

## Instrumental (and Dative) Applicatives in Maa

Doris L. Payne

University of Oregon  
dipayne@uoregon.edu

### Introduction

Maa (Eastern Nilotic; Kenya, Tanzania) has one ‘dative’ applicative, which is found across all branches of Nilotic, but another ‘instrumental’ applicative that is less widespread. The ‘dative’ applicative *-aki(n)* licenses RECIPIENT, GOAL-REACHED, and BENEFACTIVE/MALEFACTIVE applied objects. The ‘instrumental’ (INST) applicative *-ie(k)* licences a broad range of semantic roles including INSTRUMENT, LOCATION, REASON, MANNER, COMITATIVE, and SOURCE. It also functions as a morphological CAUSATIVE with one major class of verbs. Both applicatives can operate on both intransitive and transitive roots/stems to increase valence. With complex stems, Maa allows up to four non-oblique arguments in a clause.

This paper focuses on the radial semantic structure of the ‘instrumental’ applicative, while also demonstrating its syntactic effects, as a step toward better understanding cross-Nilotic applicative patterns. The study is based on a corpus of around 100 texts plus elicited data. In examples, I will use small capitals to represent semantic role concepts, and simply ‘instrument’ for the name of the morpheme.

Maa is dominantly a verb-initial language. The language has a marked-nominative case system, signalled by tone on full NPs and free pronouns. There are 16 or more tonal classes for case, varying by the specific noun or its modifier (Tucker & Mpaayei 1955). Definite objects usually have null realization, but a transitive verb is clearly understood to have object unless it carries the antipassive derivation.

### Syntactic effects

We’ll first take a quick look at the syntactic effect of the *-ie(k)* suffix. (1) puts the “instrument” used for *shor* ‘take shelter (from rain)’ in an oblique phrase marked by *t(ε)*. In contrast, (2) has the same verb *shor* but now with the instrumental applicative. The definite-null object in the highlighted clause is co-referent with *inkájjík naádopa* ‘houses that are effective’.

- (1) k=á-**shór**                      t=ená                      áji                      peê      m-áa-sha-**íkí**  
CN2-1SG-**take.shelter**    OBL=this.F.NOM    house.NOM    so    OPT-3>1SG-rain(v.)-**DAT**  
‘I am going to take shelter in/with this house so that I will not be rained on.’
- (2) m-ε-áta      mk=ájjík      naá-dop-a                      **peê**      **shúr-ié**  
NEG-3-have FPL=houses    REL.FPL-be.able-MID.NPF    so.that    CVB.**take.shelter-INST**  
‘there are no houses that are effective for taking shelter (from rain) with’

Examples with transitive roots will be presented in the process of discussing the semantics of *-ie(k)*.

### Instrument (INST) role

A prototypical instrument is a manipulated item, used to carry out some action. The action might or might not affect some other item (e.g. a base THEME or PATIENT). In (3), *-ie(k)* creates a transitive stem from *puo(n)* ‘go.PL’, where ‘cars’ is the applied object used for moving.

- (3) n-é-puo-**yié**                      in=gárrīn      enyê                      ópény  
CN1-3-go.PL-**INST**    FPL=cars    3PL.POSS    alone.PL  
‘and they move on with their own cars alone’ (elengon2.016)

In (4) *-ie(k)* operates on transitive *dol* ‘see’ to create a ditransitive stem, with ‘hands’ as the applied object used for sensing a child.

- (4) n-ε-taá            duó            mk=áík    e-dol-**íé**  
 CN1-3-be.SBJV    relevant    FPL=hands    3.CVB-see-INST  
 ‘it is with the hands she can see it’ [referring to a blind person]

*-ie(k)* also allows abstract instruments, which are not physically manipulated. Thus in (5), the applied object semantically edges into the MEANS of knowing something.

- (5) n-é-ēkō            en=kiróishi    í-yíóló-ún-yie            en=kérái  
 CN1-3-become    FSG=weight    2-know-INCH-INST    FSG=child  
 ajó            ε-gíra    a-buló  
 COMP            3-PROG    INF.SG-grow  
 ‘It is by the weight you know a child that she is growing’ (embul.029-030)

In (6), the applied object is ‘oil’, which was overtly expressed in prior sentences. Here, the semantic role effect of the instrumental might be argued to be ambiguous between an INSTRUMENT and a THEME.

- (6) n-é-el-**íék**-i                            em=bátá    ó=r=karr ...  
 CN1-3-smear-INST-IMPS    FSG=area    OF=MSG=chest  
 ‘it [the oil] is rubbed on that area of the chest’ (engobata)

In (7), ‘seats’ could be interpreted either as an instrument for sitting, or a location to sit on. This underscores the role of lexical verb meaning in mediating semantic extensions of the applicative.

- (7) n-é-ya-on-í                            il=oríkān    áa-ton-**ie**  
 CN1-3-take-VEN-IMPS    MPL=seats    INF.PL-sit-INST  
 ‘Seats were brought to be sat on’ (enamuke1.0054)

Such vagueness between roles nicely shows the way in which the meaning of the grammatical morpheme *-ie(k)* may extend cognitively from one meaning to another. We now turn to these other meanings.

## Location

Corpus data show that LOCATION is one of the most common interpretations of the ‘instrument’ applicative. Most commonly the specific type of location is PLACE OF PREDICATE, as seen in (8)-(9).

- (8) n-é-bik-**ie**                            enk=áj  
 CN1-3-remain-INST    FSG=home  
 ‘S/he remains in the home.’
- (9) órē    nánó    náa    Mbéya    áa-to-iun-**yiek**-î  
 DSCN    me    COP    Mbeya    3>1SG-PF-give.birth-INST-IMPS  
 ‘but for me I was/have been born in Mbeya’ (ParakuyoOrigins2.5)

Most applied INST-LOCATIVES in the corpus are stationary places where a situation holds true, as just seen. In a few corpus examples the instrumental can be read as designating a SOURCE from which a movement trajectory begins, as in (10)-(11). The reading of SOURCE appears to be quite contextually or verb-dependent. In (10)-(11), the verb ‘take out, remove’ and the concept of separating cows and gardens almost necessitates a SOURCE reading.

- (10) en=oshî                            nε-itayuny-**íék** -i                            in=kík  
 FSG=always                            REP.PLACE.SG-take.out-INST-IMPS    FPL=faeces  
 ‘the usual place where/from which faeces are removed’ (letabo2.011)
- (11) tó-rish-**ie**                            in=kíshú    en=kurmá!  
 IMP.SG-separate-INST    FPL=cattle    FSG=garden  
 ‘Keep away/separate the cows from the garden!’

Notably, GOAL cannot be expressed by *-ie(k)*; this is function of *-aki(n)*.

## Means

By metaphorical extension from INSTRUMENT, a MEANS or even REASON interpretation may result if the applied object is a situation rather than a physical item or physical place.

- (12) n-á-antú dúó n-á-íshíún-yīē ínâ tókôl  
CN1-1SG-come relevant CN1-1SG-recover-INST that.FSG completely  
'then I became completely well because of it [a sucking procedure].'

In (13), transitive *tīl* 'be at' has 'house' as its base LOCATION, as a core argument. The instrumental applicative *-ie(k)* allows 'elder' as a kind of MEANS that enables the boy to be in the house.

- (13) e-tíi-īe ol=ayíóní ol=payíán enk=ají.  
3-be.at-INST MSG=boy.NOM MSG=elder FSG=house  
'The boy is in the house with/because of the man.'  
(eg. The boy depends on the man for food or housing.)

## Reason

Tucker & Mpaayei (1955: 142) say that the instrumental also can convey the reason for which one acts. This is rare in the text corpus, but (14) does attest it.

- (14) mme=átā-ī apá en=tóki na-iḡuar-íék-i ol=mórráni  
NEG=have-IMPS before FSG=thing REL.FSG-leave-INST-IMPS MSG=warrior  
'There was no thing [reason] for which a warrior should be left (behind alone)' (MurranoKisonko2.0010)

## Comitative

An applied object licensed by *-ie(k)* can be a COMITATIVE. In (15) where *iyíóók* 'us' is a COMITATIVE co-AGENT with the 'you all'.

- (15) é-nyoitó é-ísik-íé iyíóók  
IMP.PL-wake.up IMP.PL-flee-INST us  
'You all get up and flee with us.'

(16) also shows a COMITATIVE with an intransitive base verb, but here the comitative cannot be construed as a co-AGENT. Instead, this is more like a moving THEME that accompanies a moving AGENT.

- (16) n-é-kuet-un-yíék-i kolé  
CN1-3-run-VEN-INST-PL milks  
'and they rushed towards the reference point with the milk.'

In (17), the instrumental suffix creates a ditransitive stem with *kína* 'breast' still as an object of *ḡar* 'share', and 'two elderly men' as the applied COMMITATIVE object which also functions as the head of the relative clause. Here the comitative is a co-AGENT of a base transitive verb.

- (17) il=payianí aáre kitúaaak ó-ḡar-īe pápâ kína  
MPL=elders two.M elderly.PL MPL.REL-share-INST my.father.NOM breast  
'two old men with whom my father shared the breast'  
i.e. who are brothers to my father) (Camus4.342)

The example set in (18)-(20) again shows the syntactic effects of the instrumental applicative. First, *rrɔ(r)* 'speak' is intransitive, as in (18), though it can take a restricted type of (cognate) object such as the name of a language, as in (19). Note that it takes an oblique comitative in (20), marked by the preposition *ó*.

(18) ε-gíra ol=páyian a-iró ó líkâi  
 3-PROG MSG=elder.NOM INF.SG-speak ASSOC other  
 ‘The man is speaking with the other one.’

(19) ε-gíra ol=meebí a-ít te=n-é-írɔ Maa  
 3-PROG MSG=foreigner.NOM INF.SG-pronounce.badly OBL=CN1-3-speak Maa  
 ‘The foreigner is speaking with an accent when he speaks Maa.’

In (20), the same verb carries the instrumental applicative, with comitative meaning.<sup>1</sup>

(20) kí-ti-ship-áte taá pápa kí-rór-îê iyíé  
 1PL-PF-be.happy-MID.PF.PL EMPH my.father CVB.1PL-talk-INST you  
 ‘we have become very happy, father, as we talk with you’ (Camus4.244)

The COMITATIVE extension may be based on a metonymic shift from *-ie(k)* first designating “a thing used by the agent”, which performe is typically “located with” the agent while being used, to just “a thing that is located with the agent.”

### Causee

Maa has a conjugational distinction between two verb classes, called “Class 1” and “Class 2”. One difference between the two classes is that Class 2 verbs use the instrumental applicative as a morphological causative. This is particularly evident when the applied object is animate.

There are two subtypes of CAUSEE: indirect, where the causee has some agency in carrying out the action; and direct, where the CAUSEE is directly manipulated much like a THEME or PATIENT. With Class 2 verbs, the Maa instrumental applicative covers this full range of causee types.

We first illustrate direct causation. (21) has an inanimate causee. In fact, one could certainly argue whether this should be called a causee at all.

(21) m-ε-áta ol=mórráni lé=m-é-nyórr te=n-é-í-pus-íék-i enk=áiná  
 NEG-3-exist MSG=warrior REL-NEG-3-like OBL=CN1-3-VBLZ-blue-INST-IMPS FSG=hand  
 ‘There isn’t a warrior who doesn’t want (his) hand to be made blue’  
 (lit: to be made blue the hand). [in this way he will be identified as generous]’

Examples (22) and (23) are from texts about what happens when someone dies. In both, the “causee” is the person who has died. Clearly, this applied object no longer can exercise agency. Again, one might suggest that the applied object is actually a THEME which undergoes caused-motion.

(22) n-é-ípaŋ-íék-i ol=adúóo tonjáni  
 CN1-3-exit-INST-IMPS MSG=aforementioned person  
 ‘and that aforementioned person is taken out’ (i.e. caused to exit)  
 (aisinani.005)

(23) Óre aké peê é-yâ áap-uo áa-irrag-ie  
 DSCN just when CVB.3-take INF.PL-go.PL INF.PL-lie.down-INST  
 ‘When they take him to lay him down ...’ (i.e. caused to lie down)  
 (enkeeya.033)

The next example is perhaps transitional between direct and indirect causation. The verb in (24) literally means ‘when they make them dance’. The people caused to dance are young initiates who, as animates who will perform the dance, have agency. But in the text, the import of the clause is not so much about

<sup>1</sup> If the base root were considered transitive with a selectionally-restricted THEME object ‘language’, then here the instrumental applicative would be analyzed as redirecting the object role from THEME to COMITATIVE.

causing someone to dance; rather ‘dancing’ is metonymic for the initial ceremony in an initiation process, which is clearly in the hands of and under the control of the elders.

- (24) óre é-ípák-îê ...  
 DSCN CVB.3-dance-INST  
 ‘when they are doing the initial ceremony ...’ (bulunoto.063)

The final examples are more clearly indirect causation. Example (25) describes a situation where the cows will move under their own power. Example (26) demonstrates a situation where the 1SG applied object clearly exercises some degree of agency, as an indirect CAUSEE.

- (25) e-idurr-íék-i áa-rευ kulîê kuapí  
 3-migrate-INST-IMPS INF.PL-drive others lands  
 ‘they [cows] are migrated/made to migrate to other lands’ (malk02.169)

- (26) áa-ı̄ı̄at-íé ı̄ı̄ı̄átúny  
 3>1SG-flee.from-INST lion  
 ‘He made me flee from the lion.’

Possibly the causee meaning extension proceeds from a literal “(inanimate) instrument” where an AGENT manipulates a prototypically inanimate object as a tool, to “direct CAUSEE” where the causee is quite THEME/PATIENT-like, to “indirectly accomplishing something via an animate intermediary” where the causee retains more agency.

### Conclusions

Close examination of the semantic effects of *-ie(k)* shows how features of NP referents (place, a situation, animacy), and the meanings of particular verbs, can contribute to the interpretation of notions typically referred to as INSTRUMENT, versus LOCATION, versus THEME, etc. Most approaches to semantic roles have said that they must have their ontology in predicates, adpositions, and elements like applicatives – but not in features of referents themselves. Saving a predicate-based view of argument roles surely calls for a macro-role approach to what is syntactically-relevant (cf. Van Valin & LaPolla 1997). We could suggest that *-ie(k)* licenses a macro-role of what we might call ITEM-LOCATED WITH-AGENT, and that from this, particular pragmatic issues and semantic features of participants and actions yield more precise interpretations – but these are pragmatic inferences or interpretations.

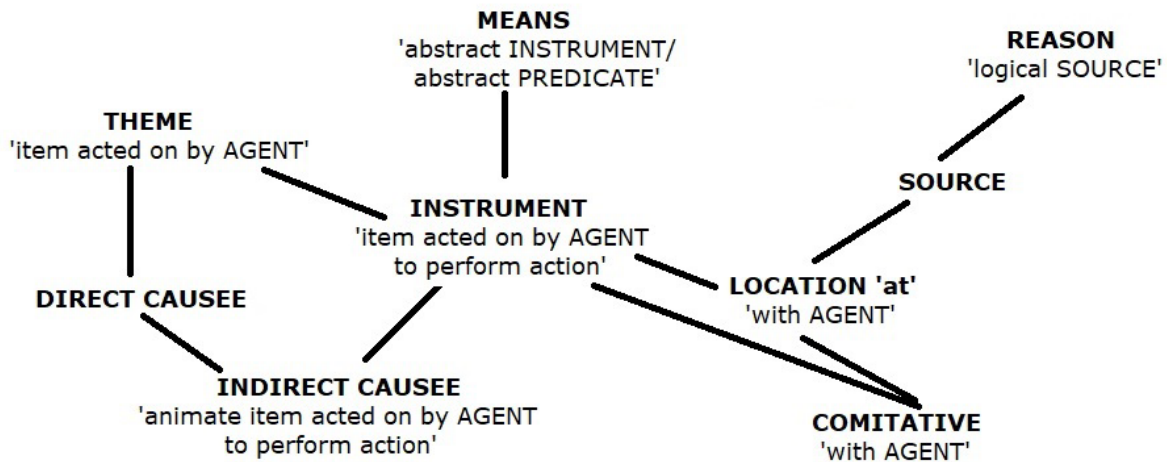


Figure 1. Possible extension of prototypical INSTRUMENT meaning

Without knowing the historical origins of *-ie(k)* it is difficult to say exactly how such a general macro-role has developed. But I have suggested specific semantic shifts that may have led from the idea of a prototypical INSTRUMENT in the sense of ‘an item manipulated by agent to carry out the action’ to all the more specific meanings; and it is this collective that comprises the macro-role.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am grateful to Leonard Ole-Kotikash, A. Keswe Mapena, Sarah Tukuoo, Stephen Muntet, Loatha Lesilale, Peter Ndetio, Lazaro Ole-Melubo, Neema, and many others for assistance with the Maa data. Funding for this research was partially provided by NSF grant SBR-9616482 and Fulbright Foundation fellowships for research in Kenya and Tanzania.

### **References (Selected)**

- Tucker, Archibald N. & John Ole Mpaayei. 1955. *Maasai Grammar, with Vocabulary*.  
Van Valin, Robert & Randy LaPolla. 1997. *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.