: 'Gift of Hasan'
     I-have gift   Hasan   Gl: 'I have a gift for/to give
                                  to Hasan' OR
                                  'I have Hasan's gift'
                                  (already somehow in his
                                  possession but its with me)

(19) A-li-andika barua y--a Hasan.   Lit: 'Letter of Hasan'
     He-pst-write letter   Hasan   Gl: 'He wrote a letter to
                              give to/on behalf of Hasan.'

(20) Ni-li-pika chakula ch--a Hasan.   Lit: 'Food of Hasan'
      I-pst-cook food   Hasan   Gl: 'I cooked food for/
                                             on behalf of Hasan'

2.4 Ashton's and Polomé's accounts reveal that the problem
of understanding the role of -A in communication is more than
one involving the identification of a set of categories which
will accurately reflect all uses of -A. Apart from the fact
that the boundaries of their categories differ in some ways,
we can note that neither are able to deal with representing
constructions which can convey more than one meaning when
considered in isolation (indicated by OR glosses added by
present author). Further, (all) the uses in 2.3 have not been
mentioned by either grammar. It would seem then that the
only possible exhaustive categorization of -A uses would be
one which defined all contextual situations in which -A can
cccur, an infinite task. While 'benefactive' and 'dative'
meanings as noted in 2.3 might be included as possible 'use'
categories, we should note that the systems of categories
thusfar postulated do not provide for the following meaningful
distinctions:

(21) Maji y--a ku-nywa   Lit: 'Water of to-drink'
                            Gl: 'Water to drink' COMPARE

(22) Maji y--a ku-nyw-ia   Lit: 'Water of to-drink-with'
                            Gl: 'Drinking water' (water especially
                                  for drinking and not anything else;
                                  eg. sterilized drinking water)

The difference between (21) and (22) is that the water in
(21) is water which is being used for drinking but it may also
be used for anything else; the water is (22) is only for
drinking and has no other purpose. The 'purposeful' categori-
zations of Polomé and Ashton do not allow for such distinctions
in meaning.

2.5 Given the observed inadequacies of descriptions of -A
based upon categorical sets, the purpose of this paper is
to see whether the data may be better accounted for with
different analytical premises. However, in order to determine
this, it will be necessary to examine certain aspects of
Swahili grammar. Since language is a communicative system,
our analysis must attempt to define the role of -A within
context of that system.

3.0 The Swahili Verb

The verb in Swahili is composed of several agglutinative morphemes. Of interest here is the derivational suffix -i(l)i-, usually referred to as the 'prepositional' or 'applied' suffix. In addition, we will examine what has been traditionally called the 'subject' and 'object' concord markers in the verb.

3.1 The derivational system of verbal suffixes in Swahili provides information about participants in the event expressed by the verb; the type of information conveyed varies. The 'causative' and 'reciprocal' derivations signal that an additional agent in the event is present and that his role is one of 'causee' and 'co-principal agent' respectively. The information conveyed by the prepositional suffix is less clear and in the grammars the suffix is usually described in terms of a number of different meanings. Ashton's account is indicative of such approaches: (p.218) "This form gives a prepositional concept to the simple form of the verb." The functions she assigns to it are as follows:

(i) To express 'to do to, for, or on behalf of someone or to the detriment of such a one'

(23) Ni-li-mu-andik-i-a Hasan barua.
I-pst-him-write-Prep.Hasan letter
'I wrote the/a letter to give to Hasan' OR 'on his behalf.'

(24) Ni-li-m-pik-i-a Hasan chakula.
'I cooked food for Hasan' OR 'on his behalf.'

(ii) To express motion towards

(25) Ni-li-fik-i-a mji-ni.
I-pst-arrive-Prep.town-in
'I arrived in town.'

(iii) To express purpose

(26) Ni-pe sindano y--a ku-shon-e-a.
'Give me the/a sewing needle.' (9)

(iv) To express finality; also may be referred to as the emphatic use

(27) A-li-m-shika Hasan. 'He held Hasan.'

(28) A-li-m-shik-ili-a Hasan. 'He really held Hasan.'
He-pst-him-hold-prep.Hasan

In light of similarities in meaning which these 'uses'
reflect, Robert Port (1972) proposes a single meaning for the
prepositional[3]:   Some participant other than the principal
agent is involved in the occurrence of an event but the
nature of his role is not specified (compare with the
causative and reciprocal suffixes which do specify such
information).   The exact nature of the new participant's
role in the event is understood by speakers and hearers
with reference to the context of the construction, both
linguistic and pragmatic.   In (23) and (24), we see that
when the new participant is human, a benefactive or dative
meaning can be conveyed; if the participant is a location (25),
the activity becomes located in the direction or in the
place of that location.   At first, (28) seems to pose a
problem for the analysis since the new participant is human
and the conveyed meaning is not benefactive or dative.
However, by examining such constructions in actual use we
can see how the meaning of the prepositional is contextually
manipulated to convey meanings which involve the introduction
of additional participating agencies.   The following example
is taken from a conversation with a woman of approximately
75 years in Mombasa (Bimomo):

....Alikuwa mgonjwa sana.   'He was very sick.
Akashikiliwa, akapelekwa   He was really held and was taken
kwa tabibu...'   to the doctor.'

The construction which interests us here is 'A-ka-shik-ili-w-a',
which is the passive form of the emphatic use of the verb in
(28).   When Bimomo was asked what this expression meant,
she explained that the man was so sick that he had to have
two people hold him up, as opposed to one person in which
case she could have used the verb without the prepositional (27).

---

[3]MA Thesis, Columbia University.   I would like to thank Ellen
Contini Morava for her summary of Port's analysis since I have
not yet been able to obtain a copy of the actual text.   I take
full responsibility for the discussion to follow because I have
not the argumentation for his analysis.

When other speakers were asked about this construction
they said that it could mean that two people were holding
the sick man up (as opposed to only one) OR just that he
was so sick that he was difficult to hold (emphatic use).
What is central to these interpretations is that some
participant's presence is seen to be critically involved in
the event as it is being described; this additional agency
may be se sone other than the principal agent and the object
which he is acting upon, or it may be the object itself
-which is seen to have a more active role than might be
expected, eg. 'making the carrying out of the action difficult'.
This analysis helps us understand the 'detrimental' use of
the prepositional as observed by Ashton since we can now
see that the detrimental aspect is attributed to the interfer-
ence or reluctance of some participant to have the action occur:

(29)   A-ta-tu-harib-i-a   furaha yetu.   'He will ruin our
                                          happiness for us! (Ashton:
                                                        p.218)

Similarly, we may note that the suffix is used in reflexive
constructions:

(30)   Tu-ta-ji-jeng-e-a nyumba.   'We will build ourseves a house.'
                                          (Polomé: p.85)

Here, the participant for whom the action is being carried out
is co-referential with the agents who are doing the action.

3.2   In light of the above discussion, we would like to make
a terminological distinction between the 'conveyed meaning'
or 'use' of a linguistic element and its 'meaning'. The
former shall be referred to as the 'message' which is conveyed
by a linguistic element in a particular instance of its
occurrence. The 'meaning' which is postulated for that item,
grammatical or lexical, is a representation which attempts to
describe the semantic information which is contributed to
any utterance in which it occurs. The 'meaning' of a linguis-
tic element is an imprecise characterization; the context in
which the item is used allows more precise messages to be
conveyed by speakers and, conversely, to be inferred by
hearers. The distinction between the meaning and the message
pressed by   linguistic item is illustrated by Robert Kirsner

Sample Texts: From S. Chiraghdin, N.H. Zaidi, M. Kamal
Khan, O.Saidi   Kusoma   na Kufahamu Kiswahili
Kitabu Cha Nne;   Nairobi: Longman Kenya Ltd.

TABLE I: Topic: Books   (Introduction to text)
Sample: 200 words

Subject Marker	Human	Inanimate
Principal Agent:	6 (28.5 o/o)	5 (23.8 o/o)
Passive Object:	0	10 (47.6 o/o)

-A Linked Nominals: Human-- 2 (9.5 o/o)
Inanimate-- 19 (90.5 o/o)

TABLE II: Topic--The Swahili Language   (page 1)
Sample--220 words

Subject Marker	Human	Inanimate
Principal Agent:	4 (20 o/o)	5 (20.5 o/o)
Passive Object:	5 (20.5 o/o)	6 (30 o/o)

-A Linked Nominals: Human-- 4 (12.9 o/o)
Inanimate--- 27 (87.1 o/o)

TABLE III: Topic--The Swahili Calendar (page 17)
Sample--200 words

Subject Marker	Human	Inanimate
Principal Agent:	1 (12.5 o/o)	5 (62.5 o/o)
Passive Object:	1 (12.5 o/o)	1 (12.5 o/o)

-A Linked Nominals: Human-- 1 (4 o/o)
Inanimate-- 24 (96 o/o)

TABLE IV: Topic--The Education of an Old Man (page 7)
Sample--260 words

Subject Marker	Human	Inanimate
Principal Agent:	24 (52.1 o/o)	13 (28.3 o/o)
Passive Object:	5 (10.9 o/o)	4 (8.7 o/o)

-A Linked Nominals: Human-- 2 (15.4 o/o)
Inanimate-- 11 (84.6 o/o)

(1975) with reference to the following examples (p.5):
a. My dog brought me my slippers. Message inferred: in his mouth.
b. My wife brought me my slippers. Message: in her hand.

3.3 In traditional grammars the initial position of the
verbal complex in Swahili contains a 'subject marker'. The
notion of subject is never defined; typically, it is the
principal agent/actor:

(31) Watu   wa-na-zungumza   chumba-ni.   'People are conversing
      People they-pres-converse room-in   in the room.'

However, other information may be marked in this position:

(32) Chumbani ku-na-zungumza   watu.   'In the room there are
      Room-in there-pres-converse people   people conversing.'

In both instances the relations expressed about the activity
and the participants involved are the same: people are doing
the talking and they are located in the room. As a semantic
characterization of this verbal position, Robert Port (1972b)
proposes the meaning FOCUS or CENTER OF ATTENTION. It is of
interest to explore whether such a formulation is compatible
with facts about how the subject marker is actually used in
Swahili.

3.3.1 We may say that subject marking refers to the process
whereby speakers can direct attention to the participants
which they see to be important to the view of the event which
they wish to convey. In Swahili writing, items in focus are written
affixed to the verb since the verb never occurs without such
a marker; that they are obligatorily associated with any
verb is not surprising since the verb is the linguistic item
which expresses the action that the participant in focus is
seen to be participating in. If we examine texts then, we
can expect to find a correlation between 'what is talked about',
what is in the center of attention in a given text as a
whole, and what is marked in the subject slot. The textual
counts which will be referred to are given on Tables I-VI.
Although the present sample is small, it is assumed that
further validation will be consistent with the findings
described here. We can make the following observations about
the fact presented on the tables:

(i)   In texts about humans, the verbal subject marker
is almost always human.

(ii)   In texts about inanimate things, there are more
inanimate subjects than were found in texts about humans;
however, the overall number of inanimate subjects when
compared to the number of human subjects in these texts is
less skewed than observed in (i).

(iii) In fact, in texts about inanimate things there were
less conjugated verbs all together (verbs which carry subject
markers). Alternative syntactic devices are used; notably,
there are more -A noun constructs. This will be discussed
in 4.1.

3.1.2 We observe then that the expected correlation
between what is talked about (discourse focus) and what
is marked in the subject marker position on the verb (verbal
focus) is supported by data when the topic of discourse is
human. That this is not similarly the case in texts about
inanimate things suggests that another factor, in addition to
the attention usually afforded to the item in discourse focus,
is operative in the assignment of verbal focus in the Swahili
verb: whether or not the participants being talked about are
human. The fact that a participant is human carries
implications for his candidacy as verbal focus; if a
participant is human it is more likely that he will be
marked in verbal focus, regardless of his status in the
overall discourse, than if he in inanimate. It appears
that two strategies for evaluating the importance of parti-
cipants in events are active in the assignment of verbal
focus in Swahili: (a) Status as discourse focus; and (b)
Animacy. It has been suggested elsewhere (Givon: 1971;
Hawkinson and Hyman: 1974) that people tend to talk about
humans more than they talk about inanimate things. With
data from Shona, a language spoken in Zimbabwe which is
historically related to Swahili, show that a hierarchy of
'natural topic' which discriminates objects in the world
according to whether or not people tend to talk about them
more than others can be used to account for patterns of

grammatical usage. Specifically, they examine how hearers assign the grammatical roles of 'causee', 'benefactive', 'dative', and 'accusative' to participants in a sentence according to distinctions in the natural topicality of the participants involved. Their hierarchy ranks humans above inanimate objects and their data shows that humans are typically assigned more active roles in events, specifically those of 'causee', 'benefactive' and 'dative'. In terms of this kind of analysis we may re-formulate the strategy outlined in (b) above with reference to some notion of 'natural' or inherent topicality which things in the world are associated with regardless of their importance in any particular event and/or disocurse. 'Discourse focus' will refer to the status of participants with regard to their importance in any particular discourse situation; 'inherent topicality' will refer to their importance for speakers according to criteria independent of their discourse status. Here, we have seen animacy to be one such criteria. If humans are more inherently topical than inanimate objects, we can expect to find them more often in syntactic positions which signal that their occupants are in focus. This is indeed what we have found: texts about human place human participants in focus on the verb; texts about inanimate objects do place more inanimate partici- pants in focus but there is also a tendency to avoid using syntactic constructions which require marking focus at all. To the extent that general observations about human behavior may be admitted into the explanation of linguistic usage, we conclude that the data is coherent with an anlysis which assigns the meaning FOCUS to the subject marker position in the Swahili verb.

3.4 The above characterization of the subject marker allows us to propose a related communicative function for the object marker in Swahili. Port (1972b) suggests that this position be viewed as a secondary focus of attention, the position where a participant who is secondarily important to the event may be marked. In order to evaluate this proposal, we should again examine facts about the use of the object marker in Swahili. 12

3.4.1. We have noted in texts that humans are preferred
in subject position on the verb (3.1.2); it is now relevant
to note another skewing in Swahili usage which correlates
with distinctions in animacy. When an object to the verb
is human, the verb must carry an object marker referring
to that object[4]; if the object is inanimate, there is rarely
such an object marker. Further, if there is an object
marker with an inanimate object, a definite reference results:

(33) +Ni-li-ona mtu.   'I saw the/a person.'
(34) Ni-li-mu-ona mtu.   'I saw the/a person.'
     I-pst-him-see person
(35) Ni-li-ona kitu.   'I saw the/a thing.'
(36) Ni-li-ki-ona kitu. 'I saw the thing.' +'I saw a thing.'

That the presence of an object marker with inanimate objects
necessarily conveys a message of definite reference is
compatible with an analysis of that marker as signalling
some sort of focus. The fact that such a distinction is
neutralized when the object is human may be understood with
reference to our premise that people are more interested in
people than in things; since they usually talk about humans,
who is being talked about is known (definite). Therefore,
patterns of usage have developed around the assumption, or
'norm', that who is being talked about is 'known' to the speakers.

3.4.2 It is also important to note in our texts that most
verbs have a subject marker which refers to the principal
agent in the event. In texts about humans we see more
active verbs with the agent in subject marker position; in
texts about inanimate things there are comparatively less
constructs with the agent as subject. We noted that constructs
were used which avoided subject marking all together (-A
linked nominals); also more passive constructions are seen
(constructs where an object rather than principal agent is
marked in subject position). Again we see evidence that people
are concerned about focussing attention upon humans, the
more active participants in events. Hence there are less
passive constructs in texts about humans; and fewer verbs(requiring

---

[4]This is true for most current usage of Swahili. Benji Wald has
...ed that some idioms and proverbial expressions do not have
object marker for human objects (private communication)

that a focussed participant be marked) in texts about
inanimate things.

3.4.3 With reference to the proposal that the object marker
indicates a second focus of attention we observe that in
Swahili, if there is an object marker on the verb, the
participant must be the principal agent; hence (38) and (39)
below are incorrect:

(37) Ni-li-andik-i-w-a barua.   'I was written(to/for)the/a
     I-pst-write-P-passive letter   letter'.

(38) *Ni-li-i-andik-i-w-a (barua) 'I was written it (the letter)'
     I-pst-it-write-P-passive

(39) *Chumba-ni ku-na-wa-zungumza watu. 'In the room there is
     Room-in there-pres-they-talk people conversing people'
                                           Compare with (31).

We suggest the following as a possible explanation for this
fact: Speakers typically focus attention on people and usually
they focus attention upon those people who are principal
agents in the event being described. This is observable in
actual data. It is proposed that this is a normal/typical
strategy which is employed for assigning and interpreting
participants which are in focus. When this conventional
configuration is used, speakers can signal the presence of
another 'important' participant and assume that hearers will
be able to 'keep track' of both participants. When the
normal strategy is deviated from this is not the case:
someone who is not the principal agent is marked in primary
focus. When the principal agent is not in focus, speakers
are signalling that someone else, someone who is not
necessarily expected to be, is important to the perception
of the event which they wish to convey. Hence, patterns of
usage avoid signalling a second focus when something 'out-of-
the-ordinary' is being signalled.[5] Given the way in which
the object marker is used, the meaning secondary FOCUS
is more descriptive than a meaning which does not specify
that the focus of attention is second to some other focus,
eg. that in primary focus (subject marker).

---

[5] In theory, there is nothing about the overall grammar of

3.4.4 There is further evidence for this analysis of the
object marker if we examine its use when nominal objects are
placed before the verb but are not marked in primary focus.
In generative grammar, such a construction would be characterized
in terms of a movement transformation called 'topicalization.'
It will suffice for our purposes to note only that it is a
deviation from normal word order strategies and hence calls
attention to the noun which is pre-posed. Since the participant
marked in primary focus usually precedes the verb, we may
assume that pre-verbal position also calls attention to the
participants occupying that position (in addition to subject
marking on the verb). Speaker judgements of the following
sentences show that when an object is brought into prominence
through pre-posing before the verb, the preferred verbal
configuration is one in which the pre-posed noun is marked
in secondary focus. Here we see word order and object marking
co-operating to signal a particular focus of attention:

(40) Hasan a-li-ona kitabu.   'Hasan saw the/a book.'
(41) ?Kitabu Hasan a-li-ona.   '(As for)the book, Hasan saw.'
(42) Kitabu Hasan a-li-<u>ki</u>-ona.'(As for)the book, Hasan saw <u>it</u>.'
(43) *Hasan kitabu a-li-ona.   '(As for)Hasan, the book he saw.'
(44) Hasan kitabu a-li-<u>ki</u>-ona.'(As for)Hasan, the book he saw <u>it</u>.'

Swahili which requires that this be the case. For example,
in Shona, a language spoken in Zimbabwe which is structurally
similar to Swahili, objects may be marked in the verb when
the subject is not the principal agent, eg. when the verb is
passive in form. This may be due to the fact that Shona has a
different system for signalling meanings in the verb, or just
that speakers have followed different communicative strategies
when employing their morphology than the Swahili. (See
Hawkinson and Hyman for examples, p. 160)

[6] (41) is questionable because some speakers will accept it;
however, all speakers with whom I spoke uniformly agreed that
( ) was more acceptable than (41).   15

TABLE V: Topic--Story about Mfundakoka (page 10)
          Sample--180 words

Subject Marker	Human	Inanimate
Principal Agent:	30 (85.7 o/o)	2 (5.7 o/o)
Passive Object:	1 (219 o/o)	2 (5.7 o/o)

-A Linked Nominals: Human-- 3 (33.3 o/o)
                     Inanimate-- 6 (66.6 o/o)

TABLE VI: Topic--Life of the Writer (page 13)
           Sample--230 words

Subject Marker	Human	Inanimate
Principal Agent:	21 (77.8 o/o)	2 (7.4 o/o)
Passive Object:	3 (11.1 o/o)	1 (3.7 o/o)

-A Linked Nominals: Human-- 14 (70 o/o)
                     Inanimate-- 6 (30 o/o)

SUMMARY:

Inanimate Topics: Total Subject Markers--49
                     Number of Humans--17 (35 o/o)
                     Number of Inanimates--32 (65 o/o)

                   Total -A Linked Nominals--77
                     Number Human--7 (9 o/o)
                     Number Inanimate--70 (81 o/o)

Human Topics: Total Subject Markers--108
                 Number Humans--84 (80 o/o)
                 Number Inanimate--24 (20 o/o)

               Total -A Linked Nominals--40
                 Number Human--19 (45.2 o/o)
                 Number Inanimate--23 (54.8 o/o)

4.0 Paraphrase Relations

It is possible now to propose certain hypotheses about
the semantic contribution of -A in communication by examining
-A constructions in comparison to sentences which native
speakers describe as 'meaning the same thing'.

4.1 All speakers questioned offered the second sentence
in each set below as a paraphrase for the -A construction
sentence type given as the first member in each pair;
these example sentences are taken from earlier sections of
this paper:

A. (19) A-li-andika barua y--a Hasan. (2.3) 'He wrote a letter
                                                to/on behalf of Hasan.'

    (23) A-li-mu-andik-i-a Hasan barua.(3.1) 'He wrote a letter
                                                to/on behalf of Hasan.'

B. (20) A-li-pika chakula ch--a Hasan.(2.3) 'He cooked food for
                                                Hasan.'

    (24) A-li-m-pik-i-a Hasan chakula. (3.1) 'He cooked food for
                                                Hasan.'

While speakers will consistently claim that such sets mean
the same thing, they are able to note a difference in usage:
the sequences with prepositionally derived verbs (23 and 24)
are more common in conversation than those with -A linked
nominals (19 and 20). This fact is consistent with
observations made in 3.4: when talking about people, speakers
usually use linguistic constructions which explicitly assign
verbal focus, rather than ones which do not. And since
people talk about people more than things, we could expect
them to feel that the linguistic constructions usually used
when describing human participation are more frequent in
their everyday speech. Since a speaker's choice about
what is in focus is a subjective one, it is understandable
that these sets of sentences would be regarded as similar in
meaning by speakers. The relations of the participants in
the event to one another with respect to the event remain
unchanged; the only difference is the relative importance
which the speaker attaches to each. Both -A and the preposi-
tional verb suffix introduce additional participants into
the perception of the event which is being conveyed by a

speaker; however, only the latter, with its accompanying
object in secondary focus, explicitly signals that the new
participant is particularly important to the event. Given
this fact, a meaning for -A might be postulated in opposition
to that assigned to the object marker: NON-FOCUS.

4.1.1 There are two sorts of evidence which might be
regarded as support for this analysis. The first concerns
observations made in 3.1.2. Since inanimate objects are
less topical inherently than human objects, we can expect
them to occur more often in syntactic constructions which
do not signal that they are in focus; we have seen than
inanimate objects are less frequently found in focus marked
constructions and that, in texts where they are in discourse
focus, -A constructions are used more often than those
constructions requiring a focus assignment to be made. To
the extent that these data show users of the language relying
upon syntactic constructions conveying meanings coherent with
the inherent\topicality afforded the participants which a
particular text is about, we can at least ascertain that -A
does not signal the meaning FOCUS for the participant which
follows it. The second sort of evidence compatible with
this analysis is seen in the following two sample texts
where the participants involved are the same but the discourse
focus upon them has been experimentally manipulated:

I. Jana nilikwenda kumwona   'Yesterday I went to see
    rafiki yangu mmoja.   a friend of mine.'
    Anaitwa Hasan.   Kabla   He is named Hasan. Before
    ya sijafika kwake   I arrived at his house
    nilipita kwa rafiki   I went by another friend's
    mwengine. Tukazungumza   house. We talked
    habari za Hasan   about Hasan
    nikamwambia yule rafiki   and I told this friend
    kuwa nitafika kwa Hasan   that I would go to Hasan's
    baada ya kutoka kwake.   after I left his place.
    Akasema 'Jee sasa hivi   And he say 'Hey, just now
(a) nilimuandikia Hasan barua   (23) I wrote Hasan a letter
(b) niliandika barua ya Hasan   (19) I wrote a letter to Hasan.
    Jtapeleka hii barua?   18   Will you take the letter?'

II. Jana nilikwenda kumwona 'Yesterday I went to see
    rafiki yangu. Nilipokuwa   my friend. When I was on
    njiani niliokota barua. .j.   my way I found a letter.
    Ilikuwa haina jina la mtu.   It didn't have anyone's name
    Nilipoingia kwa rafiki yangu on it. When i got to my friend's
    nilimwambia habari za ile   I told him about the letter.
    barua. Akasema 'Lo, jana   And he said 'Oh, yesterday

(a) nilimuandikia Hasan barua (23) I wrote Hasan a letter
(b) niliandika barua ya Hasan. (24) I wrote a letter to Hasan
    Labda ni hiyo.'   Maybe its that one.'

These two passages were read aloud to different speakers who
were then asked to choose which of the options, (a) or (b),
was most appropriate for completing the text in question.
(a) and (b) represent the same relations between the
participants with regard to their role in the event: in both,
the letter is acted upon on behalf of Hasan. They differ
only in their assignment of focus: (a) signals that Hasan
is in focus, (b) does not. We would expect then to find that
(a) would be preferred in the text where Hasan was in
discourse focus (I), and that (b) would be preferred in the
text where he is not. Our speakers opinions were not
consistent. Some said that both were fine in I, but only
one was acceptable in II; others found the converse to be
true: only one was acceptable in I and both were appropriate
for II. What is of interest is that the choice of what was
acceptable in the instances that only one was thought to be
possible were consistent: (b) was never found to be the only
one possible in I, and (a) was never found to be the only
sequence acceptable in II. What we may conclude then is that
where both constructions are not seen to be suitable for
particular texts, our predictions about which would be the
more acceptable are supported. That both are acceptable for
many speakers is probably due to the fact that speakers tend
to rely upon the inherent topicality of participants for
assigning verbal focus in everyday conversation more than they
make such assignments according to discourse focus status.

4.1.2 While the above discussion could be interpreted
in favor of the meaning NON-FOCUS for -A, there are other
aspects of its use which do not support such an analysis.
We would expect that if subject and object marking signal
focus and -A signals non-focus that the participants in
each position could not be co-referential; this is not the
case:

(45) Ni-li-m-let-e-a   barua y--a--ngu.   'I brought him my
      I-pst-him-bring-to letter -A mine   letter.'

(46) Ni-li-m-let-e-a   barua y--a--ke.   'I brought him his
      I-pst-him-bring-to letter -A his   letter.'

In (45) the -A linked nominal 'my' is co-referential with
the participant marked in primary focus in the verb, 'me';
in (46) it is co-referential with the item marked in
secondary focus, 'him'. It is true that the participant
marked in secondary focus in (46) is not necessarily co-
referential with the -A linked nominal; it may refer to some
other third person known to the speaker and hearer. However,
it is the fact that it may refer to the same participant which
is problemmatic for this analysis. We should also note that
the fact that -A must follow a noun phrase (or be understood
as referring to some noun phrase already mentioned) is also
not compatible with an analysis of its meaning as NON-FOCUS.
This formulation as stated does not specify anything but
that the element which is associated with it is not in the
speaker's main focus of attention; it does not say that the
element is dependent in some way upon some other item.
-A linked nominals appear to be important to the description
of an event only in terms of their relationship with some
other participant in the event (N_1 as described in 2.0).
They are not important to the perception of the event which
the speaker is trying to convey as independent entities but
rather, they wouldn't be mentioned at all were it not for
the relation which they are seen to have with some other
participant in the event.

4.2 In conclusion, we can say that -A does not have as its
meaning in the sense defined in 3.2 the value NON-FOCUS. We
should examine now in more detail the similarities between

the messages conveyable by the prepositional derivation
to the verb and those conveyed by -A. The two overlap to
some extent, the paraphrases of 4.1 are a case in point.
Also we should remember the directional 'uses' of the two
as described in 2.1 (v) and 3.1 (ii). Similarly, with
reference to (47) we note that the prepositional also has
an 'information about' use paralleling that which was
described for -A in 2.1 (vi):

(47)   Tu-li-ong-ele-a mambo y--a nadharia y--a maana.
       We-pst-talk-prep affairs -A theory   -A meaning

       Lit: 'We talked to/for things of the theory of meaning.'
       Gl: 'We talked about aspects of semantic theory.'

-A and the prepositional both reflect an imprecision in
meaning: they signal that some participant is around but
they do not specify what his role is. This is something
which must be inferred by speakers according to context.
In contrast to one another, the prepositional signals that
the new participant is involved in the event as an independent
entity and is important to the event's description for that
reason while -A signals the opposite: that the new partici-
pant is not important as a single entity but rather in terms
of his relationship with some other participant in the
event. Presumably, if that participant were not present the
-A linked nominal would not be mentioned; that this partici-
pant is not important, hence not in focus, is something
inferred by hearers because of the dependency relationship
which exists between the two nouns. Hence the characterization
NON-FOCUS as a meaning for -A was seen to be inadequate.
The fact that -A and the prepositional both reflect a lack of
role specification for the participant which they introduce
appears to be the reason for their overlap in usage. To
the extent that they both convey information about additional
participants this overlap may be attributed to an overlap
in meaning; to the extent that they differ we must look
elsewhere for an explanation. It is here that we must begin to
see how speaker's employment of these two imprecise meanings
in similar contexts is what gives rise to their ability to
convey the same sorts of messages.

3 The messages 'benefactive', 'dative', 'possessive', etc.

are not meanings conveyed by the particular linguistic
elements under discussion here; rather, they are relations
about the participants introduced by them which are
inferred by speakers and hearers alike according to the
contexts in which they occur. Examining situations where
-A and prepositional objects occur in the same immediate
linguistic environments can begin to show us how such
context can influence the messages conveyed by these two
variants. It should be acknowledged that this is not the
only sort of context which plays a role in the communication
of messages, pragmatic context will also be seen to be
important.

(48) Ni-li-andika barua. 'I wrote a letter'

(49) Ni-li-andika barua ya Hasan. 'I wrote a letter to give
to Hasan/on his behalf.'

(50) *Ni-li-andika barua ya Hasan ya jamaa zake. 'I wrote
a letter for Hasan to
his family.' (a)

'I wrote Hasan's letter to
his family/on their behalf.'(b)

(51) Ni-li-andika barua ya Hasan kwa jamaa zake. (a) above

(52) Ni-li-andika barua ya Hasan kwa ajili ya jamaa zake. (b)

These example show that -A can only convey messages of
benefactive and dative if it is not followed by another -A
construction which is also candidate to be associated with
such messages. In the case that other participants are
also to be introduced, the latter must be introduced by
alternative linguistic devices which specify their role;
thus the message conveyed by -A becomes clarified by
reference to what messages are not signalled by the other
construction.

(53) Ni-li-mu-andik-i-a Hasan barua. 'I wrote a letter to
give to Hasan/on his bahalf.'

(54) Ni-li-mu-andik-i-a Hasan barua ya jamaa zake. (50) a/b

(55) Ni-li-wa-andik-i-a jamaa za Hasan barua yake. (50) a/b

(56) *Ni-li-mu-andik-i-a Hasan barua ya jamaa zake ya ndugu zao.

'I wrote Hasan a letter to/for his family to/for their
relatives.'

(57) Ni-li-mu-andik-i-a Hasan barua ya jamaa zake kwa ndugu
zao.

*'I wrote Hasan a letter for his family to their friends.

'I wrote Hasan a letter to/for his family at the home of
their friends.'

22

These sentences show that when the prepositional is used
to introduce one participant that -A is used to introduce a
second; that is, the prepositional accomplishes the same
communicative task as the independent prepositions of (51)
and (52) to the extent that it alleviates an inferential
overload which occurs when two -A introduced participants
are equally candidate for two different roles, eg. benefactive
and dative. There is a problem in determining whether the
prepositional has any priority over the -A linked nominal
for a particular role. We have proposed that its object
is more in attention (with reference to object marking) than
an -A linked nominal whose referent is not signalled in the
verb; it is unclear whether a particular role, benefactive or
dative, is seen by speakers to be more likely to be in the
center of attention than another. These examples and those
which follow suggest that the more likely role may vary
according to particular situations and the nature of the
participants involved. While the (a) reading appears more
appropriated to (54) and (55) on initial reading, the (b)
reading is also quite possible. Yet in (64) and (65) the second
reading seems more acceptable at first glance. It would
seem then that such judgements are subject more to interpre-
tation according to conventional attitudes about who is more
important, the benefactor or the receiver, in any particular
activity (in addition to pragmatic context) than they are
determined by any given grammatical cue, eg. marking in or
outside of the verb. This must be examined in actual conversations.

(58) Ni-li-leta zawadi. 'I brought a present.'

(59) Ni-li-leta zawadi ya Hasan. 'I brought Hasan a present.'

(60) *Ni-li-leta zawadi ya Hasan ya mamake. 'I brought to/for
Hasan a present to/for his
mother.' (50)

(61) Ni-li-leta zawadi ya Hasan kwa mamake. 'I brought a present
for Hasan to his mother.' (51)

(62) Ni-li-leta zawadi ya Hasan kwa ajili ya mamake. 'to Hasan
because/on behalf of his mother.'
(52)

(63) Ni-li-m-let-e-a Hasan zawadi. 'I brought Hasan a present'

(64) Ni-li-m-let-e-a Hasan zawadi ya mamake. (61)/(62)

(65) Ni-li-m-let-e-a mamake Hasan zawadi yake. (61)/(62)

( ) *Ni-li-m-let-e-a Hasan zawadi ya mamake ya rafiki yake.

23

'I brought Hasan a present for his mother for his/her friend.'

(67) Ni-li-m-let-e-a Hasan zawadi ya mamake kwa rafiki yake.

*'I brought Hasan a present for his mother to his/her friend.'
'I brought Hasan a present for his mother at his/her friend's house.'

It is interesting to note in (57) and (67) that only one benefactive and one dative relation is possible in the description of any single activity; that this is also the case in English can be seen in the glosses as given. These examples then show that a particular linguistic element can reflect only one semantic relation in a particular situation, and that which of a set of possible messages is determined according to the context of occurrence and the sorts of relationships which are being signalled by other linguistic items. We will see in the following section (4.4) that the same linguistic item may be used more than once in an utterance if the messages which it conveys in each instance of occurrence is the same type of semantic relation. (see 69) The message conveyed by 'kwa' in (57) and (58) show us again how linguistic elements, when the context of their occurrence eliminates the possibility that they convey a particular message, can be used by speakers for conveying another message. This process is the same at that which we have been describing with reference to -A and the prepositional suffix.

4.4 We should note here the part which the Bantu noun class concord system plays in the disambiguation of multiple strings of -A linked participants. Swahili, as with other Bantu languages of Africa, is characterized by a nominal class gender system which divides nominals into a number of different classes, each of which is associated with a particular class agreement marker. It is these which are used for subject and object marking, as well as determining which concord marker will be prefixed to -A (see 2.0). Since all humans fall into the same concord class, such agreement markers cannot be used for disambiguation of roles among human participants except in special cases where certain nouns have differing agreement markers ('child' as compared to 'friend' in 68):

(68) A-li-mu-alika   mtoto wa rafiki ya mwalimu wa mke wa Hasan.'
     He-pst-him-invite child of friend of teacher of wife of H.

     'He invited the child of the/a friend of Hasan's wife's
     teacher.'

Typically, -A linked nominals are interpreted as being in
relation to the noun which they immediately follow and hence
the concord agreement system is used mainly as a device to
reinforce the fact that an association is being set up between
a particular pair of nouns and not some other:

(69) A-li-mu-andik-i-a barua ya habari za serikali ya nchi
      He-pst-him-write-prep letter of news of government of country/s

      za kiafrika.
      of African-ness

    Lit:'He wrote him a letter of   the news of the government
        of African countries'

    Gl: 'He wrote him a letter about news   about the government
        of the African countries.'   (a)

        'He wrote him a letter of government news about the
        African countries.'   (b)

        'He wrote him a letter about the government's news
        about the African countries.' (c)

As the glosses above show, there is some difficulty rendering
the messages conveyed by -A into English translation; English
prepositions tend to suggest that more information is being
specifically conveyed by -A than actually is the case. What is
important to note is that a number of possible inferences are
not possible because of the concord agreement markings:

    Gl: *He wrote him a letter about/of news about the
        governments of the African countries. (this would
                                 require the class concord of
                                 serikali Z--A)

        *He wrote him letters... (this would require barua Z--A)
        *He wrote....the/an African country (this would take nchi
                                                Y--A)

Since everyone knows that there is no one government for
African countries (excluding perhaps the OAU), the first
gloss above is unlikely to be heard by hearers; the
difference between the messages in (b) and (c) are minimal
if they exist at all apart from the English translation.

        Examples such as (70) below show more clearly how
-A linked nominals may be heard in relation to nouns which
not immediately precede them, although again this way of

25

looking at -A derives mainly from problems which arise
in the English translation of the messages which it conveys:

(70) A-li-ni-andik-i-a   barua ya habari zake   za kufika.
     He-pst-me-write-to   letter of news of-his of arriving

Here, 'arriving' is in relation to 'news', not 'his'.

4.5 To conclude this section, it is helpful to emntion some
of the main points brought up in the preceding discussion:
(1) -A linked participants are not typically participants in
focus although they may be if there is an object marker in
the verb which is co-referential (4.1)
(2) -A and the prepositional suffix overlap in meaning to
the extent that they both carry information that an additional
participant is present in the situation being described;
(3) They differ in that the participant which is introduced
by the preposition is an independent entity involved in the
event's occurrence, hence is presence is signalled directly
on the verb;
(4) By comparison, the participant introduced by -A is not
important to the event as an independent entity; in fact,
it is only mentioned in-so-far as the relation which it has
with some other participant is seen by speakers to be relevant
to the perception of the event which they are trying to convey(4.2)
(5) The meanings of -A and the prepositional are imprecise;
the messages which they actually convey in any particular
instances of their occurrence are inferences on the part of
speakers and hearers which are determined by various aspects
of their context. The presence or absence of additional
participants, introduced by -A or the prepostional suffix,
or independent prepositions such as 'kwa' have been shown
to be relvant feature of context. Presumably the same can
be illustrated for other verbal derivations, as well as for
other independent prepositions. It is also clear that lexical
considerations about the meanings conveyed by particular
verbs, and aspects of the nominal agreement system are relevant.
(6) We have also noted that problems in accounting for how
-A can convey a wide variety of messages is due, in part, to
the fact that English is not an adequate translation device.

5.0 Meaning

Throughout the preceding discussion we have referred to the 'meaning' of -A without attempting to formulate a single statement of that meaning. The reason is obvious; the formulation cannot be precise. -A as a linguistic sign signals a general kind of 'relational' concept which speakers use for conveying a variety of messages according to different contexts. Traditional grammarians have been aware of this fact about -A: for Ashton, -A is a particle of relationship; for Polomé, it is a connective particle. What is missing from traditional analyses is any attempt to explain, given that -A does 'relate' or 'connect', how speakers are able to use it productively in speech to signal a wide spectrum of messages and, more importantly perhaps, how they are able to understand such messages as "meaning what they mean" in each instance in which they occur. Trully, we can only hypothesize about how such communication is accomplished because the knowledge which speakers have is intuitive; it cannot be reached through direct questioning. However, if the data can be described according to identifiable contexts, and the messages which are conveyed can be understood in those contexts with reference to a proposed meaning for that linguistic element, then, at least, we have begun to identify possible methods whereby language can be used systematically by people for the communication of ideas.

As an hypothesis, we propose the following meaning for -A: -A signals that the two items in construct with it are in some unspecified relation or association such that the second noun is relevant to the event being described only in terms of the relation which it is seen to hold with the first. Hence, we can say that N_2 is dependent upon N_1 in the syntactic configuration N_1 -A N_2. Since N_2 is dependent upon N_1, it is usually the case that it is not in verbal focus; this is an inference about its importance which speakers make, not something which is specified by -A itself. This we know because N_2 may be co-referential with

a noun in verbal focus (see 4.1.2). On the other hand,
by virtue of its relation with N_2, N_1 becomes somehow
delimited from other entities of its type in the world.
Again, the way in which it differs is not specified by -A;
we have seen that the relation may be seen as one between
two individual entities, eg. benefactor (N_2) and object
acted upon (N_1) (see 2.3), or possessor and possessed (2.1),
or it may be seen as a relation between a single entity and
one of its characteristics, eg. an object and an attribute.
(see 2.1)

6.0 Contrast of -A Environments

It is now interesting to look at how different messages
conveyed by -A are influenced by features of the immediate
context; that is, how the nature of the nouns themselves
which are in construct contribute to the message which is
expressed. Throughout the discussion we have spoken of
'hearers' when we refer to the notion of 'inference' (3.2)
and 'speakers' when we talk about 'conveying messages'; it
should be made clear that the process described is the same
in both cases. Speakers and hearers draw upon the same sorts
of contextual information for constructing and for
interpreting linguistic sequences which are meaningful. We
have discussed how aspects of the overall syntactic configura-
tion and grammatical agreement affect the messages communicated
by -A; similarly we have showed how the animacy or 'topicality'
of the participant introduced into an utterance may influence
whether or not an -A construction will be used at all, eg.
human participants more likely to be marked directly in the
verb rather than linked by -A. Now we will concern ourselves
with features of the two nouns in relation to the extent that
we can show that such may be influencing the inference of
particular messages.

6.1 First of all, we can see that benefactive and dative
messages are constrained to situations where the second
noun is human and the first is inanimate:

(71) A-li-m-tafuta mbwa w--a mwalimu.   'He looked for the
     He-pst-him-seek dog 'of' teacher   teacher's dog.' NOT
                                          'he sought the dog on
                                          behalf of the teacher.'

(72) A-li-m-tafuta mtoto wa mwalimu.   'He sought the teacher's
                                          child' NOT 'He sought the
                                          child for the teacher.'

(73) A-li-tafuta kitabu ch--a mwalimu.   'He sought the teacher's
                                          book' OR 'He sought the/a
                                          book for the teacher.'

That benefactive and dative messages cannot be expressed by
constructions such as (71) and (72) may reflect considerations
about the likelihood that certain participants are benefactors
--receivers and, similarly, that particular things can be

acted upon on behalf of those said participants. As
observed by Hawkinson and Hyman (1974: p. 161), benefactors
and receivers are typically animate while obejcts acted upon
(accusatives in their terminology) are usually inanimate.
We have observed that verbal focus is typically assigned to
more active participants in events, eg. agents (see 3.4.3)
and that when there is a prepositional suffix on the verb
secondarily-focussed participants may be interpreted as
benefactors or receivers (3.1). Further, it is observed
that such constructions are used more frequently than -A
constructs for conveying such relationships (4.1). Hence,
we can propose that hearers expect that if such a relationship
is to be expressed it will be done according to normal
strategies, eg. that described above. However, when there
is no prepositional suffix signalling that an added partici-
pant is involved in the event and there are two participants
(in addition to the principal agent) who are equally
candidate for an active role in the event, then the more
active role is assigned to the participant whose presence
is signalled in the verb as is seen in (71) and (72). That
the relation conveyed is possessive and not anything else
can be understood with reference to real-world considerations:
humans do not signify directions or measures or or inherent
features of other things in the world. (see messages conveyable
by -A in 2.0).

On the other hand, in (73) there is no information in
the verb specifying that one participant is more important
than another. Since the nouns in construct are differentiated
according to animacy a more active role may be assigned to
the more animate participant since animate beings usually are
more active than inanimate objects in the bringing about
of events. Note that this will only occur when the activity
can be heard as one which is carried out on behalf of or
towards some participant:

(74) *Ni-li-ku-siki-li-a sauti ya mwimbaji. 'I heard the voice
      I-pst-you-hear-prep.voice 'of' singer   of the singer for
                                        you.'

(75) Ni-li-sikia sauti ya mwimbaji. *'I heard the voice for/
     I-pst-hear   voice 'of' singer   to the singer.'
                                  'I heard the singer's voice.'

Example (74) shows that some activities cannot be heard with reference to a benefactive or dative participant, even when the normal strategies for conveying such messages are used. Hence, (74) is unacceptable and (75) is only appropriate if a possessive relationship is heard.

That speakers do rely upon facts about the animacy of the nouns in construct with -A for inferring which participants are more active or important is evidenced by the fact that all speakers questioned about the 'meaning' of (73) gave (76), a sentence where the human noun is placed into verbal focus, as a paraphrase of the relations expressed:

(76) A-li-m-tafut-i-a mwalimu kitabu.   'He sought the/a book for the teacher.'

In principle, a sentence where the possessive relationship, one which assigns a less important role to the human noun, could have been suggested by native speakers. That speakers rely upon object marking as a cue to inference is revealed by example (77) where the 'book' of (75) is marked in verbal focus and the benefactive role for the 'teacher' is no longer possible:

(77) A-li-ki-tafuta kitabu cha mwalimu. 'He sought the teacher's book.'

This shows the importance of object marking versus non-marking for the correct inference of messages when the first noun in -A construct is inanimate. We noted in 3.4.1 that human objects were almost always marked in secondary focus in the verb if that position was available[6] while inanimate objects were not. We are now in a position to propose why this might be the case: Since humans are more active than

---

[6]It should be noted that it is possible to have a human participant who is not marked in secondary focus because some other participant is signalled in that position:

(i) Ni-li-ku-pik-ish-i-a   Fatuma chakula chako.
    I-pst-you-cook-cause-prep Fatuma food   your

'I had Fatma cook your food for you.' Here, 'Fatuma' is a human participant whose presence is not signalled in secondary focus because the benefactor 'you' is marked there. That 'Fatuma' is candidate for focus is shown in (ii) where there is no benefactor present:

(ii) Ni-li-m-pik-ish-a Fatuma chakula chako. 'I had Fatuma cook your food.'

inanimate objects they are usually more important in the
description of events, assuming that people are concerned
with describing an event with reference to those participants
responsible for its having occurred. Since humans are more
active, they are usually in the focus of attention. Hence
it would not affect the overall message conveyed if they
were not marked in secondary focus; particularly, since the
most active participant (agent) is usually marked in
primary focus. Therefore, we might propose that current
patterns of usage in Swahili have developed as follows:
the decision about whether or not a particular human partici-
pant should be marked in secondary focus has been so often
determined in favor of object marking that speakers have
come not to worry about it at all; human participants are
just always marked in the verb. On the other hand,
since inanimate things are not usually active in the bringing
about of events, and hence not usually important to the
perception of the event being conveyed, speakers have
reserved object marking for signalling special attention on
inanimate objects. Hence, as noted in 3.4.1, when inanimate
objects are marked in secondary focus definite reference is
being made to some item which has been previously mentioned
in discourse or which is assumed to be known by the hearer(s).
In contrast, human objects marked in secondary focus may
be definite or indefinite.

6.2 There are fewer presuppostions about the kinds of relations
which inanimate objects may have to one another; hence we
will find that speakers and hearers must rely more upon
pragmatic aspects of the speech situation for interpreting
such relationships. This is an area which needs further
investigation; it will suffice for the moment to examine
how the constructs with two inanimate nouns are multiply
ambiguous. In Swahili, many nominal forms may refer to
concrete entities or abstract qualities as seen in (78):

(78) Sanduku 1--a rangi.   'Box containing paint(s)' OR
                            'Colored/painted box'

Further, two nouns may be in relation to one another with
reference to some activity in which they are both involved:

(79) Sanduku l--a kuni.
    (1) 'Box containing firewood'
    (2) 'Box for firewood' (to be used for holding the wood although it might be used for other things as well)
    (3) 'Firewood-box' (a box whose sole purpose is for storing firewood, not anything else)

Given the infinite variety of social interactions possible, we cannot begin to define which of a set of possible relations will be conveyed in a particular speech situation. We can, however, examine how different messages are inferrable according to differences in pragmatic and/or discourse context:

I. Jana nilitaka kupika biriani. Lakini kulikuwa hakuna kuni nyumbani. Kwa hiyo nikamtuma ndugu yangu kuniletca sanduku la kuni ili niwashe moto mapema.

'Yesterday I wanted to cook biriani, but there was no firewood in the house. So I sent my brother to bring me a box of firewood so I could light the fire early.'

II. Alikwenda mwituni kutafuta kuni. Akapata kuni nzuri lakini alikuwa hawezi kuzi-beba zote. Basi akamtuma rafiki yake kumletea sanduku la kuni. Halafu akaniletea zote.

'He went to the woods to look for the wood. He got some nice wood but he couldn't carry it all. So he sent his friend to bring him a box for the wood (OR a firewood-box). Afterwards he brought me all of it.

The above examples show us two things: first, they provide us with a context for the messages given in (79) and, secondly, they show us that in some cases, eg. II, the difference between two possible messages is not important for understanding what is being described. We have suggested that the language has linguistic signs which are associated with meanings (see 3.2), and that these meanings are imprecise. Further we have said that more precise messages are inferred by people when these linguistic signs are used in different contexts. We can see in II above that, in some contexts, precise inferences about the message conveyed are not crucial for the understanding of what is being said. We can say here that the difference in message content between (79)-2 and -3 is not communicatively

33

significant; that is, whether the friend of the brother
brings a box to put the wood into or a box specially made
for that purpose is irrelevant for the practical outcome of
the activity--that a box be brought and the wood put in it.
Similarly for the listener of this narrative; what the
speaker is describing is not altered because of an imprecise
message about what kind of box was used since it is not
particularly important for the theme of the narrative. We
can, however, think of contexts where the difference between
(79)-2 and -3 would be communicatively significant:

III.   Jana babangu alikuwa   Yesterday my father was
       anatema kuni mwituni.   cutting wood in the forest.
       akamtuma mtu moja   He sent one person
       kumletea sanduku la   to bring him a box for
       kuni. Mwanamume yule   the wood. That man,
       aliporudi, babangu   when he returned, my father
       alianza kupiga kelele,   began to shout,
       akasema hakutaka huyo   he said that he hadn't wanted
       amletee sanduku lolote,   that man to bring him just
       alitaka arudi mpaka   any box, he had wanted him
       nyumbani kupata sanduku   to go all the way back to
       letu la kuni!   the house to get our firewood-
                           box!

6.2.1 We should note that not all nominal forms in Swahili
have the dual reference to abstract and concrete concepts
as noted above. Also we can show that certain presuppositions
about the 'inalienability' of particular inanimate things
from human owners will influence what inferences are possible
when these items are talked about:

(80) Ni-na habari z-a-ko. (1) 'I have news to give/tell you.'
     I-have news 'of'you (2) 'I have your news'(which you sent
                                  or which is about you)

(81) Ni-na huba yako.   (1) 'I love you.'(I have love for you)
            love   (2) 'I have your love' (You love me)

(82) Ni-na haya yako.   (1)?'I am shy of you'(I have shyness for
           shyness   you)
                     (2) 'I have your shyness' (I have a
                         shyness like your shyness)

(83) Ni-na sifa zako.   (1)*'I have praises for you'
          praises   (2) 'I have praises (about me) which are
                       like the ones you have (about you)

34

6.5   It is important for this discussion to examine how
the meanings postulated for -A (see 5.0) and for the
prepositional suffix (see 3.1) interact in a single
construction.   If they contradict one another our analysis
will be invalid.   However, if they can be used to explain
how people infer the messages that they do from such
constructions then we can conclude that the meanings are
coherent with the data.   Again, we acknowledge that we cannot
prove through any scientific procedure that our hypothesized
meanings are true as absolut definitions; they are only
valid to the extent that they allow us to explain patterns
of language use.   In 2.4 we presented two examples with
their associated differences in message-content which
Ashton's and Polomé's 'purposeful' categories do not
differentiate sufficiently:

(21)   Maji y--a ku-nywa.   'Water to drink'

(22)   Maji y--a ku-nyw-i-a.   'Drinking water'

It is constructions such as (22) which interest us here; the
interest is to look at differences in the message conveyed
which result from the presence or absence of the prepositional
suffix on the verbal noun in construct.   The following examples
are relevant for the contrasts which are to be examined:

(84)   a.   +Sindano y--a ku-shona.   'Needle to sew'

     b.   Sindano y--a ku-shon-e-a.   'Needle to sew with'/
                                                       'Sewing needle'

     c.   Sindano y--a ku-shona nguo.   'Needle to sew clothes'

(85)   a.   +Maziwa y--a ku-lisha.   'Milk to feed'

     b.   Maziwa y--a ku-lish-i-a.   'Milk to feed with' (eg. for
                                              giving a child medicine)

     c.   Maziwa y--a ku-m-lisha mtoto.   'Milk to feed the child'

(86)   a.   Vitambaa vya ku-uza.   'Cloth to sell' (but not necessarily)

     b.   Vitambaa vya ku-uz-i-a.   'Cloth to sell with' (eg. to
                                      wrap the purchases in)

     c.   Vitambaa vya ku-uz-w-a.   'Cloth to be sold' (which you
                                      can't use for anything else)

(87)   a.   Sanduku la ku-beba.   'Box to carry (something)'

     b.   Sanduku la ku-beb-e-a.   'Box whose only purpose is
                                    for carrying things'/'Carrying
                                                    box'

(88)   a.   Maziwa ya ku-chemsha.   'Milk which is boiled'/'Boiled
                                              milk'

     b.   Maziwa ya ku-chemsh-w-a.   'Milk which is to be boiled'

The message which each of these constructions conveys shows
how speakers infer different roles for the first noun in
construct (N_1) according to information provided by
verbal suffixes on the verbal noun to which it is linked (N_2).
For all constructions, it is inferred that N_1 is somehow
involved in the activity described by N_2; this message is
conveyed with reference to the fact that -A signals some
relation between a thing and an event and, typically, we find
things in the world as participants in events. Since there
is no information in the verb about the presence of an
additional participant in the (a) sentences, the messages
which are inferred involve N_1 as a participant which is being
acted upon in the event described. Because needles cannot
be 'sewed' and milk cannot be 'fed', (84a) and (85a) are not
acceptable. However, the importance of pragmatic context
must be emphasized here. Both of these constructs may be
heard in actual conversation under particular circumstances.
With reference to (84), if someone wants to sew and asks someone
else for a needle, he will most probably specify a sewing
needle as in (84b). If, however, the second speaker didn't
hear him he may reply, 'a needle for what?' (sindano y-a nini?).
And our first speaker may then reply, quite acceptably, with
the verb form in (84a): '--ya ku-shona'. It is with
reference to this 'non-specific' nature of the relationship
expressed by -A that we can understand why (84c)and (85c) are
acceptable: When there is no information about participant
roles in the verb, the relation of object acted upon in the
activity described is inferred. If however there is informa-
tion elsewhere, eg. somewhere else in context, that this is
not the relation being described, then some other role for
the first participant will be inferred. Hence, in (84c)
'clothes' is specified as the object of 'to sew' and speakers
do not infer that 'needle' is to be the object of sewing;
in fact, nothing much about needle is being conveyed but that
it is to be associated with the sewing of clothes. However,
since needles are used to sew clothes with, it will be inferred
that the needle is to sew these particular clothes, otherwise
it would not have been associated with them. Note that the

needle is not specified as a sewing needle; it may be any kind of needle which is to be involved in the sewing of the clothes.

On the other hand, the (b) sentences in (84) - (88) show consistently that the relation inferred between the first noun and the activity is one in which the noun is assigned an instrumental role. -A signals a relation; the prepositional suffix signals that a new participant in the event is relevant to the description of that event. It is but one inferential 'jump' for hearers to assume that N_1 is the participant which the prepositional suffix in the verb is referring to, especially since -A says that he is somehow related to the event described by that verb. The prepositional suffix signalling N_1 as an instrument in the activity described by N_2 occurs when people are concerned about conveying information about N_1, not about N_2. This subordinate relation between the two nouns in construct with reference to their importance to the overall event being described was mentioned in 5.0. However, this does not preclude the possibility that the activity may also be important; it is if the identity of N_1 is to be properly understood by hearers. Hence, constructs such as (84b) and (85a) may be used in situations where this understanding is jeopardized. While speaker judgements of (84)-(88) were generally agreed upon by all people questioned, the fact that more thoughtful speakers do recognize that even the 'unacceptable' sequences do occur in speech is further support for the claim that pragmatic context can play a crucial role in determining how speakers organize the communication of their thoughts.

A further perusal of the examples given bring forth a number of observations which, while they are not precluded by the analysis given, are not necessarily to be predicted by it. With reference to the (a) sentences of all the examples, it appears that the absence of any verbal suffix implies that there is no specific relationship expressed; that is, the relation which will be inferred will be that which is the simplest for speakers to imagine, given the nature of the

noun and the activity which it is associated with. Hence,
the inferred message for (87a) is not that the box is to
be carried (object of the action) but that it is to be used
to carry something in; typically boxes are talked about with
reference to what they contain and not how they are to be
operated upon as entities independent of their contents.
However, in context the latter inference is also possible:
Sanduku hili ni langu la kubeba na hilo ni lako. 'This box
is for me to carry (is mine 'of' to carry) and that one is
for you.' The same contrast is found with other associations
between verbs of movement and objects used for moving:

(89) a. Magari ya ku-hama.   'Vehicles to be used for moving'
                leave   (but not necessarily vehicles
                residence   only associated with that activity;
                             they may be used for something
                             else later) COMPARE

     b. Magari ya kuhamia.   'Moving vans' (vehicles designed
                             for that particular purpose)

Likewise, (88a) is of interest when contrasted with (88b)
because the message conveyed is not that the milk is to be
boiled (paralleling the other a.sentences) but rather, the
message is that the milk has already been boiled. We may be
able to interpret this contrast when we consider the activity
described and its effect upon the participant involved. In
(84), (86) and (87), the events expressed do not alter the
nature of the objects involved in them. However, in (88),
once the milk is boiled it can no longer return to a state
of being 'not boiled'; hence, the temporary relation as found
in the other examples is not possible. We may propose that
when an object is associated with an activity which alters
its state of existence, speakers have come to assume that
the change has already occurred or the relation would not have
been mentioned in the first place. Since they have the
passive suffix which specifies an 'object acted upon' role
this device has been used to cue the inference that the object
is to be changed but has not yet been so altered. These
patterns of usage have been conventionalized through repeated
usage; that is, there is nothing in the meaning of -A or in
the lexical meaning of 'to boil' that specifies that these

messages are the only ones possible. In fact, we have
already seen a number of different messages which can be
conveyed by associations between verbal activities and their
participants. We can see that this pattern of inference
has been conventionalized by referring to parallel situations
in the language:

(90) a. Samaki ya kukaanga. 'Fried fish'
     b. Samaki ya kukaangwa. 'Fish which is to be fried'
(91) a. Nyama ya kuchoma. 'Barbecued meat'
     b. Nyama ya kuchomwa. 'Meat which is to be barbecued'
(92) a. Nywele za kusuka. 'Braided hair'
     b. Nywele za kusukwa. 'Hair which is to be braided'
(93) a. Nyama ya kukatakata. 'Chopped meat'
     b. Nyama ya kukatwakatwa. 'Meat which is to be chopped'

These constructions and the messages which they convey should
be considered in contrast to the (a) sentences of examples
(84)-(87); similarly, with those that follow:

(94) Nguo za kuvaa. 'Clothes to wear' not 'Worn clothes'
(95) Kazi ya kufanya. 'Work to do' not 'Work completed'
(96) Vitu vya kununua. 'Things to buy' not 'Bought things'

The meanings proposed for -A and the prepositional suffix
together are used to signal (1) a relation between an object
and an activity and (2) that the relation is one in which
the object is seen as participant in the activity described.
When the prepositional suffix is not used, a associated change
in meaning results: the associated object is an object
acted upon rather than an object participating in the event.
It is obvious from the above examples that speakers also
draw upon other verbal suffixes, eg. the passive (-w-), to
signal different messages. While this section has shown that
the meanings of the prepositional and -A co-operate together
in conveying particular messages, we have also seen that
the meaning of the prepositional contrasts with other verbal
suffixes in construct with -A. Further, contrasts in the
messages conveyed are determined to some extent by the nature
of the activity described; that is, the message conveyed by
a particular suffix on the verb cannot be analyzed according
a specific modification of meaning signalled by the suffix.

Verbal suffixes modify the lexical meanings of the verb
roots in Swahili, but the meanings associated with each
suffix, as we have seen with the prepositional, is imprecise.
More precise messages are conveyed, and inferred, only
when the suffixes are used in a specific linguistic context.
This section has shown that conventional associations
between activities and the things in the world which
participate in them may be interpreted by the analyst as
influencing the kinds of messages which speakers attach
to particular linguistic constructions. For a more complete
understanding of the function of -A in communication such
patterns of inference deserve further study; similarly,
analysis of the verbal suffixal system should reveal
additional ways in which the meaning of -A is exploited
by speakers to convey a variety of messages.

6.6 With reference to the preceding subsections (6.0-6.5)
it is significant to note how contrasts between the animacy
of the nouns in construct with -A delimit what messages
may be conveyed by a particular combination of nouns.
When both nouns in construct are human, there is only one
possible message which can be conveyed; we might refer to
it as the 'possessive' or 'genitive'. The message is
that conveyed by constructs such as 'John's daughter' or
'Mary's son' in English. This was discussed in 6.1. When
one noun in construct is human, there are more messages
possible but they are predictable with reference to the
linguistic environment of the construct: (a) If the verb
is underived and there are no other participants introduced
by prepositions which specify benefactive or dative relations
(see 4.3), a human noun attached to an inanimate noun may
convey a benefactive or dative message. The lexical meaning
of the verb will determine whether such a message is conveyed.
(b) If the conditions of (a) are not fulfilled then the
message conveyed will be 'genitive' (as above).[7] What is

[7]The construct where N_1 is human and N_2 is inanimate has not
been discussed here but the same is true in such cases; the

interesting is that the number of possible messages
when both nouns are inanimate is much less predictable
with reference to cues in the immediate linguistic context.
As we saw in 6.2, the messages conveyed by two inanimate
nouns in construct with -A may often vary according to
pragmatic context. The question to pose then is one
concerning why it is possible to isolate features of the
immediate linguistic context which will predict which
message may be inferred when one or both of the nouns in
construct are human, but it is not possible to do so when
both nouns are human. Further, when both nouns are human
only one message is inferrable. Here we note a skewing
of message possibilities based upon the animacy identity of
the nouns in construct. Again, it is possible to propose
a reason for this skewing if we look to our hyopthesis
about the importance of people in everyday discourse.
Grammatical patterns of usage develop through people's use
of the morphological structures of their language. As we
have seen with the object marker in Swahili, speakers may
rely upon semantic features of participants in the world
when determining the kinds of morphological patterns which
are used to represent them; with the object marker, an
object's 'humanness' makes him candidate for object marking.
We saw also that a participant's 'inanimateness' made him
less of a candidate for subject marking. We related these
two patterns of usage to considerations of semantic notions
of 'focus' in discourse as well as general observations about
what people like to talk about. Here we see that humans
in construct with -A can convey a limited number of messages,
limited in comparison with inanimate objects. This may
be attributed to the overall concern which speakers have
for what humans are doing in the event's being described.
Since they are more interested in humans, they have more

number of possible messages is severely limited: (a) N_2 is
a locative: 'Teachers of that region' (see 2.2); (b) N_2 is
an attribute (characteristic) of N_1: 'Child of happiness'
(see 2.1).

presuppostions about the kinds of roles which humans
may have in events. This hypothesis is coherent with
our observation that the construct whose message can only
be one thing is that construct where two humans are in
relation (see 6.1). When only one of the two nouns is
human, more messages are possible. Still, they are fewer
than when both nouns are inanimate and they are predictable
from the linguistic environment of the construct. Relations
between inanimate nouns are often unclear until one refers
to the wider pragmatic context of the utteracne. Speakers
have less of an interest in inanimate things and hence
have fewer presuppositions about the kinds of relations which
they may have to one another.

7.0 Conclusion

The preceding discussion was based upon several
theoretical assumptions about the nature of language.
Central to the analysis there is a concern for the study
of language as a communicative system. This orientation
assumes that all linguistic signs in a language are somehow
MEANINGFUL. This does not imply that they are all uniquely
meaningful; that is, there may be more than one symbol
conveying the same, or similar, meaning. Likewise, there
may be symbols which convey more than one meaning.
However, we base our investigation upon the fact that
language is a symbolic system for representing meaning
and therefore our initial working hypothesis is that a
particular sign, -A in this paper, has some constant
semantic contribution to every utterance in which it occurs.
By identifying this meaning we should come closer to
understanding how it is used for the communication of
various messages. If it were possible for us to describe
all the 'uses' of -A in terms of lexical and grammatical
environments which are mutually exclusive of one another,
our analysis might be in favor of postulating a number of
different -A signs whose morphological shapes are
superficially the same--one sign with more than one meaning.
However, the overlap observed in the traditional categories
summarized in 2.0, together with the manipulations of
message according to differences in context which were
examined in 6.0, revealed that this kind of analysis is
inadequate.

7.1 It was our intention in this paper to identify the
communicative roel of -A in Swahili; that is, what is the
meaningful import which it brings to any utterance in which
it occurs. We attempted to isolate some of the grammatical
and lexical cues which allow speakers and hearers alike to
infer different messages from the use of a single linguistic
item Similarly, we saw that such aids to inference cannot
be completely accounted for with reference to the morphology

of the language alone. Semantic considerations such
as animacy have allowed us to identify skewings in speakers'
use of the morphology of their language for signalling
participant roles in events (see section 3.0). Similarly,
we have seen that such considerations come into play in
the interpretation of relations between participants in
particular syntactic configurations, here the case being
the constructions NOUN -A NOUN (see section 6.0). These
observations show that any study of syntactic patterns
in language cannot be fully investigated without recourse
to considerations of meaning. Particular syntactic
configurations signal information about the items which
are in construction; similarly, features of those items
themselves determine, in part, the precise message about
the relations expressed by the syntactic configuration
which is being expressed. We suggest that there are two
strategies which speakers use in order to communicate and
understand one anothers messages: I. Direct--Information
which is signalled specifically by the morphology of the
language; II. Indirect--Information which is inferred
according to semantic considerations of the participants
involved in an event (eg. inherent features or characteris-
tics), as well as with reference to conventional associations
about the kinds of roles which particular things in the world
are more likely to have in events and the kinds of relations
they are more likely to have with one another. Factors
such as the appeal to pragmatic context for message interpre-
tation will also fall under this strategy for communicating
meassages. Since we know that people communicate
mutually intelligble messages to one another in a non-random
fashion, and that they do this with a finite set of
linguistic elements (the morphology of a language), our
initial task is one of identifying the meaningful function
of these elements in communication. Then we can
begin to systematically examine less direct strategies for
conveying messages.

7.2 In conclusion we might constrast this approach to

an analysis in the generative framework currently used in
many linguistic studies. Presumably, such an analysis would
derive the different uses of -A from variant underlying
structures and, in this way, differences in 'meaning' for
a single surface construct would be accounted for. Through
this approach, semantic ambiguity for the syntactic
configuration $NOUN_1$ --A $NOUN_2$ would become apparent. The
orientation would not, however, explain why this ambiguity
does not cause problems in actual communication. The concern
would be to account for the superficial unitary structure
of the relations expressed by -A, not to examine differeneces
in the semantic import of those relations. It is a premise
of the present discussion that a unitary syntactic phenomena
should not be evidence to postulate a semantic ambiguity
which is in fact not problemmatic in speaker's actual
usage of that construct. Such an hypothesis does not further
our understanding of how the device is used in communication.
Our interest is, then, that we determine what aspects of
its occurrence can account for how it is used by speakers
to convey the messages that it does. In our discussion
we have noted that certain linguistic elements may be used
to convey multiple sets of communicated messages. By examining
how this is done with reference to differences in linguistic
context we are able to propose how a finite set of
linguistic elements might be used to convey an infinite
variety of messages. This fact about language has been a
major impetus behind all generative approaches. We have also
seen in our query that the communicative potential of any
linguistic code cannot be fully understood without reference
to information which is not specifically signalled by the
morphological elements of that code. When speakers and
hearers conversationally interact they assume that something
meaningful is to be expressed. Therefore they will use
whatever strategies they have available to them in order
to 'figure out' what is being communicated. By examining
syntactically singular constructs with reference to the
different messages which they may convey we are able to
begin to identify what these communicative strategies for

constructing and interpreting utterances are. Only
then can we begin to understand what is, in fact, the
linguistic 'structure' of language.

REFERENCES

Ashton, E.O. 1944 _Swahili Grammar_; Great Britain: Lowe
    and Brydone Limited.

Eastman, C. 1967 _An Investigation of Verbal Extension in
    Kenya Coastal Dialects of Swahili_; University of
    Wisconsin PhD Dissertation: University of Michigan
    Microfilms.

Givon, T. 1970 "Resolution of Gender Conflicts in Bantu
    Conjunction" _Papers from the Sixth Regional Meeting
    of the Chicago Linguistics Society_, 250-261.

Hawkinson, A. and Hyman, L. 1974 "Hierarchies of Natural
    Topoc in Shona"; _Studies in African Linguistics_
    Vol. 5 No. 2, 147-170

Kirsner, R. 1972 "About 'About' and the Unity of 'Remind'";
    Linguistic Inquiry Vol. III No. 4

Polomé, E. 1967 _Swahili Language Handbook_; Washington D.C:
    Center for Applied Linguistics.

Port, R. L972a "Focus and Participant Roles"; University of
    Connecticut, unpublished text.
Port, R. 1972b Master's Thesis (Title Unknown); University
    of Columbia. (See Footnote 3)

Scotton, C. 1967 _Aspects of the Swahili Extended Verbal
    System with Special Reference to Some Deep Structure_;
    University of Wisconsin PhD Dissertation: University
    of Michigan Microfilms.

Text Samples Taken from:

S. Chiraghdin, N.H. Zaidi, M.Kamal Khan, O.Saidi 1971
    Kusoma na Kufahamu Kiswahili (Kitabu cha nne); Nairobi:
    Longman Kenya Limited, 1-22.