Complex Predicates in Niuean*

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Oceanic languages are well known to exhibit serial verb or complex predicate constructions, but there has been no discussion of such predicates in Niuean, a Polynesian language of the Tongic subgroup. This paper identifies and describes the various types of nuclear complex predicates found in Niuean, including those with auxiliary verbs and directional elements, as well as those formed by juxtapositional compounding. This last group consists, as in Samoan, of subtypes including argument incorporation, coordination, resultatives, depictives, modificational constructions and possessive constructions. We also identify a set of three light verbs in Niuean. Many examples are non-compositional in meaning, suggesting a high degree of lexicalization.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

There is a wide variety of serial verb or complex predicate constructions in Oceanic languages, with substantial discussion in the literature (e.g. Aikhenvald 2006, Bowern 2008, Bril 2004, Crowley 2003, Sebba 1987, and references therein). To date, however, there has been no discussion of such predicates in Niuean, a Polynesian language of the Tongic subgroup. In this paper, we report on the types of complex predicates found in Niuean based on data compiled from Sperlich (1997), Seiter (1980), and Niue: A History of the Island (1982), augmented with native speaker consultation. This paper presents an initial catalogue of complex predicates in Niuean.

It is difficult to define the concept of complex predicate, as the term is used to describe many different constructions in various languages. As a starting point, we consider complex predicate sentences to be those in which there are two predicates within a surface single clause. We constrain the data set by the following working definitional limitations:

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- Both predicative elements must be lexical and able to function independently.
- Both must share the same Tense-Aspect-Mood (TAM).
- No clause boundary marking can appear between the two predicates.
- No conjunction or other material can appear between the two predicates.

Complex predicates have been divided into two types: core and nuclear (e.g. Bril 2004, Foley and Van Valin 1984, Crowley 1987, 2003), roughly equivalent to the VP and V domains. The core type involves iteration of the core of the sentence, which, as illustrated in (2), consists of the verb and argument(s), sharing any peripheral material. An example from Pileni, a Polynesian language traditionally considered to be of the Futunic subgroup, is provided in (3).

(2)  
[clause [core he [nucl talked] to her] in the library] (Bril 2004)

(3)  
Pileni  
Lha-ko toa lha-ko mot-ia te pakola la na.  
3.DU-TAM take 3.DU-TAM cut-TR ART giant DEM DEM  
‘They cut the giant (to pieces).’ (lit. ‘they-took they-cut the giant’) (Næss 2004:238)

The nuclear type of complex predicate, on the other hand, involves iteration of the nucleus (or predicate) only, as illustrated in (4), also from Pileni.

(4)  
Pileni  
A hi'ai ne hano lavaki, na e thaili-age.  
CONJ NEG TAM go disappear 3SG TAM wait-DIR  
‘He did not go away, he waited for him.’ (Næss 2004:233)

An additional distinction of importance is whether the complex predicates are argument-sharing (e.g. same subject and object or same object, as in (3) and (4)) or ambient (no shared arguments, modificational (Crowley 1987)). An ambient example from Paamese, spoken in Vanuatu, is illustrated below, as cited in Bril (2004).

(5)  
Paamese  
Ki-pusi-e he kaiho.  
2.SG.DIS-kick-SG 3.SG.DIS be.hard  
‘Kick it hard.’ (lit. ‘you kick, it is hard’) (Crowley 1987:71 as cited in Bril 2004:4)

Cross-linguistically, the core type is the more widespread (Bril 2004). Both types are found across Oceanic languages, but nuclear complex predicates are more studied in the languages closest to Niuean (Bril and Ozanne-Rivierre 2004). For this reason, our focus in this paper will be nuclear complex predicates of the type [Pred + Pred].

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1 Some have argued differently; e.g. that complex predicates should allow for material to intervene between the two parts, as in, for example, Chinese compound predicates (see Su 2012 and references therein).
2 Næss (2004) notes that the status of (3) as a core-layer serialization depends on the argument status of the subject clitics, with substantial discussion of the issues involved.
Nuclear serialization is often set aside as compounding, but there are two reasons why such constructions should be studied alongside core complex predicates. First, as Crowley (2003) argues, there are a great many similarities between languages in which serial constructions have been treated as compounding and those in which they have been treated as the result of a syntactic process of serialization. Second, recent theories of compounding (e.g. Harley 2008) and indeed, of morphology in general consider that lexical or morphological processes are syntactically derived, and that the word/phrase distinction is made late in the grammar, at the level of phonology (e.g. Distributed Morphology: Halle and Marantz 1993, Marantz 2007, Harley and Noyer 1999: also Hale and Keyser 1993, Baker 1988). In this view, compounds are derived in ways similar to phrases. This unclear nature of complex predicates is illustrated in our data by the fact that complex predicates are written variously as one word, or two, or sometimes hyphenated.

1.2 Our Study

The purpose of our study has been to identify and describe the various types of nuclear complex predicates found in Niuean. To this end, we studied sentences from one text (Niue: A History of the Island 1982) and the example sentences from the Niue language dictionary (Tohi Vagahau Niue: Sperlich 1997). We searched only for nuclear juxtapositions [Pred + Pred], and did not look for core serializations such as [VS + VS] (e.g. ‘run I fall I’), [VS + VSO] (e.g. ‘run I catch I him’), or [VSO + V] (e.g. ‘strike I him die’); thus, we make no claims in this paper about the existence of core complex predicates in Niuean.3 We examined anything in the predicate domain (to be defined below) that consists of more than one word or root, so our findings are limited to this type. This is intended as a preliminary—not an exhaustive—study of complex predicates in Niuean.

Niuean has [TAM + V + SO] word order (TAM = Tense-Aspect-Mood particle). The predicate domain, speaking broadly, is everything between the TAM and the first argument. Complex predicate constructions a priori, then, are all sentences where there is more than one item in this domain. According to previous literature, the elements that can occur in the predicate domain are as shown in (6). Post-verbal particles and adverbials are outlined in (7).

(6) NEG + AUX + V + POSTVERBAL PARTICLES

(7) Post-verbal particles/adverbials:
Dir > Man > InstrAppl > UnivQuant > ResPron > Asp’l > Advs > Emphs > Perf > Q

For a detailed discussion of the nature of these elements, see Seiter (1980), Sperlich (1997), Massam (2010), and references therein. Those in bold will be further discussed below. For the rest, in brief: the instrumental applicative allows an instrument to be expressed as an object; the universal quantifier expresses the completion or exhaustion of an argument; the resumptive pronoun resumes locatives and temporals that have been fronted or otherwise expressed earlier; aspectual adverbs are those with meanings such as still and always, while emphatics have meanings such as just and yet; the perfect particle expresses the present relevance of a past event; and the Q particle appears in yes-no questions.

Those not in bold in (6) and (7) are elements that we have left aside in this paper. For example, we do not consider predicates consisting of [Negation + V] to be complex predicates.

3 There do seem to be possible core complex predicate examples: e.g. [GO + SBJ + V]

(i) Kua finatu a ia takafaga ika.
    PRF go.over.there ABS 3.SG fish/hunt fish
    ‘He went fishing.’ (Sperlich 1997:291)
Similarly, we do not consider predicates consisting of [V + Instrumental Applicative], [V + Resumptive Pronoun], [V + Aspectual Adverb], [V + Emphatic], [V + Perfect], or [V + Q] to be complex predicates. The key reason for this is that the non-verbal element in such complexes cannot function as a predicate or nominal head on its own. Following our working definition in (1), these should not be considered complex predicates (although, of course, one might question whether this constraint is a valid one). We also put aside [V + Universal Quantifier], because this has been described as a floated quantifier, not a predicate. However, given the fact that *oti* can also be a verb (*'to (be) complete’*) (Massam 2002), and the fact that *aki* has been argued to be verbal (Ball 2010), these deserve further attention in light of our complex predicate study.

After putting aside certain cases as just described, we looked at any other sentences where there were two lexical elements in the predicate domain. The example types will be presented and discussed in detail below. Here we present an overview of our findings.

(8) 1) Auxiliary + verb (previously discussed e.g. by Seiter 1980)  
2) Verb + directional (previously discussed e.g. by Seiter 1980)  
3) Verb + manner (previously discussed by Seiter 1980 as a closed class of a few items, to be expanded below)  
4) Other root + root complexes (not previously discussed)  
5) Light verb constructions (not previously discussed)

Before embarking on a discussion of complex predicates in Oceanic languages, it is necessary to mention a recurring problem with classifying these constructions in this language family, in particular in Polynesian languages such as Pileni, East Uvean, Samoan and Tahitian (Næss 2004, Moyse-Faurie 2004, Mosel 2004, Paia and Vernaudon 2004, Bril and Ozanne-Rivierre 2004). Often, classifications into construction types are made based on the part of speech or lexical category of the items involved. For example, we would not consider an English example such as (9) to be a serial verb construction, but rather, a secondary predication construction (Irimia 2011), in part because the second predicate is not a verb but an adjective (Larson 1991).

(9) He wiped the table clean.

If we classified complex predicates in accordance with the part of speech of the second predicate, however, we would encounter a problem in Polynesian languages because the part of speech of lexical items in these languages is rarely or never clear due to a lack of verbal, nominal, adjectival, or adverbial inflection. Many (perhaps most) words can equally serve as nouns, verbs, or modifiers (noted early on by Biggs 1971; see also Broschart 1997, Massam 2006). For example, the Niuean complex in (10) ‘to shout loudly’ might well be analyzed as [V + V] ‘they shouted and were loud’, or [V + Adv] ‘they shouted loudly’, or perhaps even [V + N] ‘they shouted and loudness resulted’.

(10) *titi kalaga* ‘shout loudly’ (Sperlich 1997:313)

Having noted this issue, we set it aside and label words either neutrally as predicates, or loosely as verbs, nouns, or other parts of speech in terms of their basic semantics and dictionary entries. We now proceed to discuss complex predicates in Niuean, beginning with cases in which one of the predicates comes from a small closed class of elements.
2. Complex Predicates in Niuean: Closed Class Complexes

2.1 Auxiliary Constructions

There is a small class of predicates in Niuean that appear pre-verbally, shown in (11).

(11) Auxiliary + Verb  
    (closed class)  (open class)

Seiter (1980) reports that there are eight preverbal auxiliaries, listed in (12).

(12) i. fia want to  
    ii. fā habitual  
    iii. mata look like  
    iv. leo sound like  
    v. liga likely  
    vi. kamata begin  
    vii. teitei nearly  
    viii. liu + foki iterative (Liu is preverbal; foki is postverbal. Both can occur independently and can co-occur.)

Some of these are exemplified below:

(13) a. Fia fano lahi a au ki Niuē.  
     want go greatly ABS 1.SG to Niue  
     ‘I really want to go to Niue.’ (Seiter 1980:10)  

b. Mata ita tuai a Sefa ke he taha.mena.  
   look angry PRF ABS Sefa GL LOC NSP.thing  
   ‘Sefa looks angry about something.’ (Seiter 1980:12)

c. Kua teitei fakapouli tuai e mahina.  
   PRF nearly darken PRF ABS moon  
   ‘The moon has nearly darkened.’ (Seiter 1980:13)

d. Ne liu kitia foki he taha tama fifina a koe.  
   PST return see also ERG NSP child female ABS 2.SG  
   ‘You were seen again by a little girl.’ (Seiter 1980:14)

Most of these items can also appear as main predicates of clauses, as shown in (14). Recall that we are considering only constructions where both elements within the predicate domain can stand alone as predicates to be members of our class of complex predicates. The fact that the items in (11) can appear as sole predicates brings them into our classification.

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4 Niuean case markers are inflected for a proper/common value, but this is not reflected in the glosses in this paper.
5 Some (e.g. mata ‘look like’, fia ‘want’) seem to appear as main predicates only if reduplicated (Seiter 1980, Sperlich 1997).
We will not discuss this group further in this paper, although further study is warranted. For more information, see Seiter (1980).

2.2 Directional Constructions

A second set of complex predicates in which one member comes from a closed class is the class of directional constructions. Directionals have been the subject of much research in Oceanic languages (e.g. Ross 2004). In Niuean, they appear in post-verbal position within the predicate domain, and are used to indicate the directional orientation of the verb, including verbs of motion, speaking, gesture, perception, and sensation (Seiter 1980). Niuean has five directionals: *mai*, *atu*, *age*, *hake*, and *hifo*. The first three are deictic—the direction they indicate is relative to the speaker and listener—while the last two are absolute and indicate ‘upwards’ and ‘downwards’ respectively. A brief summary of the meanings of directionals is presented below:

(15) *mai* – towards the speaker

a. Hau mai lā!
   come DIR.1 EMPH
   ‘Come here!’ (Seiter 1980:18)

b. Kua ita mai a Pita ki a au.
   PRF angry DIR.1 ABS Pita GL PERS 1.SG
   ‘Pita’s angry at me.’ (Seiter 1980:18)

(16) *atu* – towards the listener

a. To fakamaama atu e au ki a koe.
   FUT explain DIR.2 ERG 1.SG GL PERS 2.SG
   ‘I will explain it to you.’ (Seiter 1980:19)

b. Homo atu e pene ē he tau pene oti.
   excel DIR.2 ABS pen DEM LOC PL pen all
   ‘This pen is superior to all the other pens.’ (Seiter 1980:19)

(17) *age* – away from both the speaker and listener

Tala age ki a ia e tala haau.
   PERS 3.SG ABS story 2.SG GEN tell DIR.3 GL
   ‘Tell him your story.’ (Seiter 1980:19)
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(18) *hake* – upwards
Ne onono hake a ia ke he mahina.
PST look DIR.up ABS 3.SG GL LOC moon
‘He was looking up at the moon.’ (Seiter 1980:19)

(19) *hifo* – downwards
Ne veli hifo e tama ke he pelapela.
PST fall DIR.down ABS child GL LOC mud
‘The child fell in the mud.’ (Seiter 1980:20)

It should be noted that *age* is used almost exclusively with verbs of speaking and giving, and *atu* is used in its place to indicate direction away from both the speaker and listener with other sorts of verbs.

Each of these directionals can also function as the main—and only—verb of a predicate, as illustrated in the examples below:

(20) a. Mai lā taha vala vai tote!
give EMPH NSP piece water little
‘Give me some water!’ (Seiter 1980:21)

b. Ne atu lā ia e au lima e talā.
PST give EMPH DEM ERG 1.SG five LIG dollar
‘I just gave (you) five dollars.’ (Seiter 1980:21)

c. To age e au taki lima e talā ki a lautolu.
FUT give ERG 1.SG each five LIG dollar GL PERS 3.PL
‘I will give each of them five dollars.’ (Seiter 1980:21)

d. Ne hifo a ia ki tahi.
PST go.down ABS 3.SG GL sea
‘He went down to sea.’ (Seiter 1980:22)

e. Ne hake e tama ki luga he mouga.
PST go.up ABS child GL top GEN mountain
‘The child went up to the top of the mountain.’ (Seiter 1980:22)

When directionals are used in this manner, their meaning is slightly altered. The three deictic directionals take the meaning ‘to give (in a particular direction)’, and the final two take the meaning ‘to go (upwards or downwards)’. Each of these directionals can occur with the verbs meaning ‘to go’ and ‘to give’ normally, such collocations being quite common.
Directionals are of particular interest to the study of complex predicates due to the problem discerning parts of speech in Polynesian languages. While some define directionals as adverbs (Seiter 1980), and others classify them as directional particles or clitics, it is clear that these directionals have verbal properties and thus fit into our working definition of complex predicates.

3. Complex Predicates in Niuean: Open Class Complexes

In this section, we turn to open class complex predicates in Niuean, which have not been previously discussed in the literature. We begin by examining Mosel’s (2004) typology of Samoan complex predicates; then we turn to a comparison of Niuean with Samoan.

3.1 Samoan Typology (Mosel 2004)

Samoan is a Polynesian language with a similar morphosyntactic profile to Niuean: ergative alignment, a lack of inflectional morphology, and a lexicon that defies classification by part of speech based on distributional or semantic criteria. Mosel’s (2004) analysis of Samoan identified six types of juxtapositional constructions: contiguous lexical words that “form an independent syntactic unit below phrase level”. These constructions are productive and can operate as complex predicates,
including serial verb constructions. In our study of Niuean, we found many open-class complex predicates, and the Samoan categories accommodate the Niuean data well. The six categories discussed by Mosel are summarized in (24).

(24) Mosel’s (2004) juxtapositional constructions in Samoan:

1. **Constructions with argument incorporation**: action word followed by person/thing word denoting a patient or place or time of the action.
2. **Co-ordinate constructions**: two lexical words of equivalent syntactic status which express two simultaneous states of affairs.
3. **Cause-effect constructions** express that a transitive action causes a person or thing to have a certain property.
4. **Modifier constructions** refer to an event, done in a certain way, near or far away, or a certain number of times.
5. **Depictive constructions**: the second element expresses a certain bodily or mental condition of a core participant or the quantity of participants.
6. **Possessive constructions** consist of a word denoting a body part, some other part of a whole, or a piece of clothing which is modified by a property or number word.

Examples of each type are shown below:

(25)

a. Sā tausi pepe le teine.
   TAM take.care.of baby ART girl
   ‘The girl took care of babies/was a baby-sitter.’ (Mosel 2004:15)

b. 'O le 'au o le lau e uliuli pa'e'e.
   PRS ART stalk POSS ART leaf TAM black thin
   ‘The stalk of the leaf is black and thin.’ (Mosel and So'o 2000, as in Mosel 2004:17)

c. Tipi fa’a-pa’ū le lā’au.
   cut CAUS-make.fall ART tree
   ‘Cut the tree down.’ (Mosel and So'o 2000, as in Mosel 2004:28)

d. Sā 'ai tele le tama.
   TAM eat much ART boy
   ‘The boy ate a lot.’ (Mosel 2004:34)

e. 'Ua folo űtoa Fitilo’ilo’i.
   TAM swallow whole Fitilo’ilo’i
   ‘She swallowed Fitilo’ilo’i whole.’ (Moyle 1981, as in Mosel 2004:55)

f. E afi tolu le sētima.
   TAM funnel three ART steamer
   ‘The steamer has three funnels.’ (Milner 1966 as in Mosel 2004:59)

We now turn to Niuean to illustrate how the data fit into Mosel’s classification.
3.2 **Niuean Open Class Complex Predicates**

With some adjustment to the definition of the six categories, the Niuean equivalent of Mosel’s juxtapositional constructions, here called open class complex predicates, are presented below. For ease of explication we write examples with a hyphen, though in the sources, the complex predicates are more usually written either as two words or as one word.

### 3.2.1 Argument Incorporation Constructions

Noun incorporation is common in Niuean, the verb preceding the noun. This topic has been previously studied (e.g. Massam 2001) and we will not discuss it in detail here, although previous analyses should be revisited in light of the general complex predicate data in Niuean.

(26) Ne pini-maka e lautolu e tagata kaihā.
    PST throw-stone ERG 3.PL ABS person thief
    ‘They threw stones at the thief.’ (Sperlich 1997:269)

### 3.2.2 Co-ordinate Constructions

Several examples were found where words of an equivalent syntactic status stand side-by-side and suggest a co-ordinate meaning (‘X and Y’), although we found few clear-cut cases.

(27) a. Kua tafe-oho e kau mai he tau faahi ne fā.
    PRF flow-rush ABS army DIR LOC PL side REL four
    ‘The army charged from all four sides.’ (Sperlich 1997:288)

b. Kua pala-tao e tau fua niu.
    PRF wet-dirty ABS PL fruit coconut
    ‘The green coconuts are decaying.’ (Sperlich 1997:258)

Example (27a) above can be analyzed as a form of co-ordination if one accepted that the resultant compound structure, translated as *charge*, consists logically of the two component actions occurring simultaneously; namely, *flow* and *rush*. However, one could also view the construction as a form of modification (i.e. flowing in a rushed manner). Similarly in (27b), the combination *wet-dirty* could be analyzed as either co-ordination (‘The green coconuts are wet and dirty.’) or modification (‘They are wet in a dirty way.’). Either example could also be a fossilized, unproductive form. Preliminary work with a native speaker consultant suggests that the co-ordination category in Niuean is not fully productive, as many examples were rejected, including the Niuean equivalent of the Samoan example in (25b), as shown in (28a). Instead, such examples were corrected to co-ordinate constructions, as in (28b).

(28) a. *Uli tote e akau ē.
    black small ABS stick DEM
    ‘This stick is black-small.’ (Fieldwork 1:2010)

b. Uli mo e tote e akau ē.
    black COM LIG small ABS stick DEM
    ‘This stick is black and small.’ (Fieldwork 1:2010)
The status of co-ordinated complex predicates in Niuean is still unclear after this preliminary study. Its validity is suggested by the presence of the category in Samoan and supported by the existence in Niuean of synonym compounds, or predicates consisting of two contiguous lexical items of nearly identical semantic content, the resultant form conveying a repetitive action. The synonymous nature of these constructions supports a co-ordination analysis, but we note the resulting pluractional semantics are the same as reduplication (Sperlich 1997; Haji Abdolhosseini, Massam, and Oda 2002).

(29) a. Ne tā-momo e ia e tagata kona kava.
   PST hit-hit ERG 3.SG ABS person drunk intoxicating.drink
   ‘He repeatedly hit the drunken man.’ (Sperlich 1997:286)

b. Kua tali-fetuku e lautolu e tau talo ke he motokā.
   PRF carry-carry ERG 3.PL ABS PL taro GL LOC truck
   ‘They carried the taros (sack by sack) to the truck.’ (Sperlich 1997:294)

3.2.3 Cause-Effect/Resultative Constructions

These examples express that a transitive action causes a person or thing to have a certain property. Cause-effect constructions, or resultatives, appeared relatively frequently in our Niuean data.

(30) Kua ofo-mate au mo e matakutaku he pā e fana.
   PRF surprise-dead 1.SG COM LIG fear CAUS explode ABS gun
   ‘The gunshot shocked and scared me.’ (surprised to the point of death) (Sperlich 1997:247)

(31) Kua tagataga-tō haana a tino katoa
   PRF loose-fall 3.SG.GEN LIG body whole
   ‘His whole body was tired.’ (Sperlich 1997:289)

Resultatives were also freely generated by our native speaker consultants, who provided examples such as (32) below.

(32) Ne hifi-kū e ia haaku ulu.
   PST cut-short ERG 3.SG 1.SG.GEN hair
   ‘She cut my hair short.’ (Fieldwork 1:2010)

3.2.4 Modifier Constructions

Modifier constructions modify an event, falling into the ambient class of complex predicates. They are not always easy to distinguish from simple [V + Modifier] constructions, but a key diagnostic for our study is the ability of the second predicate to appear as a sole predicate or nominal head, which brings this class of constructions into the complex predicate definition. This was the most common type of complex predicate in our Niuean data. Examples with manner (33), locative (34), and temporal (35) modification are provided below. Interestingly, most of these examples have what we would consider to be primarily nominal second members.
(33) a. Ne tolo-muli e toa.
PST move-behind ABS hero
‘The hero retreated.’ (Sperlich 1997:322)

b. Kua oho-feke mai a ia ki a au.
PRF rush-octopus DIR.1 ABS 3.SG GL PERS 1.SG
‘He suddenly rushed at me.’ (Sperlich 1997:248)

(34) a. Kua hola-vao e puaka.
PRF run-bush ABS pig
‘The pig ran wild.’ (Sperlich 1997:123)

b. Kua hū-poko tūmau nī a ia.
PRF hide-room always EMPH ABS 3.SG
‘He is always isolated.’ (Sperlich 1997:126)

(35) Ne fakahala a ia he tolo-pō e tama fifine.
PST fine ABS 3.SG CAUS move-night ABS child female
‘He was fined for entering the girl’s house at night.’ (Sperlich 1997:322)

3.2.5 Depictive Constructions

Depictive constructions are those where the second element expresses a certain bodily or mental condition of a core participant or the quantity of participants. The difference between modifier and depictive constructions can be subtle, but in general, a depictive predicate modifies an argument (and an event) whereas a modifier modifies an event alone (e.g. he drove drunkenly/he drove drunk).

We found some examples of depictives in Niuean, and their existence was corroborated by native speakers.

(36) Ne puku-taha e ia e mokotaliga.
PST eat-one ERG 3.SG ABS lizard
‘He gulped down the lizard.’ (Fieldwork 2:2010)

(37) Ne mate motua a ia.
PST die old ABS 3.SG
‘He died old.’ (Fieldwork 2:2010)

3.2.6 Noun-Adjective Constructions

We found two types of examples in this category. The first type is exactly the same as the possessive construction cases described by Mosel, where the predicate consists of a (body) part, which is modified by the second predicative element, and then predicated of the whole, corresponding to the part in the predicate. This example came from native speaker consultation:

(38) Ne ihu papa e tama fifine.
PST nose flat ABS child female
‘The girl has a flat nose.’ (i.e. is flat-nosed) (Fieldwork 1:2010)
We also found a second type of construction that is similar to Mosel’s possessive construction in Samoan. This category groups predicates where the second element seems to modify the first, but unlike the modifier construction category, no bodily attribute, part-whole, or possession relation is involved. Such constructions appear to be common in Niuean. The translations for the examples below include paraphrasing to emphasize this type of construction.

(39) a. Ne tuku a ia ke he falepupui hā kua aga-hala.  
PST put ABS 3.SG GL LOC prison CAUS PRF habit-wrong  
‘He was sent to prison because he was guilty (wrong-habited).’ (Sperlich 1997:43)

b. Kua hala-galo hana tau mahani.  
PRF path-hide 3.SG PL habit  
‘She is very secretive (hidden-pathed) with her habits.’ (Sperlich 1997:108)

c. Kua lama-ulı e alofale he umu.  
PRF soot-black ABS ceiling GEN oven  
‘The ceiling is tarnished (black-sooted) because of smoke of the oven.’ (Sperlich 1997:174)

We have seen in this section that Niuean exhibits a very high degree of similarity with Samoan in types of complex predicates, although the productivity of the various types appears to vary.

4. Complex Predicates in Niuean: Light Verbs or ‘T-Class’ Complexes

In addition to the above complex predicates, we also found constructions where the first member could be classified as a closed-class light verb (see Bak 2011 and references therein). These are given in (40), along with a sampling of Sperlich’s (1997) characterizations.

(40) Light verbs in Niuean

\textit{tā} When used in compounds, the general meaning is to perform an act with an implement, tool, weapon or body part, such as dancing or punching with the fist. It is also used with other words, similar to reduplication, to intensify or emphasize the action in some way. (Sperlich 1997:284)

\textit{tō} Used separately and in various derivations with a wide meaning base both literally and figuratively, including the notion of being ‘endowed’ with something, and to be given something from ‘above’ or by chance. It is often translated by ‘happen’ or ‘(be)fall’ or existential, and is also used for emphasis. (Sperlich 1997: 314)

\textit{tū} In derivations, a wide range of meanings is evident; including ‘to stand’, ‘to deliver’, ‘to subside’, ‘to appear’, and ‘to come’. (Sperlich 1997:325)

As well as being able to appear on their own as verbs, these verbs appear to each have two other uses. First, they can be added to another predicate (written as one word) to give a meaning of intensification, possibly through pluractionality, as in (41). This process, like the co-ordinate
constructions in (29), yields meanings similar to those derived via reduplication (Sperlich 1997, Haji Abdolhosseini, Massam and Oda 2002).

(41) Kua tā-folo e ia e ika.
PRF strike-beat ERG 3.SG ABS fish
‘He beat the fish repeatedly (to kill it).’ (Sperlich 1997:285)

(42) Kua tō-pā e uha.
PRF fall-crash ABS rain
‘The rain fell heavily.’ (Sperlich 1997:315)

(43) Ne tū-gaki e ulu haana he lau he moto.
PST stand-nod ABS head 3.SG.GEN CAUS hit LOC fist
‘His head jerked when hit by a fist.’ (Sperlich 1997:326)

These predicates can also be used with second elements that are not primarily verbal to derive a verbal meaning, such as tā-fuga ‘make hole/stab’ and tā-mate ‘make dead/kill’. Other examples are in (44)–(46).

(44) Kua tā-kiva e ia e falu.
PRF make-dirty ERG 3.SG ABS house
‘He made the house dirty.’ (Sperlich 1997:284)

(45) Tō-mafola e futi ika haaku i ne afi.
fall-luck ABS hunt fish 1.SG.GEN LOC PST evening
‘My fishing yesterday was successful.’ (Sperlich 1997:315)

(46) Kua tū-takai he magafaoa e tagata gagao.
PRF stand-surround ERG family ABS person sick
‘The sick person was surrounded by the family.’ (Sperlich 1997:326)

These light verbal elements have not been previously discussed in the Niuean literature, aside from in the dictionary entries in Sperlich (1997).

5. Complex Predicates in Niuean: Opaque Complexes

In addition to the above catalogued complex predicates, there are many examples in Niuean that are hard or impossible to analyze, as their structure is opaque. This demonstrates that there is a high degree of lexicalization in many complex predicates in Niuean. We provide examples below.

(47) Kua huki-poko-fua e halauta.\(^6\)
PRF pierce-groove-carry ABS inland.road
‘The eastern track is much shorter.’ (Sperlich 1997:128)

\(^6\) This example shows that it is possible for a complex predicate to have more than two members. We found several examples of this type; many of them contained a light verb. We were not able to gather enough data to allow for an analysis of complexes with more than two members.
(48) Kua tapu-telegia a ia neke logona ha leo hohā.
PRF sacred-kick ABS 3.SG in.case hear NSP noise noise
‘He is very sensitive to loud noise.’ (Sperlich 1997:299)

6. Summary and Further Directions

In this paper, we have illustrated that Niuean, like other Oceanic languages, has nuclear complex predicates. Based on our findings in texts and the Niue dictionary, corroborated with native speaker consultation, we have presented a catalogue of the many types of such predicates, all of which beg further analysis. The extent to which these are lexical or syntactic constructions is an open question, one which is affected by the particular theory of syntax/lexicon relations adopted. It seems that there is a high degree of lexicalization in many examples, and that others fit into the juxtapositional or compounding type of complex predicates discussed by Mosel (2004) for Samoan. Yet others seem to involve modals or auxiliaries, while the final class are best described as light verb constructions. The list in (49) summarizes the types of complex predicates we have found in Niuean.

(49) A. Auxiliary constructions
B. Directional constructions
C. Open class complex predicates
   1. Argument incorporation
   2. Co-ordination
   3. Resultatives
   4. Modifiers (manner, locative, temporal)
   5. Depictives
   6. Noun-adjective constructions
D. Light verbs (tā tō tū: intensification, verb-formation)
E. Opaque complexes

We have found both argument sharing and ambient complex predicates in Niuean. We have not fully analyzed the argument structure of the predicates, but a preliminary study suggests the classification in (50).
A (subject trans.) S (subject intrans.) O (object trans.) (Dixon 1994)  
(This preliminary analysis does not include the light verb class.)

**Secondary predicate takes S as an argument**

Directionals  (e.g. 15a, 19)  
Co-ordination  (e.g. 27a,b)  
Resultatives  (e.g. 30)  
Modifiers  (e.g. 34)  
Depictives  (e.g. 37)

**Secondary predicate takes O as an argument**

Directionals  (e.g. 17a, 20a)  
Depictives  (e.g. 36)

**Secondary predicate takes A and O as arguments**

Co-ordination  (e.g. 29a,b)

**Secondary predicate takes S or A as an argument**

Auxiliaries  (e.g. 13a (A not shown: see Seiter 1980:135))

**Secondary predicate has no argument**

Auxiliaries *nearly, return*  (e.g. 13c,d)  
Noun incorporation  (e.g. 26)  
Modificational constructions  (e.g. 33b)  
Directionals  (e.g. 15b, 18)  
Noun-adjective constructions  (e.g. 38, 39)  
Opaque  (e.g. 47, 48)

It is clear that Niuean exhibits a wide variety of complex predicate constructions. This paper represents the first attempt to fully catalogue the types of nuclear complex predicate types in Niuean. Further study is required to achieve a full understanding of the syntax and semantics of these predicates and their place in a larger typology of complex predicates.

**References**


COMPLEX PREDICATES IN NIUEAN


Appendix

Abbreviations used in this paper:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First person</th>
<th>EMPH Emphatic</th>
<th>PERS Personal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second person</td>
<td>ERG Ergative</td>
<td>PL Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third person</td>
<td>FUT Future</td>
<td>PRF Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Absolutive</td>
<td>GEN Genitive</td>
<td>PRS Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUS</td>
<td>Causative</td>
<td>GL Goal</td>
<td>PST Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Comitative</td>
<td>HAB Habitual</td>
<td>REL Relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ</td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>LIG Ligature</td>
<td>SG Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIR’</td>
<td>Directional</td>
<td>LOC Locative</td>
<td>SBJV Subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS</td>
<td>Distal</td>
<td>NEG Negation</td>
<td>TAM Tense-Aspect-Mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DU</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>NSP Non-specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DIR1: towards speaker; DIR2: towards listener; DIR3: away from speaker and listener.