

**The manifold uses of *-a* in Naro, including comments on *a*.**

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Several homophones *-a* occur in Naro. In this paper, an attempt is made to disambiguate the functional properties of *-a*, and also of the stand-alone *a*. The different uses will be shown, together with examples of each. A distinction is made between uses of *-a* carrying syntactic meaning, and occurrences where no syntactic meaning of *-a* can be identified. Differences between the *-a* suffixes and the *a* words are shown, followed by some statistical information, plus a transcribed Naro text to show the environments in which these morphemes occur.

**Keywords:** Naro, syntax, grammar, ligature, inserted vowel, connector

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In this article, an attempt is made to disambiguate the functional properties of different morphemes of the widely used homophones *-a* and the stand-alone *a* in Naro.<sup>2</sup> Several homophones *-a* occur in Naro, and their uses are manifold. A summary is given of the different uses, together with examples of each. A distinction will be made between uses of *-a* carrying syntactic meaning (section A), and occurrences of *-a* not carrying syntactic meaning, referring to cases where the addition of *-a* to morphemes is found as a phonetic by-product of the linking of those morphemes (section B). In section C, differences with the morphemes are shown, followed by some statistical information in section D. A transcribed and annotated Naro text is added to show the environments in which these morphemes occur.

Naro is a West Kalahari Khoe language that is part of the Khoe branch of the Khoe-Kwadi family. It is a suffixing language of a predominantly isolating type, with a preference for SOV word order. Neither verbs nor nominals are inflected. Person, Gender, and Number are integrated in the PGN-marker, the grammatical element indicating these features of a referent. In Naro, PGNs encode three persons (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>), three genders (masculine, feminine, common/neuter), and three numbers (singular, dual, plural). Person, Gender, and Number are structural properties of the NP, not of the VP. A word class “articles” is not found, and neither is the word class “pronouns” as being separate from PGNs. Insofar as articles and pronouns can be identified, these are subsumed under PGN-markers. PGN-markers, TAM-markers, postpositions, and conjunctions form closed classes, while verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and interjections are open classes.<sup>3</sup>

The language is spoken in the West of Botswana and in the East of Namibia, by an estimated 10,000 mother tongue speakers and an additional 8,000 people who speak it as a second language.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr. H. Eaton for her valuable comments to this paper. The paper presented here does not necessarily reflect her views.

<sup>2</sup> *-a* and *a* morphemes also occur frequently in related Khoe languages, but it would lead too far for this article to cover the presumed cognates.

<sup>3</sup> For the information in this paragraph, cf. Visser 2022:47.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Visser 2022: chapter 2.

It boasts a wealth of literature in and about the language, with many literacy materials, a Naro-English and English-Naro dictionary, phonological and grammatical descriptions, and a New Testament in the language. Visser 2022 provides an extensive treatment of PGN-markers in Naro, and describes the challenges and possibilities offered by the complicated Naro PGN-system when translating foreign texts (like the New Testament) into Naro – but also when speaking the language.

## 2. Uses of *-a* carrying syntactic meaning

The particle *-a* may carry the following syntactic meanings, which will be spelled out in this section:

1. interrogative particle, 2. obligatory ligature in associative construction, 3. perfective aspect marker; 4. intensifier, 5. use in listings, 6. unclear uses of *-a*, as in imperative clauses and in negations.

## 3. *-a* as interrogative particle

The interrogative particle *-a* is usually suffixed to the subjectival PGN-marker:<sup>5 6 7</sup>

(1) *Gantsi koe =tsi ko qðò*  
 Gantsi LOC =2mSG<sup>8</sup> DUR go  
 ‘you (m) are going to Gantsi’

(2) *Gantsi koe =tsi-a ko qðò*  
 Gantsi LOC =2mSG-*a* DUR go  
 ‘are you (m) going to Gantsi?’

Note: the interrogative meaning can also be expressed by *a* (instead of *-a*) which is found at the beginning of a clause:

<sup>5</sup> In the data presented, tone may play a role. See Visser 2013b for remarks on tone in Naro.

<sup>6</sup> “=” is used for clitic boundaries. As PGNs are analysed as clitics, they will appear with this symbol. The “=” may not always reflect of morpho-phonemic junctions. Where the PGN is written conjunctively in the Naro orthography, the PGN (with the preceding “=”) will appear in the glossing straight after the preceding element. Where the PGN is written disjunctively, it will appear with a space or tab.

<sup>7</sup> The Naro orthography is being used. It corresponds with IPA as follows:

	<u>dental</u>		<u>alveolar</u>		<u>palatal</u>		<u>lateral</u>	
plain click	c	l	q	!	tc	‡	x	l
click + velar fricative	cg	lx	qg	!x	tcg	‡x	xg	lx
glottalized (click + velar fricative)	cg'	lx'	qg'	!x'	tcg'	‡x'	xg'	lx'
aspirated click	ch	lh	qh	!h	tch	‡h	xh	lh
glottalized click	c'	l'	q'	!'	tc'	‡'	x'	l'
voided click	dc	lg	dq	!g	dtc	‡g	dx	lg
nasal click	nc	ln	nq	!n	ntc	‡n	nx	ln

Additionally, [x] is represented by “<g>”.

<sup>8</sup> The following notations are used to indicate the (partial) meaning content of PGN-markers: 1/2/3: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person; m/f/c: masculine, feminine, common gender; SG/DU/PL (in CAPS): singular, dual or plural number. The three features will be presented in the order person, gender, number, with no dot between gender and number, and the number in capitals, e.g. 1mPL: ‘1<sup>st</sup> person masculine, plural’.

- (3) *a*      *Gantsi koe*      =*tsi*      *ko*      *qõò*  
 INT      Gantsi LOC      =2mSG      DUR      go  
 ‘are you (m) going to Gantsi?’  
 This use is regarded as a Tswanaism.

#### 4. Ligature in associative construction

In the associative<sup>9</sup> construction, *-a* is put between noun and PGN-marker:

- (4)            *tcúú*            =*ba*                            ‘the head’  
 head            =3mSG  
 (5)            *tcúú-a*          =*ba*                            ‘his head’  
 head-*a*        =3mSG

Note the big difference in meaning between the two constructions. In the construction without *-a* (4), the PGN indicates the person, gender and number of the preceding noun, while in the associative construction (5), the PGN-marker represents the possessor (and no information is provided about person, gender, and number of the noun).

In the following example, the contrast is even more remarkable, as the number and gender of the possessed referent in (7) are potentially very different [‘child(ren) (m and/or f)’] from the number and gender of the referent in (6) [‘boy’], giving rise to a different translation in a construction that is very similar on the surface:

- (6)            *cóá*              =*ba*                            ‘the boy’  
 child            =3mSG  
 (7)            *cóá-a*<sup>10</sup>        =*ba*                            ‘his child(ren) (m and/or f)’  
 child-*a*        =3mSG

From these examples, it is also clear that *-a* in this construction is not a product of some morphophonemic process, resulting from the combination of a noun with a PGN-marker. If it were, we would not have found the contrast as established between examples (4) vs. (5) and (6) vs. (7). Instead, it is obligatory.

#### 5. Aspect marker

*-a* may indicate the perfective aspect. For example:

- (8)            *ncãa*            =*tsi*            *tséé*                            ‘you (m) worked (in recent past)’  
 RECPST        =2mSG        work  
 (9)            *ncãa*            =*tsi*            *tséé-a*                        ‘you (m) have worked (in recent past)’  
 RECPST        =2mSG        work-PF

In constructions where the PGN-marker follows the verb, *-a* usually follows both verb and PGN-marker:

<sup>9</sup> For more information about the associative construction, see Visser 2022:85f. For Khwe, Kilian-Hatz 2008: 77f. calls an apparently related construction "genitive". But at least for Naro, this term would cover the *di* construction (called possessive by Kilian-Hatz) as well. The designation "associative" is deemed more appropriate.

<sup>10</sup> The tone on *cóá* ‘child’ is lowered in this construction.

- (10) *tséé-a* =*tsi-a* 'you (m) have worked'  
work-*a* =2mSG-*a*

## 6. Intensifier

Different uses were found where *-a* indicates some kind of intensifier, highlighting or emphasizing (part of) a statement. It is difficult though to pinpoint the exact function of each. They are listed together here because the function may very well be related.

**6.1 *-a* at the end of the NP.** *-a* as emphasis marker may be found at the end of the NP:

- (11) *gaa=s* *xðò* =*sa*  
DEM6<sup>11</sup>=3fSG parent =3fSG  
'the mother'
- (12) *gaa=s* *xðò* =*sa-a*  
DEM6=3fSG parent =3fSG-*a*  
'the (very?) mother'
- (13) *ga=ba* *hěé* *naka* *ga=m* *di=s* *x'áé-q'oo=s*  
DEF=3mSG also and DEF=3mSG POSS=3fSG home-inside=3fSG  
*di* =*ne* *hěéthěé-a* *kò* *xg'ae* =*sa* *úú-a*  
POSS =3cPL also-*a* PST meeting =3fSG have-PF  
'he and his family (which was unexpected) had a meeting'

If *-a* is left out (as in (11)), no emphasis is indicated.

The text at the end of this article provides a good example where the *-a* makes a difference, probably indicating contrastive focus:

- 6j *naka* =*ra* *tiri=m* *dqùi* =*ba* *qgóó*  
and=1SG my=3mSG rope =3mSG hold

The storyteller could have used =*r* (without *-a*, as in 6h), in which case there would have been less contrast with the addressee: 'and I will hold the other end'

This use of *-a* may be found in presentational statements, which also might include some kind of contrastive focus:

- (14) *ncěe-a* *chðò* *di=m* *nxoe=m* *ga* =*me* *e*  
DEM1-*a* last POSS=3mSG month=3mSG INTENS =3mSG COP  
'this is the last month'

This *-a* cannot just be left out. Either *-a* is used, or a PGN-marker, as in (15):

- (15) *ncěe* =*ba* *chðò* *di=m* *nxoe=m* *ga* =*me* *e*  
DEM1 =3mSG last POSS=3mSG month=3mSG INTENS =3mSG COP  
'this is the last month'

<sup>11</sup> See Saul 2017 for more explanation about demonstratives in Naro.

**6.2 *-a* following a noun.** *-a* as emphasis marker may also follow the noun and precede the PGN-marker:

- (16) *Tomku-a =zi* 'Tomku and the other ladies with her'  
*Tomku-a =3fPL*  
 Compare the default form (the one without *-a*):
- (17) *Tomku =zi* 'Tomku and other ladies'  
*Tomku =3fPL*

In a similar example, *-a* is inserted at the end of a NP, but still before the final PGN-marker:

- (18) *Q'òà kii =sara Qauqau kii-a =sara* 'Mrs. Hare and Mrs. Qauqau'  
 Hare Mrs =3fDU Qauqau Mrs-*a* =3fDU

The uses described in 4.1 and 4.2 raise the question about the difference between these two uses. For example, it is highly probable that *Tomku zia* and *Tomkua zi* indicate a different kind of emphasis. A suggestion may be, that *-a* straight after a noun might be related to the pronoun base *ga-* [*xa-*] 'definiteness/clusivity marker' and might be explained as referring to an anaphoric referent.<sup>12</sup> This needs more study.

## 7. Use in listings

Where two or more nouns are listed, each noun may be followed by *-a*:

- (19) *Ciqae =tsara Tshabu =tsara* 'Ciqae and Tshabu'  
 Ciqae =2mDU Tshabu =2mDU
- (20) *Ciqae-a =tsara Tshabu-a =tsara* 'Ciqae, and Tshabu'  
 Ciqae-*a* =2mDU Tshabu-*a* =2mDU

The difference between the default construction in (19) and the one in (20) may be that in (20) there is more focus on the individuals (indicated by the comma).

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<sup>12</sup> This would mean that after the presumed reduction from *gaa-* (demonstrative) to *ga-* (definiteness/clusivity marker) (see Visser 2022:76) and/or to the intensifier *ga*, there would be a further reduction from *ga-* to *-a*. For the difference between *gaa-* and *ga-*, see the following examples:

- (1) *gaa=m* *di=s* *khòè* =*sa* 'this one's wife'  
 DEM6=3mSG POSS=3fSG person =3fSG
- (2) *ga=m* *di=s* *khòè* =*sa* 'his wife'  
 DEF=3mSG POSS=3fSG person =3fSG

The following example shows the use of the intensifier *ga*:

- (3) [*ga=kham*] *ga* *a* 'it is indeed us'  
 DEF=1cDU INTENS COP

This use of *-a* also reminds of the associative plural *-xa* which exists in the Kalahari Khoe language Ts'ixa (Güldemann & Fehn 2017: 515). Again, *-xa* may perhaps shorten to *-a*.

The list may also be a listing of possibilities: one or more, or all items may meet certain requirements:

*A-a, B-a, C-a* ‘A, (and/or)<sup>13</sup> B, (and/or) C...’

The list may indicate items to choose from. For example:

- (21) *duutsa* *gúù* =*sa* =*tsi* *ko* *tc'ěe:* *kofi-a* *màí-a* *téè-a*,  
 which thing =3fSG =2mSG DUR want coffee-a maize-a tea-a  
*kana* *bîi-a?*  
 or milk-a  
 ‘what do you want: coffee, mealie, tea, or milk?’

In this example, the intention is that not all, but one, or a few, are chosen.

At first sight, this latter use might seem close to that of a question marker (A.1), but this kind of *-a* can also be used in a statement. In this case, a speaker may conclude the list with the word *dùú* ‘what(ever)’ followed by *-a*:

- (22) *kofi-a*, *màí-a*, *téè-a*, *bîi-a*, *dùú-a*, *kg'amaga* =*tsi* *gha*  
 coffee-a maize-a tea-a milk-a what-a just =2mSG FUT  
*au* =*te* *e*  
 give =1SG O  
 ‘Coffee, mealie, tea, milk, what(ever), you can just give it to me’

The same may be done in a list with another question word, like *dii* ‘who’:

- (23) *Ciqae-a* =*xu*, *Tshabu-a* =*xu*, *Ciko-a* =*xu*, *dii* *ga*=*xu-a*  
 Ciqae-a=3mPL Tshabu-a =3mPL Ciko-a =3mPL who DEF=3mPL-a  
*qôô-a?*<sup>14</sup>  
 go-PF  
 ‘Ciqae, or Tshabu, or Ciko (and others), who have gone?’

In this list, the speaker is not sure who have gone. Some possible options are mentioned, but others are not excluded.

## 8. Unclear uses of *-a*

There are some cases of *-a* where it is not clear (up till now) what the function may be. I will briefly discuss the use in subsequent imperative clauses (6.1) and use in negation (6.2).

<sup>13</sup> The emphasis is on ‘or’, but ‘and’ is not excluded.

<sup>14</sup> The PGN-marker (*xu*) may be left out, but this is less common.

**8.1 *-a* in imperatives after *naka* ‘and’.** In subsequent imperative clauses introduced by *naka* ‘and’ (or ‘so that’), the PGN-marker that serves as subject may carry *-a* as well. This may carry some emphasis, but more study is needed to confirm this.<sup>15</sup> For example:

- (24) *ncěe koe =tu dàra naka =tu-a hàà*  
 DEM1 LOC =2cPL visit and =2cPL-*a* come  
 ‘visit here and come’

**8.2 Use in a negation.** In the following example, *-a* is tentatively interpreted as intensifier:<sup>16</sup>

- (25) *qōò tama =tsi-a* ‘you are not going’  
 go NEG =2mSG-*a*

If it is indeed an intensifier, it would be basically the same as in par. A.4. Its function is not totally clear, though. It is also difficult to view it as a TAM marker, for example.

## 9. Preliminary conclusion

From this overview in section A, it must be concluded that the mentioned *-a*’s in Naro are not functionally related. Only between functions 4 (intensifier) and 6 (negation), a functional relation might be established, which relation could possibly be extended to function number 5 (listing of possibilities). At least, the *-a*’s in function 3 until 5 (and possibly in 7) should be analysed as homonyms.<sup>17</sup>

### B. Occurrences of *-a* not carrying syntactic meaning

The following instances of the use *-a* are found where no syntactic meaning can be identified: 1. as ligature between noun and *-n* (PGN), 2. as ligature between verbs, 3. in vowel anticipation, and 4. in adaptations from another language.

#### 1. Ligature between noun and *-n* (PGN)

*-a* is found as an insertion between a noun and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person SG neuter PGN-marker *-n*<sup>18</sup>:

- (26) *kg’ui-a=n* ‘words’  
 word-*a*=3nSG

The addition of *-a* seems to be necessary because of the following *-n*, but there is no good explanation for this feature yet. There is no phonological trigger: a following *-n* apparently causes the insertion of *-a*, but with another nasal (*-m*), we do not find the addition of *-a*. So following

<sup>15</sup> At several occasions, it was said that *-a* cannot be left out.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Visser 2022:99.

<sup>17</sup> Haacke 2014:76 glosses *-a* as oblique case in certain instances. If this is right, another function of *-a* could possibly be distinguished. However, I have not been able to establish this as such for Naro. (For Nama / Khoekhoegowab, Haacke has convincingly argued for this, e.g. in Haacke 1978.) While in the example mentioned by Haacke (ibid.), *-a* should always be present, in comparable sentences (with other PGN-markers), the *-a* is not found.

<sup>18</sup> It may be of interest that this only applies to the PGN-3 and PGN-5 forms of 3nSG (cf. Visser 2022 par. 3.3 for the different PGN-series.) The insertion is not found between the noun and the other forms of 3nSG, nor between nouns and other PGN-markers of these series.

nasality in itself does not cause the insertion of *-a*. It should be noticed however that the observed insertion seems to be obligatory, as the option without *-a* is not permitted:

- (27) \**kg'ui=n*  
word=3nSG

Because of this obligatory character, we cannot assume that this *-a* carries meaning.

It may be of interest that, if the object follows the verb, the sequence "noun + *-a* + *-n*" is prohibited. *-n* becomes *ne* in this case.

- (28) *Thama =ba ko péré-a=n séè*  
Thama =3mSG DUR bread-*a*=3nSG take  
'Thama takes bread'
- (29) \**Thama =ba ko séè péré-a=n*  
Thama =3mSG DUR take bread-*a*=3cSG
- (30) *Thama =ba ko séè péré-a =ne*  
Thama =3mSG DUR take bread-*a*=3cSG  
'Thama takes bread'

Other than in (28), *-a* may be removed from (30). So *-a* in (30) can possibly be interpreted as containing contrastive focus. This should however not lead to the automatic conclusion that *-a* in (28) indicates such a focus as well.

## 2. Ligature between verbs

The juncture morpheme *-a* is found all over Kalahari Khoe verbal morphology.<sup>19</sup> Where two verbs are combined in Naro, *-a* is obligatorily inserted as a ligature between the verbs if the first verb ends in a nasal.<sup>20</sup> For example:

- (31) *kóm-a q'ãa* 'understand'  
hear-*a* know

The *-a* is optional in sequencing of verbs in general, as in:

- (32) *qgóó ghùì* 'pick up, lift up'  
hold lift
- (33) *qgóó-a ghùì* 'pick up, lift up'  
hold-*a* lift

It may be that there is a difference in meaning (in which case this should be discussed in section A), but up till now I have not been able to identify such a difference.<sup>21</sup>

In some cases (which are also morphologically conditioned), *-a* occurs with *-r-* or *-n-* within a verb form:<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See for example Vossen 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Visser 2010:179.

<sup>21</sup> Visser 2010:179.

<sup>22</sup> Visser 2010:182.



- (34) *qaa + máá -> qaa-r-a máá* 'seek for'  
 seek-*r-a* for  
 (35) \* *qaa máá*  
 seek for

### 3. Vowel anticipation

We also find *-a* in the phenomenon of vowel anticipation: under certain circumstances, the second vowel in a word with underlying CVCV structure may be anticipated and inserted between the first vowel and the second consonant:<sup>23</sup>

- /CV<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>2</sub>/ → [CV<sub>1</sub>V<sub>2</sub>CV<sub>2</sub>]  
 (36) /*nqona*/ → [*nqoana*] 'three'  
 (37) /*Koba*/ → [*Koaba*] (name)  
 (38) /*Dtcoga*/ → [*Dtcoaga*] (name)

### 4. In adaptations from another language

In transliterations from other languages, a vowel is often added in order to create the (usual) CV pattern. For example, where a name ends in a consonant, a vowel is added. This may be any vowel, but often it is *-a*.

- (39) *Josefa* 'Joseph'  
 Joseph

#### C. Difference with *a*

Even though the Naro morphemes consisting of *a* are different from the *-a* homophones (and therefore do not *need* to be discussed here), it is beneficial to contrast the two sets. In this section, an overview of the uses of *a* morphemes in Naro is presented. Subsequently, the following uses will be discussed: 1. general connector 'and', 2. use in same-subject-connector, 3. counter-expectation aspect marker, 4. reduplication of last sound, and 5. *a-* in vocative constructions.

#### 1. General connector 'and'

A very common usage of *a* is the one in the function of connector 'and'. For example:

- (40) *a tcgoà=m koe síi a máá*  
**and** elephant=3mSG LOC go **and** say  
 'and he went to the elephant and said'

The following example clearly shows the difference between the use of *-a* and *a* when used in the middle of two verbs:<sup>24</sup>

- (41) *tséé-a xg'ae* 'work together'  
 work-*a* meet  
 (42) *tséé a xg'ae* 'work and meet'  
 work *a* and meet

<sup>23</sup> See Visser 2013a:64. Alternatively, it might indicate an underlying CVVVCV pattern.

<sup>24</sup> See Visser 2010:179f. for more information about such differences.

Note that in (41), the specific meaning of the verb combination is not established by the insertion of *-a*, because it is optional, see above. Nevertheless, the examples show a vast contrast between *a* and *-a*.

## 2. Use in same cast clause connective

*a* can be found (two times) in the "same cast clause connective", a construction used in Naro to connect clauses that feature the same subject and a similar cast.<sup>25</sup>

Formation: *a* PGN *a*

Examples:<sup>26</sup>

- (43)            *a*    =*ba*        *a*                    'and he...'  
                   *a*    =3mSG      *a*
- (44)            *a*    =*tsi*        *a*                    'and you (m)...'  
                   *a*    =2mSG      *a*

There may well be a relationship between (the first) *a* in this construction and the regular *a* 'and', but the addition of the second *a* in the "same cast clause connective" clearly distinguishes the use of the two *a*'s from the general connection word.

## 3. Counter-expectation aspect marker

*a* may be used as an aspect marker in a verbal clause. Other than the connector *a* (C.1), which is used between two clauses, it occurs between the initial slot of a clause and a PGN-1 marker.<sup>27</sup>

This aspect marker *a* may seem to be related to the perfective aspect marker *-a* (A.3) but it apparently functions differently. Compare the following, where (45) has neither of the relevant morphemes, (46) has the perfective marker (twice) and (46) the *a*.

- (45)            *q̄d̄ò*    =*tsi*        *ko*                    'you are going'  
                   *go*       =2mSG      DUR
- q̄d̄ò-a* =*tsi-a*                    'you have gone'  
                   *go-PF* =2mSG-PF
- (46)            *q̄d̄ò*    *a*        =*tsi*                    'you go/went'  
                   *go*       *a*        =2mSG

It is difficult to pinpoint its meaning, but the construction usually indicates some unexpected or surprising development or action.<sup>28</sup>

The question can be asked, whether this *a* as counter-expectation aspect marker may be related to the intensifier *-a* in section A.4, where an example refers to counter-expectation as well. But both their position (end of NP vs. between the initial slot and a PGN-1) and pronunciation (*a* vs. *-a*) must lead to the conclusion that the morphemes are different.

<sup>25</sup> See Visser 2022, section 3.3.10 for more about same cast clause connective.

<sup>26</sup> For examples with full sentences, see the text below: 10a, 11a, 12b, 12c.

<sup>27</sup> For the relevance of the initial slot in Naro, see Visser 2022:93ff. For PGN-1 markers, see Visser 2022:70.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. also Visser 2010:193ff about "counter-expectation".

#### 4. Reduplication of last sound (in certain constructions)

There are instances of duplication of the last sound, in several ways.<sup>29</sup> This includes the possible duplication of the vowel *a*. See the contrast emerging in the following example:

(47) *igabaga* =*tsi* *ko* *ncēeska* *bóò* =*ta* *a*<sup>30</sup> ‘but now you see us’  
 but =2mSG DUR now see =1cPL *a*

(48) *igabaga* =*tsi* *ncēeska* *bóò* =*ta-a* ‘but now you have seen us’  
 but =2mSG now see =1cPL-PF

Example (47) shows a duplication of *a* (pronounced with a glottal stop), while example (48) contains *-a*, with a perfective meaning. The difference in meaning between the sentences cannot be explained by just the presence or absence of *ko* ‘DUR’, as *-a* ‘PF’ is different from *a* as a duplicated sound in objectival forms.<sup>31</sup>

#### 5. *a*- in vocative constructions<sup>32</sup>

The prefix *a*- (which resembles the *a* words) may be used in vocative constructions.<sup>33</sup> It can be called “attention-getting”.<sup>34</sup> For example:

(49) *a=xao-è* ‘hey you (mPL)!’  
 (DEM)=2mPL:3-VOC

### D. STATISTICS

Some research in Naro magazines<sup>35</sup> has yielded the following statistics about how many times the different uses of *-a* can be found. In order of frequency:

<i>count</i>	<i>kind of -a</i>	<i>percentage</i>
62	B1 ligature between noun and <i>-n</i>	43
36	B2 ligature between verbs	25
20	A3 perfective aspect	14
18	A4 emphasis	13
7	A2 associative ligature	5
<b>143</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>29</sup> See Visser 2022:71, 87.

<sup>30</sup> McGregor 2018 discusses an object marker (?)*a* in other Kalahari Khoe languages. The example given here shows the closest equivalent to such an object marker, but a big difference is that in Naro, the vowel varies with the preceding sound.

<sup>31</sup> See Visser 2022:87.

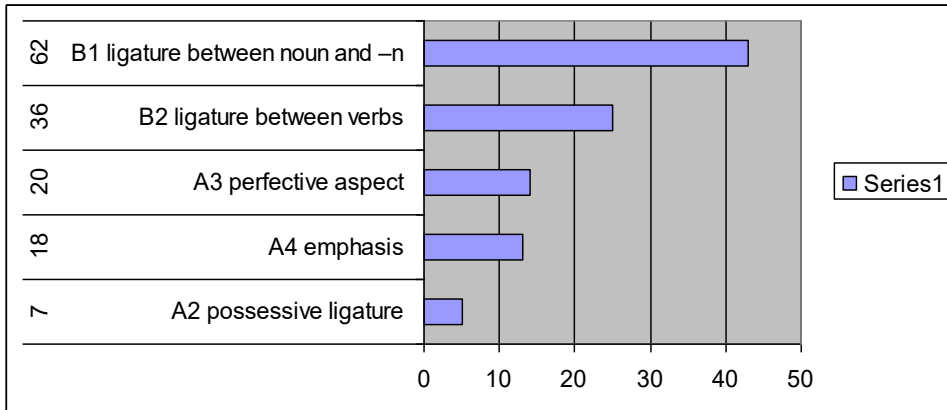
<sup>32</sup> See also Visser 2022:81.

<sup>33</sup> Because *a*- here does not really stand on its own, this occurrence could have been left out of the discussion, but on the other hand it is a separate morpheme, like *a*, so a discussion here is well justified.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Barnard 1985:19.

<sup>35</sup> Naro Nxara, December 2013 and January 2014. Each Naro magazine consists of four pages of text plus illustrations.

For the other usages, examples were not found in these magazines.



## E. CONCLUSION

In Naro, the form *-a* is used in several ways:

- *-a* may be used in different functions. Five were identified, of which the perfective and emphatic ones occur most frequently.
- The different functions of *-a* lead to the conclusion that they are different morphemes that happen to have the same form.
- *-a* may also serve as an inserted vowel, in four different ways. The *-a* before PGN-marker *-n*, and the one used as ligature between verbs scored the highest frequency.

*-a* is clearly to be distinguished from *a* ‘and, etc.’ (five uses were distinguished) When analysing Naro texts, one must be aware of the different functions (perhaps nine) of *-a*; and of course *a* (possibly five uses) as well.

## Q’òa (story about Hare, Hippo and Elephant)

This story by Bāu Fretz, recorded around 2000, was published earlier.<sup>36</sup> The glosses are adapted here in order to show the different uses of *-a* and *a*. The section numbers in this article were used as indicators, so “A1” indicates “interrogative”, etc. The indicators are printed in bold for easier recognition.

1 *Xg’ao* =*xu* *qgaò* =*ba* *hěé* *naka* *tcgoà* =*ba* *hěé*  
 REMPST =3mPL hippo =3mSG also and elephant =3mSG also  
*naka* *q’òà* =*ba* *hěéthěé* =*xu* *hàna*.  
 and hare =3mSG also =3mPL be.there  
 ‘Once there were a hippo, an elephant, and a hare.’

2a =*Me* *ko* *q’òà* =*ba* *hàà*  
 =3mSG:9 DUR hare =3mSG come

2b *a* *qgaò*=*m* *koe* *tcàrà-ku-a*=*n* *dtcàrà*.

C1 hippo=3mSG LOC be.friends-NOM-B1=3nSG request

‘Hare went to Hippo and asked him whether they could become friends (lit. friendship).’

3a =*Me* *qgaò* =*ba* *máá*:

<sup>36</sup> In Visser 2022 (appendix 4).

=3mSG:9 hippo =3mSG say  
 3b “A=*tse-è*, *táá*, *tíí* =*ra ga táá ěeta ii=m gúù=m*  
 C5=2mSG-voc, NEG 1SG =1SG INTENS NEG such be=3mSG thing=3mSG  
*cgoa tcárà-ku” témé.*  
 with be.friends-RECP QUOT  
 ‘But Hippo said: “Hey man, no; I cannot be a friend of such a small thing.”’

4a =*Me ko q’òà =ba máá:*  
 =3mSG:9 DUR hare =3mSG say

4b “*Mta hěé=s ka*  
 how do=3fSG INSTR

4c *a=tse-è tcárà =tsi-a =ra-a*  
 C5=2mSG-VOC be.friends =2mSG-A3 =1SG-A3

4d *ncĕeta=r ii igaba*  
 such=1SG be be though

4e *ke táá ěeta xam=s gúù =sa méé guu” témé.*  
 so NEG such feel=3fSG thing =3fSG say leave QUOT

‘Then Hare said: “Why? Hey man I am your friend even though I am this tiny, so don't say that.”’

5a =*Me máá:*  
 =3mSG:9 say

5b “A=*tse-è ěeta ii=∅ cóá=∅ cgoa tcárà-ku*  
 C5=2mSG-VOC such be=3nSG child=3nSG with be.friends-RECP

5c *tama =r khòè =ra a*  
 NEG =1SG person =1SG C4

5d *ke ěeta méé guu*  
 so such say leave

5e =*tsáá ko ii*  
 =2mSGDUR be

5f *a q’òà ii ne” témé.*  
 C1 hare be if QUOT

‘Then Hippo said: “I am not a friend of such a small child like you, so don't say that, you Hare.”’

6a =*Me q’òà nxāaska máá:*  
 =3mSG:9 hare then say

6b “*Hàà =tsam nxāaka ncĕeta hěé*  
 come =1mDU then such do

6c =*tsáá ko =tíí tc’aró-coa ko ntcoe*  
 =2mSG DUR 1SG body-little DUR disagree

6d *a ko máá:*  
 C1 DUR say

6e ‘=*tíí =ra tcárà =tsi tama’, témé*  
 =1SG =1SG be.friends =2mSG NEG QUOT

6f *ne méé =tsi ncĕe koe ntcōó ncĕe=m tèbe=m kg’am koe*  
 if must =2mSG if LOC sit this=3mSG pond=3mSG mouth LOC

6g *naka =tsi-a dqùì =ba qgóó*  
 and =2mSG-A4 rope =3mSG hold

6h *na=r =tíí nqáé*  
 and=1SG =1SG pass

6i *na síí ncíì za ntcōó*  
 and go other LOC sit

6j *naka =ra tiri=m dqùì =ba qgóó*

and =1SG-(A4) my=3mSG rope =3mSG hold  
 6k *naka* =*tsam* *xhài-ku*  
 and=1mDU pull-RECP

6l *na* *bòò*  
 and see

6m *ndaka* *kg'ái* =*tsam* *gha* *tàà* =*sa*”,  
 which face =1mDU FUT defeat =3fSG

6n *ta=m* *ma* *birí* =*me* *qgaò-a*.  
 thus=3mSG like tell =3mSG hippo-A4

‘But Hare said to Hippo: “Let us then do this: if you despise this small body of mine and say ‘I will not be your friend,’ sit here near this pond and hold the end of the rope, and I will sit at the other side of the pond and I will hold the other end. Then we must pull each other and see which one of us will win.”’

7a =*Me* *qòò* *nxãaska* *q'òà*  
 =3mSG:9 walk then hare

7b *a=m*  
 C3=3mSG

7c *a* *tcgoà=m* *koe* *síí*  
 C1 elephant=3mSG LOC go

7d *a* *máá:*  
 C1 say

7e “*Tcgoà-è,* =*tsáá* *koe=r* *ko* *tcàrà-ku-a=n* *dtcàrà*”, *témé*.  
 elephant-VOC, =2mSG LOC=1SG DUR be.friends-NOM-B1=3nSG request QUOT  
 ‘Then Hare went to Elephant and said: “Mr. Elephant, I want to be your friend.”’

8a =*Me* *tcgoà* =*ba* *máá:*  
 =3mSG:9 elephant =3mSG say

8b “*Eě ēe,* *ēeta* *ii=m* *gúù=m* *cgoa=r* *tcàrà-ku* *tama*  
 NEG such be=3mSG thing=3mSG with=1SG be.friends-RECP NEG

8c *kg'ama=tsi* *bòò* =*te* *tama*  
 just =2mSG see =1SG NEG

8d =*ra* *ii* =*sa*”, *témé*.  
 =1SG be =3fSG QUOT

‘Elephant said: “No I will not be a friend of such a thing. Can't you just see how big I am?”’

9a =*Me* *máá:*  
 =3mSG:9 say

9b “*Tc'áró-a* =*te* *cgoa* *qgóé* *guu*  
 body-A2 =1SG with run leave

9c *kai-a=r* *khóè* =*ra* *a*  
 big-A3=1SG person =1SG C4

9d *igaba=r* *koo* *ga* *a* *ke*  
 but=1SG amount INTENS C4 because

9e *khama=r* *ko* =*tsáá* *koe* *tcàrà-ku=n* *dtcàrà*”, *témé*  
 so=1SG DUR =2mSG LOC be.friends-NOM=3nSG request QUOT

9f *a* *xgui*.  
 C1 refuse

‘Hare said: “Don't worry about my body. I am an old person even though I look like this, therefore I ask for friendship from you.”’

10a **A** =*ba a* *máá:*  
 C2 say

- 10b “**A**=*tse-è*                    *ēeta*    *méé*    *guu*  
**C5**=2mSG-VOC            such    say    leave
- 10c *kai-a=r*            *khòè*            =*ra*    **a**            =*tíí*    *igaba*  
big-**C3**=1SG    person            =1SG    **C4**            =1SG    even
- 10d *ne=r*            *cg'áré*            *tc'áró* =*ra*    **a**            *ke*  
if=1SG            small            body    =1SG    **C4**            because
- 10e *nxāaka*            *ēeta*            =*tsi*            *ko*            *méé*            *ne*  
then            such            =2mSG            DUR            say            if
- 10f *ncēe*            *koe*            *ntcōó*  
DEM1            LOC            sit
- 10g *naka=r*            =*tíí*            *ncíí*            *za*            *síí*            *ntcōó*  
and=1SG            =1SG            other            LOC            go            sit
- 10h *naka*            =*tsam*                            *xhài-ku*  
And                    =1mDU                            pull-RECP
- 10i *naka*            *bóò*  
and            see
- 10j *ndaka*            *kg'ái-a=tsam*                            *gha*            *tàà*            =*sa*  
which            face-**A2**?=1mDU                            FUT            defeat            =3fSG
- 10k **a**            *ncēe*            *xhài*  
**C1**            if            pull
- 10l =*tsi*            *kò*            *ko*            *tcāà*            =*te*            *noka=m*            *koe*  
=2mSG            PST            DUR            enter            =1SG            river=3mSG            LOC
- 10m *ne*            =*da*            *ko*  
if            =1SG            DUR
- 10n *kana*            =*tíí*            *igaba*            *xhài-a*            *tcāà*            =*tsi*  
or            =1SG            but            pull-**B2**            enter            =2mSG
- 10o *ne*            *tcàrà-ku-a*                            =*tsam-a.*”            *témé.*  
if            be.friends-NOM-**A3**                            =1mDU-**A3**            QUOT

‘Hare continued to try to convince Elephant by saying: “Hey man, don't say that, I am also an old person, even in spite of this small body of mine. But if you argue that, then sit here and I will sit at the other side, and we will pull each other and see who will win. If you will pull me into the pond or I pull you into it, then we will be friends.” ’

- 11a **A**            =*ba a*            *síí*            *qàe-qae*            *qgaò*            =*ba*  
**C2**                            go            fool            hippo            =3mSG
- 11b **a**            *máá,*  
**C1**            say
- 11c *méé=m*                            *qgóó,*            *témé*  
must=3mSG                            hold            QUOT
- 11d **a**            *síí*            *qàe-qae*            *tcgoà*            =*ba*  
**C1**            go            fool            elephant            =3mSG
- 11e **a**            *máá,*  
**C1**            say
- 11f *méé=m*                            *qgóó,*            *témé.*  
must=3mSG                            hold            QUOT

‘then Hare went to Hippo and played a trick on him. He told him to hold the rope. He played the same trick on Elephant, telling him to hold the rope too.’

- 12a =*Me*                            *qðò*  
=3mSG:9                            walk
- 12b **a**            =*ba a*            *síí*            *xāó*            =*ba*            *tcg'òó*  
**C2**                            go            whistle            =3mSG            take out

- 12c *a =ba a nxãaska hòò =me =tsara tite qgái=∅ koe síí ntcõó.*  
 C2 then find =him =3mDU NEG.fut place=3nSG LOC go sit  
 ‘he went away and hid himself in a place where they could not see him.’

- 13a *Eẽ=m ko q'òà xãó ka*  
 when=3mSG DUR hare whistle INSTR  
 13b *=tsara kò qgaò-a =tsara tcgoà-a =tsara tshoa-tshoa*  
 =3mDU PST hippo-A4 =3mDU elephant-A4 =3mDU begin  
 13c *a xhài-ku*  
 C1 pull-RECP  
 13d *a xhài-ku*  
 C1 pull-RECP  
 13e *khòè =tsara ãe cuita xám qari-a=n úú-a =tsara xhài-ku.*  
 person =3mDU DEM2 same taste power-B1=3nSG have-A3 =3mDU pull-RECP  
 ‘when Hare whistled, Hippo and Elephant started to pull, and pull - those men who had equal power pulled.’

- 14a *=Me q'òà tẽe*  
 =3mSG:9 hare stand up  
 14b *a dqùi =ba q'ãè-a qhóm nqáè koe*  
 C1 rope =3mSG cut-B2 break middle LOC  
 14c *a síí qgaò=m koe.*  
 C1 go hippo=3mSG LOC  
 ‘then Hare stood up and cut the rope in the middle. He went to Hippo’

- 15a *=Me qgaò qgóó tshàu =me*  
 =3mSG:9 hippo hold hand =3mSG  
 15b *a máá:*  
 C1 say  
 15c *“A=tse-è qãè =tsi khòè =tsi =i cèè*  
 C5=2mSG-VOC good =2mSG person =2mSG COP EXCLAM  
 15d *qari =tsi khòè =tsi i*  
 strong =2mSG person =2mSG COP  
 15e *=ra ko tc'aró-coa-a =tsi bóò*  
 =1SG DUR body-DIM-A2 =2mSG see  
 15f *a ko ntcoè =tsi”, témé,*  
 C1 DUR disagree =2mSG QUOT  
 ‘and Hippo shook hands with him. Hippo said to him: “You are a good man and indeed a powerful man and I despised you because of your small body” ’

- 16 *=i xg'arà.*  
 =3nSG:9 finish  
 ‘it was resolved’

- 17 *=Me tcgoà=m koe síí gataga méé,*  
 =3mSG:9 elephant=3mSG LOC go likewise say  
 ‘he also went to Elephant and said the same words’

- 18 *=i xg'arà.*  
 =3nSG:9 finish  
 ‘and it was (also) resolved (likewise)’



19 =Si tóá.  
 =3fSG finish  
 ‘it finished’

### Abbreviations

COP copula  
 DEF definiteness  
 DEM demonstrative  
 DIM diminutive  
 DUR durative,  
 EXCLAM exclamation  
 FUT future  
 INSTR instrumental  
 INT interrogative  
 INTENS intensifier  
 LOC locative  
 NEG negation  
 NOM nominalizer  
 NP nominal phrase  
 O object  
 PF perfective  
 PGN person-gender-number  
 POSS possessive  
 PST past tense  
 QUOT quotative,  
 RECP reciprocal  
 RECPST recent past (relating to today or yesterday)  
 REMPST remote past,  
 TAM tense/aspect marker  
 VOC vocative.

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