## Polysemy, Distribution, and Variation in Kinyarwanda Verbal ra-Supplemental Handout Child Language Proseminar

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Kinyarwanda has morphological complexity:

(1) *U-ra-gi-som-a-ho.*2sg.SBJ-PROG-7.OBJ-read-IPFV-16.LOC
'You're reading it there.

The prefix *ra*- has at least three different functions: a) present progressive, b) proposition-finality, and c) phonological homophony avoidance. (1) demonstrates the present progressive *ra*-.

In Kinyarwanda propositional content (bolded) must remain adjacent, in contrast to English (2a). In non-present-progressive contexts, *ra*- appears when the verb is proposition-final (2b).

- (2) a. **Wahageze kare** ku bw'amahirwe. you arrived early fortunately 'You fortunately arrived early.'
  - b. Warahageze ku bw'amahirwe.you arrived fortunately'You fortunately arrived.'

Lastly, (3) shows a ra- that isn't progressive or proposition-final.

(3) Nsanga warahageze ejo.
I realize you arrived yesterday.'

I argue that this *ra*- is phonologically inserted for homophony avoidance: *wahageze* is "taken."

Across all three functions, ra- is forbidden in negation (among other environments):

- (4) a. Barasoma ibitabo. b. Ntibasoma ibitabo. they are reading books 'They are reading books.' they aren't reading books.'
  - c. Barasomye rwose. d. Ntibasomye rwose. they read definitely 'They definitely read.' 'They definitely didn't read.'
  - e. Nsanga barasomye. f. Nsanga ntibasomye.
    I realize they read I realize they didn't read.'

    'I realize they didn't read.'

As unmarked verbs have many other functions, the lack of ra- occasionally results in ambiguity. ra- disambiguates progressive from non-progressive in the present tense (5a-b) but there is no disambiguator when negated (5c-d).

- (5) a. Barasoma ibitabo. b. Basoma ibitabo. they are reading books 'They are reading books.' b. Basoma ibitabo. they read books.'
  - c. Ntibasoma ibitabo. d. Ntibasoma ibitabo. they aren't reading books they don't read books 'They aren't reading books.'