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

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. 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 (1st, 2nd, 3rd), 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.

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.

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1 I am grateful to Dr. H. Eaton for her valuable comments to this paper. The paper presented here does not necessarily reflect her views.
2 -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.
3 For the information in this paragraph, cf. Visser 2022:47.
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. 5 6 7

(1)  
Gantsi\ tsi\ ko\ qõõ  
Gantsi \ LOC \ =2mSG\ DUR \ go  
‘you (m) are going to Gantsi’

(2)  
Gantsi\ tsi\-a\ ko\ qõõ  
Gantsi \ LOC \ =2mSG\ 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:

5 In the data presented, tone may play a role. See Visser 2013b for remarks on tone in Naro.
6 “=” 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.
7 The Naro orthography is being used. It corresponds with IPA as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>plain click</th>
<th>dental</th>
<th>alveolar</th>
<th>palatal</th>
<th>lateral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>!</td>
<td>te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>click + velar fricative</td>
<td>cg</td>
<td>lx</td>
<td>qg</td>
<td>!x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glottalized (click + velar fricative)</td>
<td>cg’</td>
<td>l’x’</td>
<td>qg’</td>
<td>!x’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspirated click</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>l’h</td>
<td>qh</td>
<td>!h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glottalized click</td>
<td>c’</td>
<td>’</td>
<td>q’</td>
<td>!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voided click</td>
<td>dc</td>
<td>lg</td>
<td>dq</td>
<td>!g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal click</td>
<td>nc</td>
<td>ln</td>
<td>nq</td>
<td>!n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

8 The following notations are used to indicate the (partial) meaning content of PGN-markers: 1/2/3: 1st, 2nd or 3rd 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: ‘1st person masculine, plural’.
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4. Ligature in associative construction

In the associative\(^9\) construction, -a is put between noun and PGN-marker:

\[(3) \quad a \quad \text{Gantsi koe} = tsi \quad ko \quad qõõ\]

\[\text{INT Gantsi LOC} = 2\text{mSG DUR go}\]

‘are you (m) going to Gantsi?’

This use is regarded as a Tswanaism.

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:

\[(4) \quad tcuíú = ba \quad \text{‘the head’}\]

\[\text{head} = 3\text{mSG}\]

\[(5) \quad tcuíú-a = ba \quad \text{‘his head’}\]

\[\text{head-a} = 3\text{mSG}\]

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:

\[(8) \quad nca a = tsi \quad tseé \quad \text{‘you (m) worked (in recent past)’}\]

\[\text{RECPST} = 2\text{mSG work}\]

\[(9) \quad nca a = tsi \quad tseé-a \quad \text{‘you (m) have worked (in recent past)’}\]

\[\text{RECPST} = 2\text{mSG work-PF}\]

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

\[\text{Intonation on} \quad cóá ‘child’ \text{ is lowered in this construction.}\]

\[\text{For more information about the associative construction, see Visser 2022:85f. For Khwe, Kilian-Hatz 2008: 77f. calls an apparently related construction "genitive". But at least for Naro, this term would cover the dí construction (called possessive by Kilian-Hatz) as well. The designation "associative" is deemed more appropriate.}\]

\[\text{The tone on} \quad cóá ‘child’ \text{ is lowered in this construction.}\]
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) \[ gaa=s \text{ xõõ} =\text{sa} \]
     DEM6\text{11}=3fSG parent =3fSG
     ‘the mother’

(12) \[ gaa=s \text{ xõõ} =\text{sa}-a \]
     DEM6=3fSG parent =3fSG-a
     ‘the (very?) mother’

(13) \[ ga=ba \text{ hêê naka ga=m di}=s \text{ x'âé-q'oo}=s \]
     DEF=3mSG also and DEF=3mSG POSS=3fSG home-inside=3fSG
     \[ di =ne \text{ héêhéê-a kò } xg'ae =\text{sa úú-a} \]
     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 =r\text{ a} tiri=m dqüi =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) \[ nçeè-a chôô di}=m nxoem=m ga =\text{me e} \]
     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) \[ nçeè =ba chôô di}=m nxoem=m ga =\text{me e} \]
     DEM1 =3mSG last POSS=3mSG month=3mSG INTENS =3mSGCOP
     ‘this is the last month’

See Saul 2017 for more explanation about demonstratives in Naro.

\[ ^{11} \text{ See Saul 2017 for more explanation about demonstratives in Naro.} \]
6.2 –a following a noun. –a as emphasis marker may also follow the noun and precede the PGN-marker:

(16) \( \text{Tomku}-a =zi \) ‘Tomku and the other ladies with her’
    \( \text{Tomku} =3\text{fPL} \)

Compare the default form (the one without –a):

(17) \( \text{Tomku} =zi \) ‘Tomku and other ladies’
    \( \text{Tomku} =3\text{fPL} \)

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

(18) \( \text{Q’òà kii}=\text{sara} \quad \text{Qauqau} \quad \text{ki}-a =\text{sara} \) ‘Mrs. Hare and Mrs. Qauqau’
    \( \text{Hare Mrs} =3\text{fDU} \quad \text{Qauqau} \quad \text{Mrs-a} =3\text{fDU} \)

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 \( \text{Tomku zia} \) and \( \text{Tomkua zi} \) indicate a different kind of emphasis. A suggestion may be, that –a straight after a noun might be related to the pronoun base \( \text{ga-} \text{xa-} \) ‘definiteness/clusivity marker’ and might be explained as referring to an anaphoric referent.\(^\text{12}\) This needs more study.

7. Use in listings

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

(19) \( \text{Ciqae} =\text{tsara} \quad \text{Tshabu} =\text{tsara} \) ‘Ciqae and Tshabu’
    \( \text{Ciqae} =2\text{mDU} \quad \text{Tshabu} =2\text{mDU} \)

(20) \( \text{Ciqae}-a =\text{tsara} \quad \text{Tshabu}-a =\text{tsara} \) ‘Ciqae, and Tshabu’
    \( \text{Ciqae}-a =2\text{mDU} \quad \text{Tshabu}-a =2\text{mDU} \)

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).

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

(1) \( \text{gaa}=m \quad \text{di}=s \quad \text{khöè} =\text{sa} \) ‘this one’s wife’
    \( \text{DEM6}=3\text{mSG} \quad \text{POSS}=3\text{fSG} \quad \text{person} =3\text{fSG} \)

(2) \( \text{ga}=m \quad \text{di}=s \quad \text{khöè} =\text{sa} \) ‘his wife’
    \( \text{DEF}=3\text{mSG} \quad \text{POSS}=3\text{fSG} \quad \text{person} =3\text{fSG} \)

The following example shows the use of the intensifier \( \text{ga} \):

(3) \( [\text{ga=kham}] \quad \text{ga} \quad a \) ‘it is indeed us’
    \( \text{DEF}=1\text{cDU} \quad \text{INTENS} \quad \text{COP} \)

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:

\[ A-a, B-a, C-a \text{ ‘A, (and/or) }^{13} \text{ B, (and/or) } C\text{…’} \]

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

(21) \[ \text{duuutsa } \text{giùù } =sa \text{ ko } \text{tc’èe: } \text{kojì-a, } \text{màì-a, } \text{tée-a,} \text{ kana } \text{bùì-a?} \text{ or } \text{milì-k} \text{ ‘what do you want: coffee, mealie, tea, or milk?’} \]

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 \(dùù \) ‘what(ever)’ followed by \(-a\):

(22) \[ \text{kopi-a, } \text{màì-a, } \text{tée-a, } \text{bùì-a, } \text{dùù-a, } \text{kg’amaga } =tsi \text{ gha} \text{ au } =te \text{ e} \text{ give } =1SG \text{ O ‘Coffee, mealie, tea, milk, what(ever), you can just give it to me’} \]

The same may be done in a list with another question word, like \(dìì \) ‘who’:

(23) \[ \text{Ciqae-a } =xu, \text{ Tshabu-a } =xu, \text{ Ciko-a } =xu, \text{ diì } \text{ ga}=xu-a \text{ Ciqae-a }=3mPL \text{ Tshabu-a } =3mPL \text{ Ciko-a } =3mPL \text{ who } \text{DEF}=3mPL-a \text{ gòò-a}^{14} \text{ go-PF ‘Ciqae, or Tshabu, or Ciko (and others), who have gone?’} \]

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).

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13 The emphasis is on ‘or’, but ‘and’ is not excluded.
14 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.\textsuperscript{15} For example:

\begin{verbatim}
ncêe koe =tu dâra naka =tu-a hàà
\end{verbatim}

‘visit here and come’

8.2 Use in a negation. In the following example, -a is tentatively interpreted as intensifier:\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{verbatim}
qôô tama =tsi-a
go NEG =2mSG-a
\end{verbatim}

‘you are not going’

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.\textsuperscript{17}

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\textsuperscript{rd} person SG neuter PGN-marker –n\textsuperscript{18}:

\begin{verbatim}
kg’ui-a=n
word-a=3nSG
\end{verbatim}

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

\textsuperscript{15} At several occasions, it was said that –a cannot be left out.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. Visser 2022:99.

\textsuperscript{17} 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.

\textsuperscript{18} 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 séé  
Thama =3mSG DUR bread-a=3nSG take  
‘Thama takes bread’

(29) * Thama =ba ko séé péré-a=n  
Thama =3mSG DUR take bread-a=3cSG

(30) Thama =ba ko séé 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. 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. For example:

(31) kóm-a q’áa  
hear-a know  
‘understand’

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

(32) agóó ghüï  
hold lift  
‘pick up, lift up’

(33) agóó-a ghüï  
hold-a lift  
‘pick up, lift up’

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.21

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

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19 See for example Vossen 2010.
20 Visser 2010:179.
21 Visser 2010:179.
22 Visser 2010:182.
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(34)  \[ qaa + m\alpha \rightarrow qaa-r-a \text{ máá} \]  
\( \text{‘seek for’} \)

(35)  \[ * qaa \text{ máá} \]
\( \text{seek for} \)

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:

\[ /CV_1CV_2/ \rightarrow [CV_1V_2CV_2] \]

(36)  \[ /nqona/ \rightarrow [nqoana] \]  ‘three’

(37)  \[ /Koba/ \rightarrow [Koaba] \]  (name)

(38)  \[ /Dtcoga/ \rightarrow [Dtcoga] \]  (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)  \[ a \text{ tcgoà=m koe sií a máá and elephant=3mSG LOC go and say 'and he went to the elephant and said'} \]

The following example clearly shows the difference between the use of –a and a when used in the middle of two verbs:

(41)  \[ tséé-a xg’ae 'work together' \]

work-a meet

(42)  \[ tséé a xg’ae 'work and meet' \]

work and meet

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23 See Visser 2013a:64. Alternatively, it might indicate an underlying CVVCV pattern.
24 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.\(^{25}\)  
Formation: \( a \) PGN \( a \)

Examples:\(^{26}\)

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
(43) & a = ba & a & \text{‘and he…’} \\
    & a = 3mSG & a & \\
(44) & a = tsi & a & \text{‘and you (m)…’} \\
    & a = 2mSG & a & \\
\end{array}
\]

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.\(^{27}\)  
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, 0 has the perfective marker (twice) and (46) the \( a \).

\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
(45) & qôô & = tsi & ko & \text{‘you are going’} \\
    & \text{go} & = 2mSG & \text{DUR} & \\
    & qôô-a & = tsi-a & \text{‘you have gone’} \\
    & \text{go-PF} & = 2mSG-PF & \\
(46) & qôô & a & = tsi & \text{‘you go/went’} \\
    & \text{go} & a & = 2mSG & \\
\end{array}
\]

It is difficult to pinpoint its meaning, but the construction usually indicates some unexpected or surprising development or action.\(^{28}\)

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.

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\(^{25}\) See Visser 2022, section 3.3.10 for more about same cast clause connective.  
\(^{26}\) For examples with full sentences, see the text below: 10a, 11a, 12b, 12c.  
\(^{27}\) For the relevance of the initial slot in Naro, see Visser 2022:93ff. For PGN-1 markers, see Visser 2022:70.  
\(^{28}\) Cf. also Visser 2010:193ff about "counter-expectation".
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4.  Reduplication of last sound (in certain constructions)

There are instances of duplication of the last sound, in several ways. This includes the possible duplication of the vowel \( a \). See the contrast emerging in the following example:

\[
\begin{align*}
(47) & \quad \text{igabaga} =tsi & ko & \text{ncēeska} & \text{b̪o̪o} =ta & a^30 \quad \text{‘but now you see us’} \\
\quad \text{but} & =2\text{mSG} & \text{DUR} & \text{now} & \text{see} & =1\text{cPL} \ a \\
(48) & \quad \text{igabaga} =tsi & \text{ncēeska} & \text{b̪o̪o} =\text{ta-a} \quad \text{‘but now you have seen us’} \\
\quad \text{but} & =2\text{mSG} & \text{now} & \text{see} & =1\text{cPL-PF}
\end{align*}
\]

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.\(^{31}\)

5.  \( a \)- in vocative constructions\(^{32}\)

The prefix \( a \)- (which resembles the \( a \) words) may be used in vocative constructions.\(^{33}\) It can be called “attention-getting”.\(^{34}\) For example:

\[
(49) \quad a=xao-\dot{e} \quad \text{‘hey you (mPL)!’}
\]

\( (DEM)=2\text{mPL}:3\text{-VOC} \)

D. STATISTICS

Some research in Naro magazines\(^{35}\) has yielded the following statistics about how many times the different uses of \( -a \) can be found. In order of frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>count</th>
<th>kind of ( -a )</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>B1 ligature between noun and ( -n )</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>B2 ligature between verbs</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>A3 perfective aspect</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>A4 emphasis</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A2 associative ligature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{29}\) See Visser 2022:71, 87.

\(^{30}\) McGregor 2018 discusses an object marker (ʔ)\( a \) 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.

\(^{31}\) See Visser 2022:87.

\(^{32}\) See also Visser 2022:81.

\(^{33}\) 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.

\(^{34}\) Cf. Barnard 1985:19.

\(^{35}\) 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’ôa (story about Hare, Hippo and Elephant)

This story by Bău Fretz, recorded around 2000, was published earlier. 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 \( Xg’aq =xu \quad gqao=ba \quad héé \quad naka \quad tcgo=n=ba \quad héé \quad \)
   \( \text{REMPST} =3\text{mPL} \quad \text{hippo} =3\text{mSG} \quad \text{also} \quad \text{elephant} =3\text{mSG} \quad \text{also} \quad \)
   \( \text{naka} \quad q’ôà=ba \quad hééthéé=ux hâna. \quad \)
   \( \text{and} \quad \text{hare} =3\text{mSG} \quad \text{also} \quad =3\text{mPL} \quad \text{be.there} \quad \)
   ‘Once there were a hippo, an elephant, and a hare.’

2a \( =Me \quad ko \quad q’ôà=ba \quad hàà \quad \)
   \( =3\text{mSG}\;9 \quad DUR \quad \text{hare} =3\text{mSG} \quad \text{come} \quad \)

2b \( a \quad gqao=m \quad koe \quad tcàr̃à-ku-a=n \quad dtcàr̃à. \quad \)
   \( \text{C1} \quad \text{hippo} =3\text{mSG} \quad \text{LOC} \quad \text{be.friends-NOM-B1} =3\text{mSG} \quad \text{request} \quad \)
   ‘Hare went to Hippo and asked him whether they could become friends (lit. friendship).’

3a \( =Me \quad gqao=ba \quad màà: \quad \)

---

36 In Visser 2022 (appendix 4).
The manifold uses of –a in Naro

3b “A=tse-è, tàá, tii =ra ga tàá ëeta ii=m giù=m
C5=2mSG-voc, NEG 1SG =1SG INTENS NEG such be=3mSG thing=3mSG
cgoa tcárá-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 hëë=ls ka
how do=3fSG INSTR
C5=2mSG-VOC be.friends =2mSG-A3 =1SG-A3
4c nceëta=r ii ëgaba
such=1SG be though
4d ke tàá ëeta xam=s giù =sa méë 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 ëeta ii=∅ cóá=∅ cgoa tcárá-ku
C5=2mSG-VOC such be=3nSG child=3nSG with be.friends-RECP
5c tama =r khoë =ra a
NEG =1SG person =1SG C4
5d ke ëeta méë guu
so such say leave
5e =tsàá 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 nxãaska máá:
=3mSG:9 hare then say
6b “Hàá =tsam nxãaka nceëta hëë
come =1mDU then such do
6c =tsáá ko =tii tc’áró-coa ko ntcoe
=2mSG DUR 1SG body-little DUR disagree
6d a ko máá:
C1 DUR say
6e ‘=tii =ra tcárá =tsi tama’, témé
=1SG =1SG be.friends =2mSG NEG QUOT
6f ne méë =tsi nceë koe ntcoo nceë=m tèbe=m kg’ain 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 =tii nqàé
and=1SG =1SG pass
6i na sìí nciì za ntcoó
and go other LOC sit
6j naka =ra tiri=m dqùì =ba qgóó
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and =1SG-(A4) my=3mSG rope =3mSG hold

6k naka =tsam xhâi-ku
and=1mDU pull-RECP

6l na bòò
and see

6m ndaka kg’áí =tsam gha tàà =sa”, which face =1mDU FUT defeat =3fSG

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 nxâaska q’òà
=3mSG:9 walk then hare

7b a=m
C3=3mSG

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

7d a máá:
C1 say

7e “Tcgoà-è, =tsáá koe=r ko tcárá-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 “Eè èè, ëëta ii=m guì=m cgoa=r tcárá-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 khóê =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 tcárá-ku=n dtcàrà”, témé
so=1SG DUR =2mSG LOC be.friends-NOM=3nSG request QUOT

9f a xguì.
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
‘A=tse-è èeta méé guu
C5=2mSG-VOC such say leave

kai-a=r khòè =ra a =tíi igaba
big-C3=1SG person =1SG C4 =1SG even

e=r cg'árè te'áró =ra a ke
if=1SG small body =1SG C4 because

nxáaka èeta =tsi ko méé ne
then such =2mSG DUR say if

ncèe koe ntcòö
DEM1 LOC sit

naka=r =tíi nciì za sìi ntcòö
and=1SG =1SG other LOC go sit

naka =tsam xhài-ku
And =1mDU pull-RECP

naka bóò
and see

ndaka kg'áí-a=tsam gha tàìì =sa
which face-A2?=1mDU FUT defeat =3mSG

a ncèe xhài
C1 if pull

=tsi kò ko tcàà =te noka=m koe
=2mSG PST DUR enter =1SG river=3mSG LOC

ne =da ko
if =1SG DUR

kana =tíi igaba xhài-a tcàà =tsi
or =1SG but pull-B2 enter =2mSG

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.”’

A =ba a sìi qàè-qaè qgaò =ba
C2 go fool hippo =3mSG

a múá,
C1 say

méé=m qgòò, témé
must=3mSG hold QUOT

a sìi qàè-qaè tcgoò =ba
C1 go fool elephant =3mSG

a múá,
C1 say

méé=m qgòò, 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.’

=Me qòò
=3mSG:9 walk

a =ba a sìi xàò =ba tcg’òò
C2 go whistle =3mSG take out
he went away and hid himself in a place where they could not see him.’

‘when Hare whistled, Hippo and Elephant started to pull, and pull - those men who had equal power pulled.’

‘then Hare stood up and cut the rope in the middle. He went to Hippo’

‘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” ’

‘it was resolved’

‘he also went to Elephant and said the same words’

‘and it was (also) resolved (likewise)’
19. **=Sí **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)
- REEMPST: remote past,
- TAM: tense/aspect marker
- VOC: vocative.

**References**


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