

## Advanced language puzzle

### 'our' in Nukuoro (Federated States of Micronesia)

Each of the examples below contains a possessive pronoun which can be translated as 'our'; they are all different in form and meaning.

One thing you need to know: Nukuoro distinguishes two categories of possession, often called **a-possession** and **o-possession**.

- **a-possession** is used when the possessor has an active or dominant role towards the possessed, e.g. one's tools, household objects, money, children, actions, dreams.
- **o-possession** is used in all other cases, e.g. one's parents, friends, house, body parts. It also includes sins.

This distinction plays a role in the possessive pronouns, but not necessarily in all forms.

Questions:

1. Find out what distinguishes the pronouns from each other. What categories play a role? Hint: start by comparing 1 and 12, then 1 and 9, then 1 and 13. Then compare 6, 8 and 7; and compare 2, 10 and 3.  
One extra hint: gender (male or female) does not play a role!
2. Make a table showing the different forms.
3. Can you predict the missing forms?

(Orthography adapted. AFF = affectedness, ANA = anaphoric, AWY = movement away from the speaker, INC = inceptive, IO = indirect object marker, PF = perfect, PFT = perfective, Pl = plural, TOW = movement towards speaker, VOC = vocative)

1. *Kitaau ka ahe e hulo ki taho* otaau *taina.*  
we INC return IPF go to side sibling

(Paul said to Barnabas:) 'Let us return and visit **our** brothers' (Acts 15:36)

2. Temaau *tama taane e hakamaoluja*  
child male IPF stubborn

(The father and the mother say to the town elders:) 'Our son is stubborn.' (Deut. 21:20)

3. *Ia ne hakao kimaau ki taha, kai* amaau *sseene*  
he PFT sell us to outside and coin  
*ku oti tonu i tana hai.*  
PF finish really by his do(ing)

(Leah and Rachel said to Jacob, talking about their father:) 'He has sold us, and our money [lit. **our** coins] are used up by what he did.' (Gen. 31:15)

4. *T<sup>h</sup>ajata Akoako, hai aje ki toku taina taane ki*  
man teach make AWY to my sibling male to  
*vaelua ina kimaau i mee a* temaau *tamana.*  
share AFF we IO thing of father

(A man said to Jesus:) 'Teacher, make my brother share the inheritance [lit. things of **our** father] with me.' (Luke 12:13)

5. *Kitaau ka hakataupale pei* luootaau *tamana.*  
we INC cooperate like father

(King Asa said to king Benhadad,) 'Let us cooperate, like **our** fathers (referring to their own fathers, not their forefathers).' (2 Ch. 16:3)

6. **Temaateu** Tamana te laa i te laji  
Father the there in the heaven

(Christians pray:) 'Our Father who art in heaven...' (Mat. 6:9)

7. Kimaateu e luuluu kelekele o tootou atuhale ku p<sup>h</sup>iki mai  
we IPF shake dirt of your city PF stick TOW  
ki **omaateu** vae.  
to foot

(The apostles must say to the people who don't believe their message:) 'We shake off the dust of your city that clings to our feet.' (Luk. 10:11)

8. Kooluu kaimee ma te unu, e **luoomaateu** soa!  
you eat and the drink VOC friend

(The friends say to the two lovers:) 'Eat and drink, our friends!' (Sng. 5:1)

9. T<sup>h</sup>aki Maoluja kimaau e lloto K<sup>h</sup>oe ki haia ki aala **omaau** mata!  
Leader high we IPF want you to do to awake eye

(The two blind men said to Jesus:) 'Lord, we want you to open our eyes!' (Mat. 20:33)

10. e teai se tarjata e hakatonu ina mai **luaamaau** miti.  
IPF not there\_is person IPF explain AFF TOW dream

(The cupbearer and the chief baker said to Joseph:) '(We have both had a dream, but) there is no one to interpret our dreams.' (Gen. 40:8)

11. **T<sup>h</sup>aa**u tamana ku matumatua  
father PF old

(Lot's older daughter said to her sister:) 'Our father is old...' (Gen. 19:31)

12. Iesu K<sup>h</sup>listo ne kaavaŋe Tono mouli ka taa  
Jesus Christ PFT give his life INC die  
i hiitiŋa **otaateu** haisala  
because.of sin

(Paul writes to the Galatians:) 'Jesus Christ gave his life for our sins.' (Gal. 1:3)

13. Haia ki hanu **ataau** tama, au k<sup>h</sup>ana makau!  
make to some child I lest/might die

(Rachel said to Jacob:) 'Give me children [lit. make that there are our children], or I shall die!' (Gen. 30:1)

14. Kootou kaamai hanu ootou momo loto e hhao ai **amaateu** laama.  
you give some your amount oil IPF fill ANA lamp

(The foolish girls said to the wise ones:) 'Give us some of your oil to fill our lamps.' (Mat. 25:8)

15. Iakopu ku k<sup>h</sup>ave mee alotahi a **t<sup>h</sup>aateu** tamana.  
Jacob PF take thing all of father

(The sons of Laban said among themselves:) 'Jacob has taken all that was our father's.' (Gen. 31:1)