

## Nias Unmutated Personal Pronouns

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**Abstract:** *Nias is an Austronesian language spoken mainly in Nias Island located on the west part of Sumatera, Indonesia. This is a unique language but it has not been analyzed in details due to some factors such as geographical obstacles and linguistic problems. The language has both free and bound personal pronouns. The free forms are divided into two groups: the unmutated and the mutated. This study focuses on how the pronominals in the first group are used in sentences or clauses. The data were taken from short stories and other Nias writings that contain the use of unmutated forms of the personal pronouns. The data were processed by classifying them into the same types and analyzed how they are used syntactically in sentences, clauses, or within phrases, as well as their relations to other constituents. The results of the research show that Nias unmutated personal pronouns are used in various ways and with different functions or roles. They are used as predicates, reflexives, objects, markers of modifiers, adverbs, emphases for imperatives, and others. It might be possible, however, to find other kinds of use if a similar research is conducted on different data, but those presented here are representatives of main uses of the unmutated personal pronouns in Nias.*

**Keywords:** *Function, mutation, Nias language, personal pronoun*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Nias language is spoken mainly in Nias Island located on the west part of Sumatera, Indonesia. It is an Austronesian language and consists of some dialects. In his research Marulafau mentions that there are five dialects of Nias namely South, West, North, Gunungsitoli, and Middle dialects [1: p. 2]. This is in line with the account given by Ndruru [2: p. 3] in a research done on the clitics of the Middle dialect. Both researchers, however, realize the fact that Nias language needs the attentions of linguists to conduct more research on this language both for the sake of theoretical developments and practical purposes.

Compared to languages of the world, Nias has some unique characteristics in relation to phonological, morphological, and syntactic issues. A more recent study about one of these unique characteristics is that of Berthold Crysmann's on the superficial ergativity of the language [3]. Observers of the language, in contrary, worry about two things: first being the unsupportive attitude of most native speakers toward the language and second being the very limited studies that have been done on the language [4: p. 7; 5: p. 1; 6: p. 171].

In general, it is for the concern mentioned above that this research was done by the present writer. This is a small but initial effort to maintain the language as well as to pose its linguistic characteristics to further and more detailed studies. In a narrower and more specific objective, this research aims to give accounts on the unmutated personal pronouns, one of five 'pronouns' referring mainly to person known in Nias. It focuses on the dialect of Gunungsitoli because it is the most familiar dialect to the present writer and to most of Nias people as it is used widely in formal communications, printed materials, songs, and daily interactions.

Unmutated	Mutated	Realis	Irrealis	Possessive	Meaning
ya'o/ya'oto	ndrao/ndraoto	u-	gu-	-gu	<i>I</i>
ya'ugö	ndraugö	ö-	gö-	-u	<i>you (sg.)</i>
ya'ia	ya	i-	ya-	-nia	<i>she/he/it</i>
ya'ita	ita	ta-	da-	-da	<i>we (inc.)</i>
ya'aga	ndraga	ma-	ga-	-ma	<i>we (exc.)</i>
ya'ami	mi	mi-	gi-	-mi	<i>you (pl.)</i>
ya'ira	ira	la-	ndra-	-ra	<i>they</i>

In her comprehensive research done on the dialect of Nias Selatan, Lea Brown gives five lists of Nias pronouns which are related to person. She presents four of the lists in pairs, each pair shown on different pages, and names them according to the relation that the two have within the pair [4: p. 42, 71]. Above the present writer combined the four kinds together with the other one, the possessive, into one table.

As shown by the labels, the first two lists are considered as a pair *unmutated/mutated* and so are the second two *realis/irrealis* lists. The present writer added the last column in order to provide the correspond meanings of the pronominals in the rows. The most striking feature from these lists compared to Gunungsitoli

dialect, the widely known dialect, is the list labeled *irrealis* in the table above compared to that of *subject/patient*, fourth column, listed below. This table is adapted from the one formulated by Arka and Nazara [7: p. 270].

Free Form with <i>ya-</i>	Free Form without <i>ya-</i>	Bound Form Hosted by Verb		Bound Form Hosted by Noun	Meaning
		Actor	S/P		
ya'o/ya'odo	ndra'o (do)	u-	-do	-gu	<i>I</i>
ya'ugö	ndra'ugö	ö-	-ö	-u/-mö	<i>you (sg.)</i>
ya'ia	ia	i-	-	-nia	<i>she/he/it</i>
ya'ita	ita	ta-	-	-da	<i>we (inc.)</i>
ya'aga	ndra'aga	ma-	-ga	-ma	<i>we (exc.)</i>
ya'ami	ami	mi-	-	-mi	<i>you (pl.)</i>
ya'ira	ira	la-	-	-ra	<i>they</i>

These two tables are shown because the present writer focuses on analyzing the dialect of Gunungsitoli, presented in the second table, but with the terms introduced in the first table by Lea Brown. Labels such as *mutated* and *unmutated* are more appropriate as Nias is abundant in its mutation system of the nouns. The whole lists have been shown rather than only the list being discussed in order to provide a description of the one being analyzed in its relation to the others. Despite the differences that the tables show about the other lists, there is no significant difference when it comes to the unmutated forms or free pronouns with *ya-* as Arka and Nazara name it. There is only one difference appears in the first column in which Arka and Nazara use *-do* for the third syllable of *ya'odo* but Lea uses *-to*. In addition to being the dialectal characteristic, these two notions, in some consideration, are only a matter of choice as both can be understood by the speakers of the dialects. The researchers also indicate that the presence of *-to* or *-do* is for emphasis and sometimes can be omitted, leaving *ya'o* alone in use.

Doing research on the unmutated forms is considered here as a more appropriate step before doing so to the other lists because, as it is obvious from the label, they are the free forms and have not undergone mutations. For instance, in answering question like 'What is *you* or *they* in Nias?' one would use those in the list labeled as unmutated forms. The question underlying this research is that of what functions or roles are taken by these Nias unmutated personal pronouns. The word *function* here is not limited to syntactic functions by definition but also to other constructions in which these pronominals are used. An assumption that Nias unmutated personal pronouns are used in different ways and with various functions was the starting point that triggered the question and the need of conducting this research.

## II. DATA AND METHOD

The data for this research are sentences and clauses or other constructions that contain the use of unmutated personal pronouns of Nias language. These data were taken from short stories and writings written by Edward Halawa and posted on the website of *Nias Online*. Short stories that became the data sources were *Kadi'a ba Guru Tane'a*, *Larumbögia*, and *Fangifi Nama Gö'ö*, and among other writings were *Wäöwäö Wämölö Akhe*, *Elemu*, and *Alai na Hatö Töi*. These sources were chosen on the reason that they provide various data in which Nias unmutated personal pronouns are used.

The first step taken in gathering and analyzing the data was to write down the sentences or clauses that contain the use of unmutated forms of the personal pronouns. Those raw data were then classified into different types where each datum was grouped with other similar kinds of use. These types were analyzed comprehensively to make sure whether the types were really different and the data in each type were all in the same characteristics. Next steps were to broke down the data, try other possible orders or constructions, find how the personal pronouns influence other constituents or be influenced by syntactic rules of the sentences. After they were all analyzed accurately, the most representing samples of each type were chosen to be provided in this research.

It is obvious from the explanation above that this is a descriptive-analytical qualitative research which makes use of available facts or information to analyze and make a critical evaluation [8: p. 110; 9]. It is not only syntactic issues that are considered while dealing with the data analyses but also morphological aspects of the verbs. This is because the use of the personal pronouns cannot be separated from the verbs.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In line with the assumption posed before conducting the study, Nias unmutated personal pronouns are used in different ways. Some of the uses found are grouped under the same subtopics in this research both because the systems of each are similar or with the intention to provide a simpler explanation.

### 3.1 Predicates

The use of Nias unmutated personal pronouns as predicates results from the system of the language, like Indonesian, that allows nouns to be the predicates of sentences. The predicate of the Indonesian sentence *Dia guru* 'S/he is a teacher', as Sneddon exemplifies, is the noun *guru* [10: p. 233]. The difference between this system with that of Nias sentences below is that most of Nias sentences are inverted; that is, the predicate precedes the subject or argument.

- (1) Ya'ami mbörö.  
You reason.  
*You are the reason.*
- (2) Ya'ita naŵöra.  
We friend-their.  
*We are their friends.*

Looking at the English translations which are italicized, one might consider *ya'ami* and *ya'ita* as the arguments but they are not because they are in their unmutated forms while *mbörö* and *naŵöra* are in mutated forms of *börö* and *aŵö*. Brown's elaboration about this nominal clause is that the unmutated NP functions as the predicate and the mutated one functions as the argument [4: p. 255]. This function holds when the personal pronouns are followed by demonstratives such as *da'a* and *da'ö* like in (3) and (4) below as well as when they are negated by *tenga* like in (4).

- (3) Ya'ugö da'a, Guru!  
You this, Teacher.  
*This is you, Teacher.*
- (4) Tenga ya'ia da'ö.  
Not he/it that.  
*That is not him/her/it.*

Unmutated personal pronouns of Nias can also be the predicate of an argument which is relativized. The phrase *zangokhögö* in (5) means 'the one who owns' and with the rest of the sentence it forms an NP. Despite the clauses they contain, however, the phrases *zangokhögö kabu zatuania* and *zolulugö aŵöda ba gelemu* function as the arguments of the predicates *ya'ia* and *ya'ita* respectively.

- (5) Ya'ia zangokhögö kabu zatuania.  
He who-own farm parent-his.  
*It is he who owns his parents' farm.*
- (6) Ya'ita zolulugö aŵöda ba gelemu.  
We who-push friend-our to magic.  
*It is we who compel our friends to the magic.*

The position of these personal pronouns when used as predicates, from the data presented, tends to be in the beginning of the sentence. It is not impossible, however, to negate the predicates like in (4) with other kinds of negations or precede them with certain conjunctions. In adding those elements there can be adjustments of the arguments that follow if necessary. The negation *böi* 'don't', for instance, can negate the personal pronouns in (1), (2), (5), and (6) but not (3) or neither replace *tenga* in (4) without grammatical adjustments and semantic change of the arguments. In contrary, all (1) through (6) can be preceded by conjunction *na* 'if' but with additional clauses to the sentences.

### 3.2 Reflexives

There are no special forms of personal pronouns for reflexives in Nias. This leads to different ways in realizing reflexive meaning as explained by Lea Brown [4: p. 308-309] for Nias Selatan dialect and explored in more details by Arka and Nazara [7] for Gunungsitoli dialect. The data gathered for the purpose of this research show the possibility of using the unmutated personal pronouns as reflexives.

- (7) Urifö samini'ö ya'ia.  
Animal that-hide it.  
*Animal that hides itself.*
- (8) So zogatu ya'ira ba ndraha geu.  
Exist who-hang they on branch tree.  
*There are those who hang themselves on the tree.*

The construction in (7) is a noun phrase with a clause in it while (8) is a sentence with *so* 'exist (there is)' as the predicate. The personal pronouns in both, however, without any change, can refer to different referents and thus eliminate the senses of reflexive in the constructions. In this case, contexts in which these constructions are used determine that the pronominals *ya'ia* refers to definite NP *urifö* and *ya'ira* to indefinite referent contained in the NP *zogatu*.

### 3.3 Objects in Relative Clauses

The possibility of the personal pronoun in (7) or (8) to refer to something else and not to the agent leads to another function of it as a patient of the transitive verb as illustrated by other sentences below.

- (9) Falemba dödönia ba nono matua solohi-lohi ya'ia.  
Adhere heart-her to child boy who-chase she.

*She falls in love to the boy who chases her continuously.*

- (10) Uwalinga solulugö ya'odo ba mbaho.  
I-think who-push I to ravine.

*I think [he acts as] someone who pushes me to ravine.*

The phrase *solohi-lohi* in (9) consists of a repeated transitive verb *molohi* 'to chase' and an indefinite agent indicated by the presence of prefix *s-* which replaces the first letter and by so doing changes to verb into a noun phrase that means 'someone who keeps chasing'. This *someone* refers back to the mutated form of *ono matua* 'a boy' and as the two phrases combine, the agent of the verb is now definite. Having the transitive verb and the agent, the clause needs a patient or object which is fulfilled by the presence of personal pronoun *ya'ia*.

Sentence (10) is different from that of (9) as the indefinite agent in *solulugö* points out of the sentence. In other words, the agent carried by the prefix *s-* is not in the whole sentence and can be understood only from the context. The pronominal *ya'odo*, however, also functions as the object of the verb *molulugö* 'to push'. These positions of *ya'ia* and *ya'odo* can be taken by common nouns in their unmutated forms as long as they are the patients of the verbs.

### 3.4 Markers of Modifiers

Other function of Nias unmutated personal pronouns is to introduce modifiers. The most striking feature of this kind of use is that the personal pronouns themselves are always followed by other noun phrases. Another characteristic is that the personal pronouns used this way usually follow preposition phrases. However, it is not impossible for pronominals to modify other noun phrases which function as objects.

- (11) Lö niha bö'ö baero ita ya'ita ono niha.  
No people different except us we child people.

*There are no other people except us, we Nias people.*

- (12) Akha ohahau dödögu ba zingami ya'ami iraonogu.  
Let me happy heart-my in side-your you child-my.

*Let me be happy staying among you, you my children.*

Both (11) and (12) actually can end before the phrases begun by *ya'ita* and *ya'ami* without any syntactic and semantic changes. In contrary, it would be ungrammatical to keep those phrases if *ita* and *zingami* were absent from the constructions. The reason for this is because *ya'ita ono niha* emphasizes the personal pronoun *ita* 'us' in the sense that by adding the modifier to it the speaker is talking about *us* (the speaker and the listeners) as Nias people, not as Indonesians nor as a religious group. The same principle applies to sentence (12) in which *ya'ami iraonogu* touches the 'known' information as to whom the speaker is speaking in order to 'remind' them the reasons why he or she deserves happiness from them.

As seen from the examples, the constituents modified by *ya'ita ono niha* and *ya'ami iraonogu* are preceded by prepositions *baero* 'beside' and *ba* 'in' which automatically make *ita* and *zingami* as objects of prepositions. This is the typical order of the data found. There is a possibility, however, to have a similar construction without a preposition in it such as *Iröi ndra'aga ya'aga iraononia* 'She leaves us, we her children'. The phrase *ya'aga iraononia* here follow a mutated pronoun *ndra'aga* 'we' without a preposition.

### 3.5 Adverbials

This kind of use is different from those in 3.4 as this one functions like the word *alone* in English. It gives more description on the verb and not on the noun or the noun phrase that comes first in a construction like the modifiers discussed above. All unmutated personal pronouns can be used this way but as can be seen from the examples below, they are always used with *ha* 'only' as a phrase.

- (13) Böi törö lala ha ya'ugö.  
Don't pass street just you.

*Don't walk by yourself.*

- (14) Toröido ha ya'oya'odo.  
Stay-I just I.

*I stay alone.*

The phrase *ha ya'ugö* in (13) describes the verb *törö* 'pass' in the sense that the listener is allowed to go out only in a group or with other people. In (14) the same principle holds. The sentence implies that no one stays to accompany the speaker. Additional information shown by the last example is that the personal pronouns in

this use can be repeated to give an emphasis. They are reduplicated by repeating the first two syllables and combining them to the last one.

### 3.6 Emphases for Preference

It has been mentioned above that when the unmutated personal pronouns function as predicates they tend to be in front unless they are preceded by other elements such as certain negation or conjunction. There are two other cases, however, in which they take the first position but not as predicates. First, it is to show preference about an agent. Second, it is to show preference about a patient.

- (15) Be'e.  
Give.
- (16) Ya'ugö be'e.  
You give.
- (17) Halö.  
Take.
- (18) Ya'ira halö.  
They take.  
Take them.

The pronominals *ya'ugö* and *ya'ira* here might seem similar in function to those in (1) through (6) above but they are not. Those six are followed by noun phrases and demonstratives but these two are followed by verbs. Thus, *ya'ugö* and *ya'ira* cannot be the predicates.

Sentences (15) and (17) are pure imperatives but the presence of unmutated personal pronouns as in (16) and (18) has given them emphases. Yet, both commands are emphasized in different ways. Actually *Ya'ugö be'e* does not simply mean 'You give'. It carries an implied intention of the speaker like 'Let's give it but I prefer you be the one who give, not me'. The interesting part is that the construction of (18) is the same as (16); that is *pronoun + verb*, but the emphasis here is not on the agent. Rather than means 'I want that they are the one who take', *Ya'ira halö* means '(Please) take them, don't take me'. It is obvious from the translation that (18) is expressing preference about the patient, e.g. I do not want you to take me; I want you to take them.

A question may arise about how to underline or give an agent to (18). One can do this by inserting a pronominal prefix *la-* 'they' to the verb *halö* forming the sentence *Ya'ira lahalö* which means 'It is them who is going to take'. Further discussion on this should be under a different topic.

### 3.7 Special Uses

In the data gathered there are two impersonal uses of *ya'ia*. First, it is used as an assent indicator. In answering the questions below, speaker B uses *ya'ia* 'yes' to show agreement to both questions. Using negation *tenga* discussed above is an appropriate choice for negative answers.

- (19) A: Salau ba danga?  
Caught by hand?  
B: Ya'ia, Kawa!  
Yes, Friend!
- (20) A: Ya'ami da'ö?  
You that?  
Is that you?  
B: Ya'ia!  
Yes!

Second, *ya'ia* is also used to give a more precise description of the thing mentioned before. This differs from those explained in 3.4 above because any relevant unmutated personal pronouns can be used as markers of modifiers. For the kind of use discussed here, as seen from the examples below, is restricted to *ya'ia* only.

- (21) So zasese ifake delania afökha, ya'ia da'ö fa'amate zatua.  
Exist that-often he-use means-his evil spirit it that death parent.  
*There is something often used as means by evil spirit, that is parent's death.*
- (22) Lö olifu ita hadia zalua, ya'ia molö sebua andrö.  
Not forget we what which-happen it flood big that.  
*We don't forget what happened, that is the severe flood.*

In (21) an idea has been introduced in the clause before the comma; a means often used by an evil spirit exists. This introduction cannot stop as the listener or reader is waiting for the main information related to the means. It is then the role of *ya'ia* to complete the sentence with more precise information. To make the clauses into one is to say that the evil spirit's means is one's parent's death. As can be seen from the last clause in (21), *ya'ia* 'that is' is directly followed by demonstrative *da'ö* 'that'. This is a typical construction of this use.

However, using another form of demonstrative and putting it at the end like in (22) is also grammatically acceptable in Nias.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The elaboration of the data presented shows that the functions or roles of Nias unmutated personal pronouns vary from one kind to another. Each use is unique in relation to each other and, at least from the discussion above, implies the need of further research to give more comprehensive accounts or a possible simpler elaboration on how they are realized. Another issue to underline here is that other kind of personal pronouns such as the mutated forms also grammatically influences the use of the unmutated ones.

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#### Notes

The letters *w* is pronounced as voiced bilabial fricative /β/, *ö* as open-mid central unrounded /ɜ/, and *mb* as voiced bilabial trill /B/