

The Actor Voice Prefix *N-* of Kelabit

– In Austronesian Perspective –

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Abstract

In some Austronesian languages including Kelabit and Indonesian, the nasal prefix has been treated as if it is a productive and multi-functional affix. This makes the system of affixes in some languages more complicated. However, there is a main function, actor voice marking, which is seen in Proto Austronesian in light of the findings of this study and previous studies. The aim of this study is to clarify the main function of the nasal prefix *N-* in Kelabit. Analyzing collected Kelabit sentences, the difference between the base and prefixed form is exemplified. Here we found that the Kelabit nasal prefix *N-* marks actor voice by its feature of anti-passive. Before prefixation, the base, referred object, has highest prominence. To the contrary, after prefixation, the subject of the sentence becomes an actor and the referred object moves to an object position or a predicate which implies the object.

This result provides new insight into our understanding of the nasal prefix *N-* in Kelabit and its reflexes. Nevertheless, further consideration will be needed to yield more detailed findings about historical voice system change in Austronesian languages.

1. Introduction

Kelabit is one of the Austronesian languages spoken in Borneo, Malaysia. This paper deals with the function of the nasal prefix *N-* in Kelabit by looking at the structure of sentences with and without prefix and their roots. Describing the function of the nasal prefix (the reflex of the prefix *meN-* of Malaysian and Indonesian) is one of the controversial issues because the distribution is irregular and unpredictable. In both Philippine-type languages and Indonesian-type languages, this prefix is closely related to the historical change of Actor Voice (AV) morphemes. Over time, the function has changed due to competition with other affixes of active meaning function.

2. Prefix *N-* and its Reflexes

In this section, previous studies of the nasal prefix *N-* and its reflexes are outlined. First, I will introduce the description of the Kelabit nasal prefix *N-* in Hemmings (2016). Then, the nasal prefixes in both languages around Indonesia and in the Philippines are described.

2.1 Prefix *N-* in Kelabit

Hemmings (2016) shows the features of the nasal prefix *N-* in Kelabit. First, as a phonological feature, prefix *N-* causes nasal substitution regardless of whether that consonant is plosive or fricative, voiced or voiceless (Hemmings 2016: 104). Examples of nasal substitution caused by prefix *N-* are shown in (1)¹.

(1) nasal substitution

N → [m] / _ [bilabial]	>	<i>N-</i> + <i>puwer</i>	→	<i>muwer</i> ‘AV.butcher’
		<i>N-</i> + <i>bilag</i>	→	<i>milaq</i> ‘AV.break’
		<i>N-</i> + <i>terad</i>	→	<i>nerad</i> ‘AV.cut’
N → [n] / _ [dental/alveolar]	>	<i>N-</i> + <i>dinger</i>	→	<i>ninger</i> ‘AV.hear’
		<i>N-</i> + <i>si’er</i>	→	<i>ni’er</i> ‘AV.see’
N → [ŋ] / _ [velar]	>	<i>N-</i> + <i>kiding</i>	→	<i>ngiding</i> ‘AV.lift
		<i>N-</i> + <i>gekkang</i>	→	<i>ngekkang</i> ‘AV.lift.up/fire’

(Hemmings 2016: 104)

There are three allomorphs of prefix *N-*; nasal substitution, *nge-* prefixation with approximants and *ng-* prefixation with vowels (Blust 1977, Hemmings 2016: 115).

Hemmings (2016) describes functions of this nasal prefix as follows;

The main function is to mark actor voice (AV). In addition, N- also derives intransitive verbal predicates and participates in a causative alternation. The nasal prefix can attach to roots of any word-class:

(Hemmings 2016: 114)

It is very natural to determine the main function as marking actor voice because many of the Austronesian languages have nasal prefix as actor voice marking. However, the other functions of this prefix are different in some languages and still controversial. Examples in Hemmings (2016) are shown in (2) to (4);

(2) marking actor voice (AV)

a.	noun root	<i>abet</i>	‘tie (n)’	→	<i>ngabet</i>	‘AV.tie’
b.	adjective root	<i>rayeh</i>	‘big (adj)’	→	<i>ngerayeh</i>	‘AV. celebrate’
c.	verb root	<i>terem</i>	‘sink (v)’	→	<i>nerem</i>	‘AV.sink sth/sb’

(Hemmings 2016: 114)

(3) intransitive predicate derivation with non-verb roots

a.	<i>dalan</i>	‘path’	→	<i>nalan</i>	‘walk’
b.	<i>arang</i>	‘dance’	→	<i>ngarang</i>	‘to dance’
c.	<i>utaq</i>	‘vomit’	→	<i>ngutaq</i>	‘to vomit’

(Hemmings 2016: 116)

(4) causative inflection with intransitive predicate roots

a.	<i>matey</i>	‘die.INTR’	→	<i>ngatey</i>	‘kill’
b.	<i>meseb</i>	‘burn.INTR’	→	<i>ngeseb</i>	‘burn.TR’
c.	<i>tudo</i>	‘sit.INTR’	→	<i>nudo</i>	‘seat.TR’
d.	<i>terem</i>	‘sink.INTR’	→	<i>nerem</i>	‘sink.TR’
e.	<i>bilag</i>	‘break.INTR’	→	<i>milag</i>	‘break.TR’

(Hemmings 2016: 116)

Summarizing the above, in Hemmings (2016), the nasal prefix *N-* (the reflex of **maŋ-*) has three functions: (i) an affix which indicates actor voice, (ii) a derivational affix which derives verbs from non-verb roots, and (iii) an inflectional affix which indicates causative when attached to intransitive verbs.

However, this ‘actor voice marking’ function, which is basically considered as inflectional, is exemplified as derivational and inflectional in (2) and the analysis on roots is not well explained in (3) and (4). What this study makes clear is the difficulty of defining word class in Austronesian.

Considering this matter, other studies show various methods of explaining the function of the nasal prefix *N-*.

2.2 The Nasal Prefix in Proto Malay-Polynesian (PMP) and Proto Malayic (PM)

Among Proto Malay-Polynesian (PMP) affixes, the prefix **maŋ-* is shown as ‘active verb’ function (Blust 2013: 371). Blust (2013) mentions that reflexes of **maŋ-* vary the function in Indonesian-type languages and Philippine-type languages. Especially in Bikol (in 2.3.4), spoken in the Philippines, the function of **maŋ-*, active verb, is weakened because of competition with other affixes. Ross (2002) explains that, the actor voice prefix in Proto Malayic, the form **maN-* is a combination of prefix **paN-* and actor voice, and it indicates neutral rather than perfective (Ross 2002: 50). Adelaar (1992) also mentions the reflexes of the prefix **maN-* in Proto Malayic (PM) are constituents of the focus marking affixes and an inflectional transitive verbal prefix in some Malayic languages.

2.3 The Nasal Prefix in surrounding languages

As I mentioned in 2.2, the nasal prefix is found in many languages in Indonesia and the Philippines. Their voice systems are divided into two types, Indonesian-type vs. Philippine-type, through the development of the morphosyntactic model inherited from Proto Austronesian language. Himmelman (2005) defines Philippine-type languages as symmetrical voice languages which have at least two formally and semantically different undergoer voices, at least one non-local phrase marking clitic for nominal expressions, and pronominal second position clitics. On the other hand, Adelaar (2005) claimed that in Indonesian-type languages, the Proto Austronesian voice system is reduced to a simple opposition between actor and undergoer voice. However, the definition is not consistent across researchers in the field. Borneo languages are sometimes included in the same category as Philippines-type. In this paper, as Indonesian-type languages, the examples of Malaysian, Indonesian and Sumbawa languages are described. As Philippine-type languages, the examples of Bikol and Arta languages are described.

2.3.1 Malaysian

Blust (2013) mentioned that reflexes of PMP prefix *maŋ- mark active verbs that usually take an object over much of western Indonesia. However, an object is not obligatory. Examples in Malay are shown in (5).

(5) Malay: examples of prefix *meN-*

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>a. pukul</i> | > | <i>mə-mukul</i> | ‘to hit’ | <i>dia məmukul saya</i> | ‘he hit me’ |
| <i>b. tulis</i> | > | <i>mə-nulis</i> | ‘to write’ | <i>dia sedang mənulis</i> | ‘he is busy writing’ |

(Blust 2013: 378)

In this paper, Malaysian (Bahasa Malaysia) and Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesian) are treated as different languages because these languages do not always have a mutual lexicon, thus it is possible that we may have a serious problem when we look into the root of the words.

2.3.2 Indonesian

Sneddon (2010) describes the functions of the prefix *meN-* in Indonesian as follows. It is one of the constituents of primary verbs in Indonesian, and (i) the function of the prefix *meN-* added to an intransitive primary verb is derivational affix, and (ii) the function of the prefix *meN-* added to transitive primary verbs is inflectional voice affix. In (6a) ~ (6c), *meN-* cannot be assigned a function with these verbs, other than that its presence is required to produce a well-formed verb (Sneddon 2010: 69). In addition, many noun bases are also found like (6d) ~ (6f) and different meanings can be identified. Examples (6d), (6e) are typical examples which mean ‘go to [base]’. (6f) is an example which means ‘become like, resemble [base]’. In (6g), an example which means ‘become [base], take on the characteristic of [base]’ is shown.

(6) Indonesian: prefix *meN-* with intransitive primary verb

- | | | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| <i>a. nangis</i> | ‘cry (primary verb)’ | > | <i>me-nangis</i> | ‘cry’ |
| <i>b. didih</i> | ‘boil (primary verb)’ | > | <i>men-didih</i> | ‘boil’ |
| <i>c. nikah</i> | ‘marry (primary verb)’ | > | <i>men-nikah</i> | ‘marry’ |
| <i>d. darat</i> | ‘land (noun)’ | > | <i>men-darat</i> | ‘land (verb)’ |
| <i>e. laut</i> | ‘sea’ | > | <i>men-laut</i> | ‘go to sea’ |
| <i>f. batu</i> | ‘stone’ | > | <i>mem-batu</i> | ‘petrify, harden’ |
| <i>g. kering</i> | ‘dry’ | > | <i>meng-kering</i> | ‘dry’ |

(Sneddon 2010: 69-70)

Words in (6) show derivational function. On the other hand, by affixation, transitive verbs are inflected for voice (Sneddon 2010: 72). However, this inflectional active voice marking prefix, *meN-*, is omitted in some circumstances. Inflected verb in (7a) ~ (7c) means active voice, however it is often used as ‘*buka*’ in colloquial usage. Some simple transitive verbs are based on nouns and mean ‘use [base] on the object, apply [base] to the object as shown in (7d) and (7e).

(7) Indonesian: prefix *meN-* with transitive primary verb

a.	<i>buka</i>	‘open (primary verb)’	>	<i>mem-buka</i>	‘open’
b.	<i>tutup</i>	‘close (primary verb)’	>	<i>men-tutup</i>	‘close’
c.	<i>pukul</i>	‘hit (primary verb)’	>	<i>mem-pukul</i>	‘hit’
d.	<i>sapu</i>	‘broom (noun)’	>	<i>meny-sapu</i>	‘sweep (verb)’
e.	<i>potret</i>	‘portrait (noun)’	>	<i>mem-potret</i>	‘photograph (verb)’

(Sneddon 2010:73)

2.3.3 Sumbawa

Shiohara (2009) describes the function of the nasal prefix *N-*, which is the reflex of *meN-* in Indonesian as follows: (i) the distribution of the prefix *N-* and *bar-* is irregular from the phonological and semantic feature, (ii) the prefix *N-* derives intransitive verbs by attaching to bound morphemes, and the intransitives tend to be imperfective circumstances in aspect. (iii) prefix *N-* (and *bar-*) are involved in valence-decreasing when they are attached to transitive verbs. In (8), the roots with initial ‘-’ indicate bound morpheme, which cannot occur alone. Examples of (9) show noun root derivation. As we can see in (9a) ~ (9c), number of this kind of derivation is limited, and the way to derive these meanings is also irregular (Shiohara 2009: 65).

(8) Sumbawa: prefix *N-* with bound morpheme

a.	<i>-tanges</i>	>	<i>anges</i>	‘cry’
b.	<i>-guleng</i>	>	<i>nguleng’</i>	‘lay’
c.	<i>-luet</i>	>	<i>ngeluet</i>	‘move (body)’
d.	<i>-ganga/-anga</i>	>	<i>nganga</i>	‘(stative) open one’s mouth’

(Shiohara 2009: 64)

(9) Sumbawa: irregular derivation with prefix *N-*

a.	<i>enten</i> ‘knee’	>	<i>ngenten</i>	‘kneel’
b.	<i>entet</i> ‘fart (noun)’	>	<i>ngentet</i>	‘fart (verb)’
c.	<i>surat</i> ‘letter’	>	<i>nyurat</i>	‘write a letter’

(Shiohara 2009:65)

Moreover, according to Shiohara (2009), when the prefix *N-* is attached to transitive verbs, it causes valence-decreasing. This prefix *N-* cannot be attached to all transitive verb stems. Some transitive verbs appear with both prefix *N-* and *bar-*. Other verbs can occur only with one prefix, *N-* or *bar-*. Others can occur with neither prefix *N-* or *bar-*. However, it is difficult to classify stem verbs by their phonological or semantic features. Based on an analysis of 123 transitive verbs, Shiohara (2009) pointed out that 88.3% of the cases with prefix *N-* cause decreasing of P (patient) valence. Then it was concluded that this function of the prefix *N-* is related to the feature

of anti-passive in proto languages (Shiohara 2009: 76).

The nasal prefix becomes the active verb prefix in Indonesian-type languages like *meN-* in (5), however, in Philippine-type languages, the reflex of the prefix PMP **maŋ-*, prefix *mang-* in Bikol, has a narrower intransitive function (Blust 2013 :371). Bikol and Arta are languages which are spoken in the Philippines and are described in the following sections.

2.3.4 Bikol

In parts of the central Philippines, reflexes of PMP **maŋ-* have a narrower range of functions. The reflex of **maŋ-* in Bikol has lost its active verb function through competition with the reflexes of **maR-* and **-um-* in marking actor voice (Blust 2013: 378). In example (10a) and (10c) intransitivity of the verb with the prefix *mang-* is higher than the one with *mag-*, like (10b) and (10d).

(10) Bikol: examples of prefix *mang-*

- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| a. | <i>bakal</i> ‘to buy (infinite)’ | > | <i>mang-makal</i> | <i>mamakal</i> | ‘to go shopping’ |
| b. | <i>bakal</i> ‘to buy (infinite)’ | > | <i>mag-bakal</i> | <i>magbakal</i> | ‘to buy’ |
| c. | <i>patos</i> ‘a wrapper’ | > | <i>mang-matos</i> | <i>mamatos</i> | ‘to pack up’ |
| d. | <i>patos</i> ‘a wrapper’ | > | <i>mag-matos</i> | <i>magmaots</i> | ‘to pack (as for a trip)’ |

(Mintz 1997: 196, Mintz 2019: 76)

2.3.5 Arta

Kimoto (2017) describes the function of the nasal prefix *maN-*, the reflex of PMP **maN-*, as intransitive verb prefix. In (11a) and (11b) the verbs are marked by the prefix *meN-* and the function is typically intransitive. Although the verbs in (11c) and (11d) occur with objects, Kimoto (2017) considers them as extended intransitive based on the case marking.

(11) Arta: examples of prefix *meN-*

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| a. | <i>Mang-addub</i> | <i>i</i> | <i>du:t=i.</i> |
| | INTR-burn | SG.ABS.DEF | fire=SPC |
| | ‘The fire is burning.’ | | |
| b. | <i>Mang-ka:rawèg=tep</i> | <i>ta</i> | <i>lattong.</i> |
| | INTR-play=still | INDF | outside |
| | ‘S/He will still play outside.’ | | |
| c. | <i>Mangbugay</i> | <i>=tid</i> | <i>ta laman.</i> |
| | hunt | =3PL | INDF wild.pig |
| | ‘They go hunting wild pigs.’ | | |
| d. | <i>Mamangan</i> | <i>=tid</i> | <i>ta mabaw aydi: yakkan.</i> |
| | eat | =3PL INDF | rice and viand |
| | ‘They will eat rice and viand.’ | | |

(Kimoto 2017: 137-8)

Throughout the previous studies, the reflexes of the nasal prefix are defined as intransitive marking affixes. In Malaysian and Indonesian, however, it is possible to form active verbs, which can have objects.

3. Method

This research has been based on qualitative research with data acquired from a small number of Kelabit informants. The language consultants are P.M. (age: 50s) and S.L. (age: 70s), and both of them have grown up in Bario village in Sarawak, thus they are fluent in Kelabit. Data was collected during fieldwork by recording and writing field notes. Some data were collected while attending a bible translation meeting at Bario in 2019 where Kelabit people revised the first translation version of the bible, however, the translation has not been published yet. In this paper, the Kelabit language description is based on the international phonetic alphabet. Glossing rules applied on the examples are based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules (<https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>) and adapt their principles, such as word-by-word alignment, morpheme-by-morpheme correspondence, the use of small caps for grammatical labels, the use of the period for one-to-many correspondence.

To analyze the function of the nasal prefix, firstly examples with different roots will be shown. As Hemmings (2016) mentioned, the nasal prefix *N-* is able to appear with every word class. However, Kimoto (2017) argued about how to find borders between verbs, nouns, and adjectives in Arta language in Philippine, and mentioned that many Philippine languages pose significant problems to the universalists like Schachter and Shopen (2007) and Dixon (2010) (Kimoto 2017: 123). This is also true in Kelabit and the other languages of Malayo-Polynesian languages (Dixon2002). Therefore, an analysis based on appropriate classification of root is needed. In this study, semantic classifications of root are set as below without using terms like noun, adjective and verb.

(1) Concrete reference: *abet* ‘something to tie, string’, *sibu* ‘plant’, *ate* ‘heart’

(2) Abstract reference:

a. STATES and PROPERTY: *melu* ‘overripe’, *beruh* ‘new’, *ain* ‘taste’ etc.

b. ACTIVITY: *ettij* ‘arrival’, *aweh* ‘marriage’, *pili?* ‘selecting’, *si?er* ‘what someone sees or thinks’, *di?er* ‘what someone hears’ etc.

We will take a look at examples with these roots (or stems) first, then discuss the change of meaning by attaching affixes, and finally generalize the function of the nasal prefix.

Of course, defining the certain word-classes of Kelabit is still required in future studies.

4. Analysis of Kelabit nasal prefix *N-*

4.1 Concrete reference base

The examples with concrete reference root are shown in (12) ~ (15). In (12b) and (13b), prefix *N-* derives verbs which precede objects. In (14) and (15), the roots are a bit far from the prototype of the concrete references, however, still derive transitive verbs³.

(12) *abet* ‘something to tie’

a. *Təpu* *pakai abet* *ue*.
Grandmother/father use abet ue (a kind of plants)

‘Grandmother use/d ue strings.’

b. *Təpu* *ɲabet* *bekaŋ sinih*.
Grandmother/father N-abet basket here

‘Grandmother made this basket.’

(13) *sibu* ‘plant’

a. *Sibu lawa kopi inih, sənibu* *Nawan*.
plant tree trunk coffee DEM ⁴-plant Nawan

‘These coffee trees are planted by Nawan.’

b. *Nawan nibu lawa kopi*.
Nawan N-plant tree trunk coffee

‘Nawan planted coffee trees’

These two examples are typical concrete references. The base of these examples becomes an object of an affixed verb. If the base is not a typical concrete reference, but not an abstract reference either, the meaning of the base is more like a function or a feature of the base rather than the base itself.

(14) *ate* ‘heart’

a. *ate payo*

heart deer

‘a heart of deer’

b. ... *ideh neh ɲate iah* ...

3PL PT N-heart 3SG

‘... they killed Stephan ...’

(Bible translation Acts 8:33)

(15) *abi* ‘all, everything’ with prefix N-

a. *iah ineh dela?ih suk sinaru? pənu?uh abiabi nuk ləm ayu? usin Kandake*,
3.SG COP man REL si-do pe-care all~RED REL about treasure Kandake

‘(...) he is an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake, (...)’

(Bible translation Acts 8: 27)

b. *ɲabi bua? inih*.

N-all fruit DEM

‘Eat all of this fruit.’

In these examples, these bases also become objects of affixed verbs. In other words, when someone kills someone/something, s/he *ngatey* ‘kills’ someone’s *ate* ‘heart’, feature of living, and when someone finishes

something, *s/he ηabi* ‘finishes’ *abi* ‘everything’. However, abstract reference roots are more complicated.

4.2 Abstract reference base

The examples with abstract reference root are shown in (16) ~ (20). (16) and (17) show examples with state and property bases and (18) ~ (20) show examples with activity bases.

4.2.1 State and property

(16) *melu* ‘overripe’

a. *Bua? inih m-elu.*

Fruit DEM m-elu

‘This fruit is overripe.’

b. ... *Na'em teh doo? renga kamih η-elu mada? karuh Alla ...*

NEG PT⁵ good during 1.PL.EXCL N-elu guide word God ...

‘...It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God...’

(Bible translation Acts 6: 2)

(17) *bəruh* ‘new’

a. *sapa? bəruh*

shirt new

‘new shirt (clothes)’

b. *ηəbəruh ηadan.*

N-beruh name

‘Renew (your) name.’

In (16a), the predicate occurs with prefix *me-*, considered as stative verb marker. The base *elu* does not appear alone, thus it is considered as a bound morpheme just like the ones in Sumbawa. In these examples, the subject in (16a) and referred thing (17a) are a patient (or an experiencer), these roles are predicates which implies a base as an object in (16b) and (17b).

The example of *ain* ‘taste’ is also examined, however, the informant does not allow the combination of *ain* with prefix *N-*. Shiohara (2009) and other scholars mention the irregularity of the base of nasal prefix in languages in Indonesia and Philippines, and that is also true in Kelabit. Thus, determining which words are possible to attach *N-* to is the subject of future studies.

4.2.2 Activity

(18) *aweh* ‘marriage’

a. *Bulan ənam inan ilau p-aweh ηi ruma' kadaŋ Bario Asal.*

month six exist celebration p-marriage LOC house long Bario Asal

‘In June, there is a wedding ceremony in the long house at Bario Asal village.’

- b. *Inan anun? – aweh!*
Exist what – marriage!
'What do you have? – marriage (ceremony)!'
- c. *uih η-aweh ngan Julian.*
1SG N-marriage COM Julian
'I (will) marry Julian.'

(19) *si'er* 'what you see or think about the object'

- a. *Kapəh si'er muh dattur sineh kən doo mayu neh?*
How si'er 2SG female DEM INT suitable PT
'How do you think of that girl, is she suitable for you?'
- b. *Ian n-i'er iah.*
NEG.IMP N-si'er 3SG
'Don't look at him.'

(20) *di'ner* 'something that you have heard'

- a. *Kapəh di'ner muh unih menani Renai deh?*
How di'ner 2SG sound sing Renai DET
'What do you think about the sound of Renai's song?'
- b. *Ukəm tauh! n-i'ner iah nekaruh.*
Quiet 1PL.INCL N- di'ner 3SG speak
'Be quiet! Listen to him.'
- c. *Paŋəh təh kamih n-i'ner iah mala Yesus, ...*
Already PT 1PL.EXCL N- di'ner 3SG tell Yes
'... we have heard him saying Jesus...' (Bible translation Acts 7: 14)

The word *aweh* in (18b) is the answer to 'what', thus, it is considered to be a noun. On the contrary, *si'er* in (19) and *di'ner* in (20) are difficult to classify clearly. Words like these exist in some languages (Blevins 1999). They look like nouns, however they can be used like verbs in the sentences as well. If *si'er* and *ni'er* are used in a sentence 'I have already seen', both can occur and are considered grammatical by informants. In this case, only *ni'er* can be used without an object.

(21) *si'er* vs. *ni'er*

- a. *Uih pengah ni'er.*
1SG already N-si'er
'I have already seen (something we mentioned).'

- b. *Uih pengah si?er inih.*
 1SG already si?er DEM
 ‘I have already seen this’

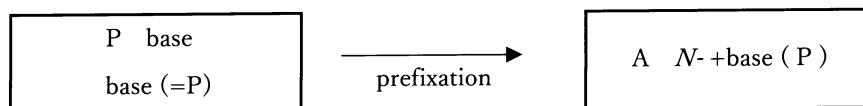
- c. **Uih pengah si?er.* (for ‘I have already seen.’ like (21a))

In (21b), *si?er* is used as a verb, and a lot of words like this can be seen in Kelabit. Although (21a) is allowed in highly contextual situations, this example plays an important role in distinguishing the *N-* form from the base form. Other activities, *rudap* ‘sleep’, *metting* ‘arrive’, *mari* ‘come’ and *nalan* ‘walk’ were also examined. In these 4 examples, only *nalan* ‘walk’ is made with the nasal prefix *N-*. For the activities base, the distribution is more irregular than for other bases, and it is difficult to explain by semantic characteristics. Based on these examples, there is no case that shows causative function of the nasal prefix. However, during fieldwork at Bario, causative examples appeared with a word *naru* ‘do’ between the actor and cause. Thus, the authenticity for the causative function of the nasal prefix remains uncertain.

5. Main function of nasal prefix *N-*

In summary of the discussion above, the distribution of the nasal prefix *N-* is so irregular that whether any one base can occur with *N-* or not is not explained by the semantic classification of the bases. However, these examples show the mutual function of the nasal prefix *N-*. In all examples, if the sentence is without the nasal prefix *N-*, the referred objects or characteristics of each word would have high prominence. In case of the concrete reference base, the base can be subject or object of the sentences without the prefix *N-*. In case of the state and property base, the base can be modifier or a predicate. Then, after being prefixed, the higher prominence is moved on to an actor (or subject) of the sentence, and the referred objects or characteristics expressed by the base have less prominence, becoming an object or a predicate which implies a base as an object. In other words, they are demoted by the nasal prefix. This process is indicated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 : the main function of nasal prefix *N-* in Kelabit



Shiohara (2009) also pointed out the same function of the nasal prefix *N-* in Sumbawa and described it with the term ‘anti-passive’. This is also evident from the data shown above, the subject of the sentence becoming an object or a predicate implies a base as an object through the prefixing.

In conclusion, therefore, the present study has demonstrated that the nasal prefix *N-* in Kelabit causes argument demotion by its anti-passive function. By anti-passive function, nasal prefix *N-* marks Actor Voice in every sentence.

6. Conclusion

In this study, I conclude that the feature of anti-passive in the nasal prefix *N-* marks actor voice in sentences. Even though classifying the word class of the roots is difficult, the feature of anti-passive can be applied in every example. In the sentences with prefix *N-* word, the actor of the verb will appear and the base does not keep the prominence. Therefore, the major function of the nasal prefix can be confirmed to be actor voice marking. There are more affixes in Kelabit to research and some are closely related to this nasal prefix *N-* in terms of other types of voice marking.

It is of note that Ross (2002) reported the possibility of the existence of rich focus systems in Proto Austronesian. However, revealing how those systems resulted in today's Indonesian-type vs. Philippine-type system is a subject for future analysis.

Notes

¹ Hemmings (2016) follows the orthography of the Kelabit language suggested by Labang (2012). However, in the Kelabit community, orthography is still a controversial matter. Janowski (2014) uses the spellings which attempt to reflect phonemically the variety of Kelabit spoken in the southern community of Pa' Dalih. Amster (1995) uses the phonetic alphabets based on an English phonology.

² This is considered as a 'burning'.

³ In this paper, [e] and [ə] are considered as allophones of /e/. Nevertheless, transcription of the Kelabit language in this paper follows phonetic characteristics. Thus, the same phoneme may be written as *e* and *ə*. The Kelabit phonology is still controversial in terms of allophones, and it is a subject for future studies.

⁴ This glossing is also controversial. A study comparing these affixes in Kelabit is required.

⁵ In Hemmings (2016) treated this as particle, but it is not well researched yet. In this paper, the term particle is used to add gloss on it, however, further study is needed.

Abbreviations

<>	infix	PL	plural
1	first person	PT	particle
2	second person	RED	reduplication
3	third person	REL	relative clause
COP	copula	SG	singular
DEM	demonstrative		
DET	determiner		(abbreviations appeared in Kimoto (2017))
EXCL	exclusive	ABS	absolutive
IMP	imperative	DEF	definite
INCL	inclusive	INDEF	indefinite
LOC	locative	INTR	intransitive verb
NEG	negative	SPC	nominal specificity

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