

## THE PARTICLES i AND na IN TOK PISIN

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### 1. Introduction

The particles i and na have a variety of syntactic functions in Tok Pisin (TP), as spoken in Papua New Guinea. Sadler (1973) for example, lists i as in introducer of action or subject (or its condition), as emphasizing the size or quantity of a subject, as occurring between the pronoun and verb to separate clausal actions, and so on. He also gives a number of rules which account for the absence of i. Dutton (1973), on the other hand, treats i as a marker connected to the verb, but associated with direction, ability, auxiliary, and modals. More recently Woolford (1979) has statistically accounted for the most common syntactic environments of i.

In this article we examine TP pronominal identity, in particular how i and na are syntactically and semantically associated with adjoined constituents. We also draw comparisons with some parallel structures in Kewa, a Highlands language of Papua New Guinea.<sup>1</sup>

In Mihalic's dictionary of TP (1971:99) he suggests for the etymology of i that it is derived from the English pronoun 'he'. Mihalic states that i is always present between the subject and predicate in sentences when the subject is either a noun or a third person singular or plural pronoun. His etymology follows Hall (1966:83) who maintains that i is a result of substandard English, where the subject is recapitulated by means of a pronoun, for example, 'the man-he'.

We note, on the other hand (Franklin 1978), that TP i may have a multiple etymological history: in addition to the apparent relation to 'he', i corresponds to the final i (sometimes spelled -ee) of Chinese Pidgin English verbs, as well as to the verbal i in Austronesian languages such as Tolai or Tangoan.<sup>2</sup>

Wurm (1971) outlines a number of rules which account for the functions of i but feels that its use has become unstable in recent years (1977:516).

### 2. Inter-clausal identity with i

When a Kewa speaks TP and identifies identical actors in conjoined clauses the particle i is used following na:

- (1) mitupela lukim na i go 'we(two) saw it and went'<sup>3</sup>  
we-two see-it and we-two go

- (2) mi paitim na i stap 'I hit it and waited'  
 I hit-it and I wait

In both sentences i occurs in cross-reference to the free pronouns: mitupela 'we (two)' in (1) and mi 'I' in (2), so that the pronouns are not repeated in the second clauses.<sup>4</sup> Such instances indicate that the co-referentiality of the actor is marked by i. This structure parallels the common so-called "same-subject" markers in Papuan languages where the form often both marks succession and identifies the actor. In TP successive actions with new information are marked by a separate morpheme, rather than identifying successive action and subject identity by one and the same morpheme.<sup>5</sup>

If the actor identity switches between the clauses the appropriate pronoun reference is supplied in the second clause:

- (3) mi lukim na ol i go 'I saw it and they left'  
 (4) yu lukim na mi go 'You look at it and I will go'

In (3) ol 'they' is a new subject introduced in the second clause and in (4) mi 'I' likewise breaks the inter-clause identity chain. This structure parallels the so-called "different-subject" successive action structure in Papuan languages:

Additional examples can be supplied to illustrate that consecutive sequences of actions by the same actor are marked by i following na and that similar consecutive actions by different actors are indicated by the appropriate free pronoun inserted after na in the second clause. In terminology common for Papuan languages, na marks the consecutive nature of the action and i marks the co-referentiality of the actors. If there is switch reference it is necessary to insert the appropriate pronoun between na and i in the second clause. Further evidence comes from the fact that temporal aspect marked in the first action carries through the sequence with no change of reference:

- (1a) mitupela bin lukim na i go 'We (two) saw it and left'  
 (2a) bai mi paitim na i stap 'I will hit it and wait'

If, on the other hand, we wish to vary the time in the second clause, the pronominal reference in the second clause switches and is explicit:

- (1b) mitupela lukim na em bin i go 'We (two) saw it and he/it left'  
 (2b) mi paitim na bai em i stap 'I will hit it and he/it will stay'

### 3. The particle i as copula

There are a variety of constituents which may be linked by i in equational sentences. The most common type is: iP + i + Complement, where the latter may consist of an NP or adjective. The NP may commonly consist of a common noun, a proper noun, a possessive NP, a pronoun, or a time word. Some examples are:

- (5) nem bilong mi i ami 'My name is Legion'  
NPposs + i + noun
- (6) Jon i profet tru 'John was an outstanding prophet'  
Proper n + i + iP
- (7) Mitupela i pikinini 'We are both children'  
pronoun + i + n
- (8) dispela soa i bikpela 'This is a large sore'  
IP + i + adj

If the sentence is negated the complement may not be a pronoun: \*Kristen i no mi 'I am not a Christian'. Rather we would expect:

- (9) mi (i) no Kristen 'I am not a Christian'

In examples (5) - (8) the negative is similarly inserted before i and the complement. In actuality (9) would most often be heard idiomatically as mi no stap Kristen or mi no kamap Kristen.

### 4. The particle i with auxiliary

The particle i also functions to link a two verb sequence, where the first V is an auxiliary:

- (10) em (i) laik i go 'he wants to go'  
(11) em inap i go 'he is able to go'  
(12) em (i) save i go 'he knows how to go'  
(13) em (i) ken i go 'he is about to go'  
(14) em (i) kirap i go 'he started to go'  
(15) em (i) mas i go 'he should go'  
(16) em (i) klostu i go 'he is almost going'

If the verb 'go' is omitted and the auxiliary simply functions as a complement of the subject pronoun, i obligatorily follows the pronoun.<sup>6</sup> This is more obvious in negated statements:

(10a) em i no laik 'he doesn't want to'

(11a) em i no inap 'he isn't able to'

However, not all so-called auxiliaries function as full complements in this manner:

(15a) \*em i no mas

unless we contrive an argument where the responder is elliptically stating 'he must not...'

We should further note that some of the auxiliaries can function as full transitive verbs with the -im suffix, while others cannot: laikim, inapim, \*saveim, \*kenim, kirapim, \*masim, (?) klostuim. In other words, although i occurs throughout the auxiliary paradigm, the syntactic properties of some of the verbs are different.

## 5. Inter-clausal reference with na

The particle na functions to introduce a clause, to connect the constituents of a clause or, in some instances, a phrase. The Kewa speaker of TP also uses na for text connectors which are based upon a successive "same-subject" marker plus a topic morpheme, for "different-subject" successive action markers, and for phrase joiners. First of all, note switch reference of actors in a rather long complex sentence of a narrative discourse:<sup>7</sup>

(16) (a) Na wanpela meri em i karim planti abus  
Then one women Topic carry much meat

(b) i wokabout i stap  
walk cont.

(c) na em i hait  
switch hide

(d) tasol em i kisim olgeta dispela pik  
however got all this pig

(e) em i karim long bilum bilong em  
carry in bag poss. her

(f) na dispela meri i no lukim  
this woman neg. see

- (g) em i stilim olgeta pik bilong em em i kaikai pinis.  
steal all pig poss. her eat complete.

Although the sentence is syntactically complex it represents involved clause chaining which is common in Highland language structure. In order to analyze the functions of i and na we now parse the sentence into a number of clauses and give translations and comments separately.

- (16a) Na wampela meri em i karim planti abus 'Then there was a particular woman carrying lots of meat'

The sequence of actions is introduced by na which switches the topic from a dialogue between two brothers to the woman. The woman is identified as the topic by meri and em. The 3rd subject agreement is marked by i, which co-occurs with the transitive verb karim 'to carry something'. The object carried is planti abus 'lots of meat'.

- (16b) ...i wokabaut i stap '...was walking along'.

The actor is still the woman because i carries the co-reference from karim 'carry' to wokabaut 'walking'. The progressive nature of the action is indicated by the sequence i stap 'to keep on (doing something)'.<sup>8</sup>

- (16c) ...na em i hait '...and he hid'

The action now switches to one of the brothers in the story. We know this because na switches the actor who is marked now as the topic by em.

- (16d) ...tasol em i kisim olgeta dispela<sup>9</sup> pik '...but he then got all of that pig'

The same actor, the younger brother, now continues in the sequence, again marked by i. We note in passing that tasol is not adversative in its generally accepted function, but simply indicates a more dramatic sequential action, that is, getting the pig after hiding.<sup>10</sup>

- (16e) ...em i karim long bilum bilong em 'which she was carrying in her net bag'

In this relative clause em i refers us to the grammatical subject and identity of the main clause again, but does not switch the reference or focus. The reference does switch in the next clause which is again introduced by na:

- (16f) ...na dispela meri i no lukim 'and that woman did not see (something)'

Here the woman is brought back into the sequence as the actor by the phrase dispela meri. She is mentioned as not seeing who steals the

pig. If dispela meri is omitted the switch would be marked by na em i. The following embedded action is again marked as a relative clause by em i and the actor must be interpreted as the brother because we know he has stolen the pig (from analyzing 16d):

- (16g) ...em i stilim olgeta pik bilong em em i kaikai pinis.  
 '(did not see that) he had stolen all of her pig which he had eaten.'

The object of stilim 'to steal' is olgeta pik bilong em 'the pig which belonged to her' and therefore em appears reduplicated - once to mark the possessor as 'her' and followed by em i as further embedding but referring back to the main actor in the clause, that is, 'the brother'.

## 6. Na as conjoiner of NPs

It is natural to consider na as a conjoiner of constituents which are nouns, some kinds of noun phrases, or pronouns. If we think, however, of na as switching the identity of the NPs its syntactic function parallels our description of interclausal switch reference. Note the following examples:

- (17) Nem bilong tupela em bikpela boj na liklik boj  
 Name poss. two big boy little boy  
 'The names of the two were the big boy and the little boy'
- (18) Gaden bilong tupela i bikpela gaden na liklik gaden  
 Garden poss. two big garden little garden  
 'Their gardens were large and small'
- (19) Na tupela i laik kisim paiawut na wara samting olsem  
 Then two want get firewood water something similar  
 'Now (when) they wanted to get firewood and water, or similar things'
- (20) Orait bikpela boi em i rabim gris bilong pik long skin  
 Alright big boy he rub grease poss. pig on skin  
bilong em na long pes bilong em  
 poss. he on face poss. he  
 'Then the big boy rubbed pig's fat on his body and face'
- (21) Yu na mi mitupela i go 'You and I will go'  
 You I we-two go

Within each sentence the NPs are not only linked by na but the identity of the NP also varies. In (19) samting olsem 'similar things' functions as a marker of unspecified things of the same class, an etcetera, as it were. Kewa, on the other hand, has separate unidentical forms to mark phrasal conjunction.<sup>11</sup>

## 7. The inter-relationship of *i* and *na*

We can summarize in general the relationship between *i* and *na* as follows:

- (a) sequential actions involving the same person or topic are conjoined by *i*;
- (b) NPs which function as topics in equational sentences are conjoined to NP complements by *i*;
- (c) auxiliaries and main verbs are conjoined by *i*;
- (d) sequential actions involving different persons or topics have switched reference marked by *na*. The normal rules of *i* then follow;<sup>12</sup>
- (e) phrasal NPs are conjoined by *na*; pronominal insertion then clarifies person-number ambiguity;<sup>13</sup>
- (f) relative clauses can be marked by *em* + *i*.

Contrasting the above statements with the grammar of Kewa, we note that

- (1) sequential actions involving co-referentiality are marked by verbal suffixes;
- (2) the first constituent of an equational clause or sentence is marked as the topic;
- (3) verbs which function as auxiliaries are semantically and grammatically closely linked to a main verb and any suffix attached to one verb applies to the sequence as well;
- (4) sequential actions involving switch reference are marked by a different series of verbal suffixes than actions which are co-referential;
- (5) phrasal NPs have different conjoiners than actions;
- (6) certain relative clauses are the product of a topicalized NP followed by the third person singular pronoun.

When a Kewa speaks TP he is influenced by a different set of underlying language rules than a lowlands TP speaker, a creolized TP speaker, or perhaps other Papuan language speakers. Because of this the TP markers *i*, *na*, and *em*, in particular, must be analyzed carefully in reference to the syntactic structure of the underlying language.

## NOTES

1. We compare the TP structures with Kewa (a Highlands language, Franklin 1968, 1971) because we believe that the structure of Kewa, or any underlying mother tongue for that matter, conditions the speaker's TP output. Convincing evidence is given by W. Camden (1979), for example, that Bislama Pidgin derives significant grammatical features from Tangoan of the New Hebrides, rather than from English. This has also been observed in phonology and is well documented in another Highlands language, Usarufa, by D. Bee (1971). Conversely, TP speakers are influenced in their non-native English dialect by underlying TP features. (See A.M. Smith, 1978).
2. That is, if TP is in fact historically linked to Chinese Pidgin English. Mühlhäusler (1976) gives evidence that TP is historically related to Samoan plantation Pidgin English.
3. Past tense is implied in these cases by the logical progression of the actions. The past tense marker bin is used by Highland speakers who have had more education or urban contact.
4. This contrasts with coastal and lowland Pidgin (Laycock 1970:16) where similar sentences repeat the free pronoun, instead of i:

(a) mi sindaun na mi kaikai 'I sit down and eat'

(b) mipela sindaun long paia na mipela toktok 'We are sitting at the fire and talking'

There are other variations such as (a') mi sindaun na kaikai or (a'') mi sindaun kaikai which focus upon the duration of one or the other or both actions.

5. For example, in Kewa note how one complex morpheme (-a) marks succession and identity:

(1) saa-me ado-a pua-pa 'We (two) saw it and went'  
we two-subj. see-and-we-two go-we two-did

(2) ne-me tu-a pa a-yo 'I hit it and am waiting'  
I-subj. hit-and-I just stand-I am

We point out (1971) that "same" or "different-subject" can be a misleading label for such markers. Rather the referential identity of animate and inanimate subjects, topics, patients, and so on, is marked by a series of suffixes conjoining clauses. For more on the subject see Franklin, forthcoming.

6. There is often a difference of opinion between Highland and Lowland types speakers who usually reflect underlying Papuan and



Austronesian mother tongues. I have heard the latter react against i being inserted between the pronoun and auxiliary.

7. The full text was given by Yapua Kirapeasi in 1972 in Usa village, the Southern Highlands Province, Kagua Sub-Province. It is a story of two brothers and how their initial togetherness and subsequent fight lead to a family division and separate clans.
8. In other words verbal aspects and auxiliaries are linked to verbs because they also involved co-referentiality in conjoined actions.
9. We do not attempt to describe the discourse functions of words like wanpela 'a certain' or dispela 'this particular', where new and given information are marked.
10. It could be argued, not knowing the Kewa story upon which the Pidgin is based, that tasol em means 'however she' in (16d), but the order of events is clear and who does them is also clear as long as we follow the Kewa - Pidgin manner of switching referents.
11. Note, however, in Hua of the Highlands, that there are similar morphological forms for sequential clause conjunction involving same actors and certain phrase conjunctions (Haiman 1978:9).
12. Examples such as kilim i dai 'hit it (and it dies)' or sutim i pundaun 'shoot it (and it falls down)' are based on the deleted object em and sequential marker na: kilim em na i dai, sutim em na i pundaun, i.e. the actions are quite separate in regard to the actor.
13. Woolford (forthcoming) analyses na as an "ordinary coordinate conjunction that joins words, phrases or sentences... Since na appears in a position just preceding clauses, it is also in a position to be reanalyzed as a complementizer."

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