Clause Structure and Case in Niuean

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1. Introduction

The goal of this paper is to initiate an understanding of the basic nature of clause structure in the Polynesian language Niuean. The paper is descriptive in the sense that its goal is to examine Niuean syntax, rather than to break new theoretical ground. Nonetheless, the discussion takes place entirely within the framework of the Extended Standard Theory and it is felt that once a basic understanding of Niuean is reached, we will be in a position to test many claims of the theory, especially regarding word order, case assignment and NP movement.

The paper examines three key aspects of Niuean clause-level syntax which raise interesting questions for linguistic theory. First, Niuean is a VSO language, thus its analysis should impact on the extensive literature on the phenomenon of verb movement. Second, it has an Ergative/Absolutive system of case marking, while its syntax is largely if not wholly Nominative/Accusative. Thus its analysis will speak to the current lively debate on the nature of ergativity. Third, the language has an unusual array of raising constructions, as first presented in Seiter (1980), which pose difficulties for common assumptions about NP-movement. I consider that these three facets of Niuean syntax are related, and it is a goal of my analysis to discover the nature of their connection.

2. Verb Movement

In this section we examine Niuean VSO order, building on Steuart (this volume). Niuean exhibits a VSO word order, as shown in (1) below. (Note that data not otherwise identified is taken from Seiter, 1980.)

(1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Direct Object</th>
<th>Indirect Object</th>
<th>Other Obliques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

* I would like to thank Winnifred Bauer, Elizabeth Cowper, Chris Lane, Elizabeth Pearce, Laki and Moka Sipeli, the Porirua Niuean community, Wolfgang Sperlich and the Niuean Dictionary Project, and Jeffrey Waite for their generous help with this work. This research has been funded by SSHRCC research grant 410-94-1093. I am using double vowels in place of macrons, and I use g to indicate a velar nasal. I have adapted orthography in some examples.
a. Ne tala aga e ia e tala ke he tagata.
   Pst tell Dir3p Erg he Abs story to man
   "He told the story to the man." (Lane)

b. Hifo a Lemani ke hagi mo e vaka.
   go-down Abs Lemani to sea with Abs canoe
   "Lemani went down to sea with a canoe."

If we adopt the common assumption that the verb and its object originate within V, then all Niuean clauses involve verb movement. In this section we will address the issue of the destination of the verb movement.

I take it as a theoretical assumption that the verb originates in V, but there is in fact some evidence for this, in that verbs form a closer D-structure bond with their objects than with their subjects. For instance, verbs can incorporate objects, but not subjects, and verbs can form idioms in conjunction with their objects (but not, I think, with their subjects). I thus reject Woolford's 1991 analysis of Niuean as having a flat VSO VP. The incorporation facts are shown below in (2), while (3) shows a verb-object idiom.

(2)
a. Kua hahala he tagata e akau.
   Perf chop Erg man Abs tree
   "The man is chopping the tree." (Lane)

b. Kua hahala akau e tagata.
   Perf chop tree Abs man
   "The man is tree-chopping." (Lane)

c. Faa totou he tau faiaoga e tau tohi.
   Hab read Erg Pl teacher Abs Pl book
   "(The) teachers often read books."

d. *Faa totou faiaoga e tau tohi.
   Hab read teacher Abs Pl book
   ("Teachers often read books.")

(3) Loto a au ke oeli e tau matahui, ti koli.
   like Abs I Sbj oil Abs Pl knee then dance
   "I like to get a little drunk, then dance."

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1 I do not have evidence that verb-subject idioms do not exist in Niuean, but I have not encountered any.
2 There are also arguments that the subject c-commands the object, thus arguing against a flat VSO S-structure and D-structure, again, contra Woolford (1991). While I reject Woolford's analysis, it has been instrumental in causing me to reanalyse claims made in Massam (1985).
A central problem in the study of VSO languages is to determine which functional projection head serves as the landing site for the verb. The debate usually focusses on COMP and INFL (or TENSE)\(^3\) so we will begin our discussion with a look at these categories. Theories of functional categories (such as in Chomsky, 1993) consider that features of functional categories such as tense, for example, project to a maximal projection. A checking requirement demands that these features be matched with the tense morphology on the verb thus triggering movement of the verb to the head of TP. Tense features in COMP might also trigger further verb movement to this functional projection.

In Niuean, the two categories of COMP and TENSE appear to be merged. The sentence begins with a particle which indicates the tense/aspect of the sentence.\(^4\)

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& PAST & PRESENT & FUTURE & PROGRESSIVE & PERFECT \\
\hline
ne/na & ko e & to & haa ne & kua \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

a. Ne tagi a ia.
Pst cry Abs she
"She cried." *(Ko e Pusi - a children's reader)*

b. Ko e kai a mautolu he talo.
Pres eat Abs we,PL,Ex at taro
"We are (now) eating taro."

c. To fano a ia.
Fut go Abs he
"He will go." *(McEwen)*

d. Haa ne nonofo a mutolu i hinei.
Prog stay Abs you at this-place
"Whilst you are staying here." *(McEwen)*

e. Kua fano tuai a ia.
Perf go Perf Abs he
"He has gone." *(McEwen)*

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\(^4\)The semantics of the tense/aspect system are not discussed here, and I will consider the two categories to be one, labelled tense, for the purposes of this paper.
The sentence-initial particle expresses the tense of the sentence. These particles, however, also display complementizer-like properties. Matrix clauses begin with the particles listed above, and so do sentential objects of some verbs, namely verbs of cognition, evaluation, observation, and speaking (Seiter, 1980). These particles are in complementary distribution with other particles which do not have a tense function, but which are more clearly complementizers, such as the causal or factive particle he, seen in (5a). They are also in complementary distribution with the subjunctive particle ke which introduces clauses embedded under modal verbs, verbs of desire, and intention (Seiter, 1980) as in (5b). Finally, we find a second series of tense/aspect markers in relative clauses, as shown in (6).5

(5)

a. Gagao foki nii a au he hifo a Maka ki tahi.  
sick also Emph Abs I Compl go-down Abs Maka to sea  
"I'm also sick of Maka going down to the sea."

b. Tala age ki a ia ke hau.  
tell Dir3p to Abs him Sbj come  
"Tell him to come." (McEwen)

(6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAST</th>
<th>PRESENT</th>
<th>FUTURE</th>
<th>PROGRESSIVE</th>
<th>PERFECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ne</td>
<td>ne</td>
<td>ka</td>
<td>ne faa e</td>
<td>(ne) kua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. e tama ne hau i Makefu  
Abs child Nft come from Makefu  
"the child who comes from Makefu"

b. ke he tagata ka nofo i kaina  
to person Fut stay at home  
"to the person who's going to stay at home"

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5 The exact morpho-semantic analysis of these particles is not fully clear to me. The analyses of Seiter (1980), Whittaker (1982) and McEwen (1970) differ in detail. For example, Whittaker states that kua is present tense, while McEwen considers kua to indicate present, past or future. Seiter states that it is perfect, whether past, present or future. In addition, it appears that in the absence of an initial particle, the sentence might be past, present or future, depending, I should think, on context. The analysis of ko e as a present tense marker also bears examination, as the same element serves to topicalize, cleft, or form a predicate from a nominal. It is not considered to be a present tense marker in McEwen or Whittaker. Seiter notes that it behaves differently from the other tense markers in that at times the negative can precede it. This would argue that ko e properly belongs in the V-slot and not in the initial COMP/Tense position.
c.  e  tagata ne  faa e onoono hake ke he mahina  
Abs man Nft Prog look up to moon  
"the man who's looking up at the moon"  


d.  e  mena (ne) kua taute e  Sione  
Abs thing Nft Perf fix Erg Sione  
"the thing Sione has fixed."  

We can see that sentence-initial particles express information both as to the tense/aspect of the sentence, and to the grammatical status of the clause (matrix, subject clause, object clause, relativizing clause). In the case of object clauses, they also express information as to the selectional properties of the governing verb i.e. whether it selects a subjunctive or a fully tensed clause.  

Given the above facts, the initial particle is best considered as a portmanteau Complementizer/Tense element. I express this by calling it CTP (i.e. COMP/TENSE PHRASE). It might also be the case that there is a separate CP and TP, where T raises to C, however the two analyses are identical in effect and I adopt the simpler of the two since there is no evidence for a TP specifier below C.  

We can now question whether the verb fronting operation in Niuean involves fronting to CTP. In fact, this appears not to be so, at least in some cases. In order to show why this is so, we must examine the Niuean verbal complex. We begin with the preverbal elements. These are outlined below.  

(7)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMP/Tense</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Auxiliaries</th>
<th>VERB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

To nakai liu  feleveia foki a taua.  
Fut not return meet also Abs we,Du,INC  
"We will never again meet."  

Note that the negative morpheme and auxiliary verb(s) intervene between the verb and the sentence initial CT particle. This means that if the verb is considered to always move to CT position, there must at some point in the derivation be an Xo of the form: [Tns-Neg-Aux-Verb]. It might be the case that [Neg-Aux-V] is a constituent at D-structure, in which case the entire complex moves to CT. Or, one or both of the Aux and Neg elements could appear in a head position, with the verb complex moving first to Aux, then to Neg, and so on.  

These views are problematic, because Neg appears to be an independent stem, itself able to host verbal clitics. There is a post-verbal perfect marker, which often co-occurs with the CT perfect marker kua. This element is tuai. It appears above in (4e). In a negative sentence, instead of appearing after the verb, it appears after the negative element.
(8) Kua naakai tuai liu e tahi.
Perf not Perf turn Abs sea
"The tide has not turned."

As well as the perfect particle, Seiter (1980) notes that there is another
verbal clitic which shifts to the post-negative position in a negative sentence.
This is an emphatic marker laa seen in (9). (Note the negative element
naakai alternates with ai which is seen in (9)). It often co-occurs with ia. In a
negative sentence laa appears on the Neg, while ia occurs on the verb.

(9)

a. Ai laa kitia e au e pusi.
not yet see Erg I Abs cat
"I have not yet seen the cat."

b. Ne vali laa ia e maua e nofoa.
Pst paint just Erg we Abs chair
"We just now painted the chair."

c. Naakai laa nofo ia a au he ha motu tufa a Niue.
not yet live yet Abs I on Nsp island like Abs Niue
"I've never before lived on an island like Niue."

A constituent question marker can also appear after the negative element.

(10) Ai kia kitia e koe e laa kua tokoluga?
not Q see Erg you Abs sun Perf high
"Didn't you see the sun high up?"

It has been argued (Chung, 1970) that in other Polynesian languages the
negative element is in fact a verb, since, for example, it houses verbal affixes
and it takes as its complement a phrase which begins with an embedded CT
Niuean it does not appear that the negative element is a higher verb, since it
does not appear with the full range of verbal clitics (outlined below) and it
does not take a CTP complement. It certainly has a hint of verbal behaviour,
though, in that it can attract tuai and laa (as opposed to the auxiliaries which
do not do this).6 In this it behaves like a traditional auxiliary verb. This
independent morphological behaviour makes it unlike an affix or an element
X0 adjoined to the verb.

6Note that we cannot consider the Neg to be like auxiliaries in, for example,
French, which, if present, usurp the inflectional position of the main verb.
This is because in Niuean, even if there is a Neg, the verb still fronts. So
whatever position Neg is in, it must still leave a position free for verb
fronting.
Since none of the material surrounding Neg is phrasal, it might still be possible to maintain the claim that [Neg-tuai-laa-Aux-Verb] is a single X₀ in V₀. But this leads to a complex statement of morphological facts since the order of morphemes differs depending on whether the verb is negative or positive. It is hard to explain this change of morpheme order under a V-to-CTP view, whereas if we assume that Neg intervenes between CT and the fronted verb, we can explain why tuai and laa appear on the Neg element simply by observing that they are always on the element governed by CT.⁷

(11)
a. Order for negative verb:
   [Neg Emph-1 Perf Aux V..... Emph-2 .... ]

b. Order for positive verb:
   [Aux V .... Emph-1 Emph-2 Perf....]

Finally, as well as being an independent morphological head, Neg has sentential scope rather than scope over the verb alone. It is preferable then, to consider Neg as an independent item in the D-structure syntax. We thus rule out the movement of V to CTP, at least in sentences where there is a Neg.

Auxiliaries in Niuean include desideratives, habitual, and elements meaning "look like", "nearly", "begin", among others (see Seiter, 1980) An example appears below.

(12) Ne fia evaeva a ia ka e naakai talia he matua ke taute pihia. 
Pst want walk Abs he but not let Erg parent Sbj do so 
She wanted to go for a walk, but the parent wouldn't let her do so." 
(Sperlich)

Auxiliaries appear between Neg and V. They do not show evidence of independence from the verb.⁸ In a sentence with a Neg, the perfect element appears on Neg rather than the verb. In a sentence with no Neg, but with an auxiliary however, tuai appears on the verb, not on the auxiliary. From these facts we can generalize that the perfect element tuai appears on the first [+V] head to the right of the perfect element in CTP. Laa also appears on the first [+V] element to the left of CTP. These generalizations entail that auxiliaries are either not [+V], or are not heads. Since several auxiliaries can also appear as independent verbs, I take the second option, and consider the auxiliaries to be verbal prefixes, or perhaps more correctly, that they form compounds with verbs. Under the entry for fia Sperlich (to appear) states that "... some

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⁷There are several emphatic elements. The first of these (laa) appears after Neg if it is present, but the others always appear after V.
⁸One auxiliary liga "likely", does show evidence of being an independent item, since it is followed by a tense marker, and can appear in front of Neg. I leave this auxiliary aside here.
speakers may want to consider such constructions either as compounds or as verbs with a prefix...". This view is supported, since the auxiliaries appear to be completely inert syntactically. This position is further (weakly) supported by Seiter's observation that one auxiliary is orthographically represented as a prefix on a verb (fiakai "hungry" (lit. "want-eat"), fiamohe "sleepy" (lit. "want sleep")). A similar support is found in the fact that several auxiliaries are redundant expressions of portions of meaning of the verb they appear with, eg. faa "habitual" with mahani "typical", or fia "desiderative" with loto "want" or with manako "desire". The generalizations above can now be more formally stated as below.

(13)  
a. tuai requires government by kua.  
b. laa requires government by Tense

This requirement explains why these elements appear on the Neg element if there is one, and on the Aux-Verb complex if there is no Neg element in the sentence. It is possible that the element with tuai and laa (i.e. V or Neg) moves to the CT head in order for these morphemes to be checked. We will not explore this possibility here. But note that, at least in sentences with Neg, there must be some position other than CT for the verb to front to. We thus posit the following tree, where there is a CT head, followed optionally by a Neg head, then the Aux-V element. This then reopens the question as to which position the verb is moving to, i.e., what is the head of XP?

(14)  
```
(Spec) CTP  
  CT'  
  CT  
  Neg  
  XP  
  X  
  VP  
  V'  
  NP
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The functional projection to which the V moves does not appear to contain features associated with any of the preverbal morphemes. We now turn to the postverbal morphology to see if there is a candidate for X here.

(15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adv</th>
<th>aki&quot;with&quot;</th>
<th>oti&quot;all&quot;</th>
<th>ai &quot;pron&quot;</th>
<th>S-Adv</th>
<th>Emphs</th>
<th>Perf</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a,b,cj)</td>
<td>(e)</td>
<td>(f,g)</td>
<td>(h)</td>
<td>(h,i)</td>
<td>(c,i,j,k)</td>
<td>(d,f,g)</td>
<td>(k)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Mafiti lahi a Sefab.
   fast greatly Abs Sefab
   "Sefa is very fast."

b. Hau mai la!
   come Dir1 just
   "Come here!"
c. Mumui mai ni a lautolu he motaka ha lautolu follow,Pl DirI just Abs they in car of the
"They'll just follow (us) in their car now.

d. Kua hele tuai e Sione e falaoa aki e titipi haana.
Perf cut Perf Erg Sione Abs bread with Abs knife his
"Sione has cut the bread with his knife."

e. Kua hele aki tuai e Sione e titipi haana e falaoa.
Perf cut with Perf Erg Sione Abs knife his Abs bread
"Sione has cut the bread with his knife"

f. Kua iloa tuai e lautolu oti a au.
Perf know Perf Erg they all Abs me
"They all know me"

g. Kua iloa oti tuai e lautolu a au.
Perf know all Perf Erg they Abs me
"They all know me"

h. ti nakai talia ai agaia.
then not consent therefore still
"...so she still didn't consent"

i. Kata tumau ni a ia.
laugh always just Abs he
"He's just always laughing."

j. Kua uku hifo foki tuai a au ke he toka.
Perf dive down also Perf Abs I to bottom
"I have dove down to the bottom before."

k. Ita tuai nakai a patu na?
angry Perf Q Abs guy that?
"Is that guy angry?"

The first five elements are unlikely candidates to require checking with VP-external functional projections and we consider them no further here. We cannot consider projections of the Perfect features, or of the first Emphatic element to be the goal of the verb, since these morphemes do not appear in the verb complex in a sentence with Neg, yet V-movement still takes place in such sentences. A functional projection associated with what Seiter calls the S-adverb likewise cannot be chosen as the destination for the verb, since if this element is checked by movement, so must be all the elements to its right in the verbal complex. This is undesirable, since then, PerfP and one of the
EmpHPs would appear elsewhere in the tree in case of a negative sentence. Such extreme syntactic difference between negative and positive sentences is unmotivated except by morpheme order. There are no syntactic arguments for such differences.

There is one remaining postverbal element, namely Q. No problems are posed by considering its features to project a functional projection [±Q], to which the verb moves and adjoins on the left, since it is the last element in the verbal complex. In a declarative sentence the Q head position is filled with a null declarative element. Usually, verb movement is motivated by the need for morphology on the verb to be checked against an abstract category, and this could hold of [±Q]. As discussed above, the aspectual feature on the verb (provided by *tuai*) is licensed by virtue of appearing on the head of the complement of the CT perfect element *kia*. The other morphemes in the verb complex, such as the S-adverbs, and the emphatics appear to require no specific licensing or checking.\(^9\)

Our analysis involves a morphologically complex verb. There are many questions about the postverbal morphology, that we will not address in detail here except to say that the V\(^0\) in Niuean appears to be part of a complex syntactic entity made up of X\(^0\) adjunctions which must then be accommodated into X-bar theory. (cf. Ghomeshi, 1995). We will not delve into the issues of raised by the first five postverbal elements such as incorporation and quantifier floating.

To summarize this section: Niuean poses some problems for the theory of V-movement. If we adopt the common assumption that the verb is generated in V', then the verb must move out of VP. But it does not move to C or T, the two most common landing sites for V-movement. Heads projected by other verbal features, such as those associated with the Emphatics, the S-adverbs and the post-verbal Perfect marker are likewise not the landing sites for V-movement. Two possibilities remain. One of these is that all sentences contain a [±Q] phrase, and that this is the landing site of the verb, which moves to allow checking of this feature against the final element in the verbal complex. Another possibility is that there is an empty functional projection, to which the verb moves (for some reason). We adopt the former analysis here, while noting that this issue still requires more examination (Massam, in prep.).

The phrase structure proposed so far is as in (14) above, where X is now filled in as Q.

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\(^9\)This analysis is similar in spirit, though not in detail, with that of Steuart, (this volume). She argues for movement to what she calls Mood Phrase, which houses the emphatics and the question marker. The examination of Neg, *iaa*, and *tuai*, in this paper has led me to modify her analysis.
3. The Arguments

We now turn to the next question, which is where are the verbal arguments in the Niuean clause? In order to answer this question, we begin with a description of the case system.

Niuean has ergative absolutive case marking pattern, as seen below. (In fact many aspects of the nominal marking system of Niuean require re-examination (cf. Sperlich, 1994), but we will adopt Seiter's analysis here.)

(16)
\[\begin{array}{ll}
a. & \text{Koetele} \quad e \text{Sione} \quad a \text{Sefa} \\
& \text{Pres kick} \quad \text{Erg Sione} \quad \text{Abs Sefa} \\
& \text{"Sione is kicking Sefa."}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{ll}
b. & \text{Mitakilahi} \quad a \text{Niue} \\
& \text{good very Abs Niue} \\
& \text{"Niue is very nice."}
\end{array}\]

(17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABS</th>
<th>ERG</th>
<th>LOC/IND</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>MIDDLE</th>
<th>POSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMON</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>ke he</td>
<td>ke he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPER</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>ki</td>
<td>ki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seiter notes, however, following Chung (1978) that the syntax of Niuean is essentially Nominative/Accusative in that there are syntactic operations which refer to the category Absolutive of intransitive/ Ergative of transitive, (i.e. subject). but there are no syntactic operations referring to the category Absolutive. These operations include Equi NP deletion, Relative Clause Possessive, and Reflexive marking.

3.1. Subjects and Objects Outside VP

There is strong evidence that Niuean subjects and objects appear outside of VP at S-structure. Beginning with absolutive objects, we can see from the following examples that there is an object position available for Raising to Object NPs.\(^{10}\)

(18)
\[\begin{array}{ll}
a. & \text{To nakai} \quad \text{toka} \quad e \text{au} \quad \{\text{ke kai he pusi e ika}\} \\
& \text{Fut not let Erg I Sbj eat Erg cat Abs fish} \\
& \text{"I won't let that the cat eat the fish."}
\end{array}\]

\(^{10}\)In Massam (1994) I argued the opposite, that no arguments externalized in Niuean. Given sentences such as (19c) I have come to revise my position on this, while maintaining many aspects of the analysis of 1994. See also Runner (1995), who argues for overt movement of objects in English, based on ECM.
b. To nakai toka e au e pusi [ke kai e ika]  
Fut not let Erg I Abs cat Sbj eat Abs fish  
"I won't let the cat eat the fish"

Given the assumption that NPs may not move to thematic positions within VP (the Projection Principle, Chomsky, 1981), it is clear that raised objects—and hence, all absolutive objects, since they appear to be in the same position—are not within the matrix VP. We will assume that they are in the specifier of a functional projection above VP. In what follows we will zero in on the nature of this functional projection. In a later section we will discuss further the Raising operation.

In addition to raised objects, we also find raised subjects. That these subjects are indeed raised to the upper clause, and not just fronted in the lower clause, can be seen in (19c), where the absolutive subject appears to the left of a matrix PP. (See Seiter (1980) and Massam (1985) for arguments that easy and tough verbs in Niuean trigger a Raising operation rather than a Tough movement operation).

(19)

a. To maeke [ke lagomatai he ekekafo e tama e]  
Fut possible Sbj help Erg doctor Abs child this  
"The doctor could help this child." (Seiter)  
(It is possible for the doctor to help this child)

b. To maeke e ekekafo [ke lagomatai e tama e]  
Fut possible Abs doctor Sbj help Abs child this  
"The doctor could help this child." (Seiter)  
(The doctor is possible for to help this child)

c. Kua mukamuka e moa ki a au [ke kai lima ecj]  
Perf easy Abs chicken to Pers me Sbj eat hand  
"Chicken is easy for me to eat with the hands."

Note that all raised subjects are absolutive: there are no non-thematic ergative subjects. This means that we cannot use the same argument for the S-structure externalization of ergative arguments as for absolutive ones. But, since all ergative subjects appear to the left of absolutive objects, ergative NPs must also appear outside of VP in a specifier of a functional projection. So why is raising to ergative disallowed? We hold off answering this question until the end of the next section.

The S-structure for a Niuean clause is thus as in (20).
3.2. The Nature of Niuean Ergativity

In a Niuean transitive sentence there are two argument positions external to VP. This fits in well with current views of argument structure which consider that at some level both the object and the subject appear outside of VP. In Niuean, because it is clear from word order facts that movement is involved in raising constructions, there is evidence that the arguments move outside of VP by S-structure. For convenience we might call the two functional projections AGR5 and AGRO, or AGR1 and AGR2. For the moment we will use the latter more neutral terms, although we will not in the end adopt these as the labels for the Niuean functional projections. An outstanding question now is whether the absolutive argument of an intransitive verb is in AGR1 (=X in (20)), or AGR2 (=Y in (20)).

If the intransitive subject is in AGR 2, Niuean can be described as an ergative language in the sense of Bobaljik (1993), where AGR2 is the "strong" AGR, associated with absolutive case and subjectionhood, or in the sense of Levin and Massam (1984), where absolutive is the case that must be assigned. Niuean is not however, a syntactically ergative language, since for all syntactic operations "subject" is the ergative NP of a transitive clause or the absolutive argument of an intransitive clause. Subjectionhood is thus not associated always with absolutive case. This means that the relative "strength" of AGR2 in a transitive sentence is not sufficient to elevate the NP in its specifier to subjectionhood in transitive sentences. In Niuean, "Subject" must be defined, not as the NP in spec of AGR2, but rather, as the highest NP in the specifier of a functional projection, whether AGR1 or AGR2. The notion of subject is thus a relative one in the language. If AGR2 is to be considered in any way "strong", then, it is purely a morphological strength. In fact, however, the notion of this kind of strength for functional projections is redundant in

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\[\text{An alternative would be to posit that subject is always AGR1, and that case is not isomorphic with position, but subjectionhood is. A problem here is that then the functional projections cannot be seen as checking for case, and their purpose becomes simply "subject-identifier" and "object-identifier" which to my mind goes against the central EST claim that subject and object are derivative and not primitive notions. The idea developed in Runner (1995) that the two Agrs are indistinguishable except for what moves to them (Tns or V) cannot be maintained in Niuean, since both heads contain a trace of V.}\]
the Niuean system, since the priority of absolutive case is explained by its nature as a verbal case. This will be outlined below.

We return to the issue of labels for the functional projections. Since there is no inflectional agreement in Niuean, the arguments cannot be seen as moving to Spec of "AGR" except in an entirely abstract sense. And tense, as we have seen, is generated and remains completely to the left in the clause, making it impossible to posit movement of the arguments to Spec of TP. It is straightforward, on the other hand, for the functional projections to be generated by Case features, namely, ergative and absolutive, respectively. We will thus call the projections ERGP and ABSP. The NPs might move to the specifiers of these categories in order either to be assigned case, or to have their cases checked. In Niuean, the NPs move to check case rather than to have case assigned. The argument for this is outlined immediately below.

The generation of AbsP is automatic above VP, while the generation of ErgP is triggered only in a clause with a transitive verb. (It is thus in a sense, like Murasugi's, 1992 Transitive Phrase). This is tidily explained in a checking analysis which requires all cases to be assigned within VP (cf. Massam, 1994, Moorcroft, 1995). As in Levin and Massam (1984), it is a lexical property of V to assign Abs case to its closest argument. Ergative case is not assigned by all verbs, though. Instead, it is a lexical property only of transitive verbs to assign ergative case to a second argument. In this view, the generation of AbsP and ErgP can be considered to be entirely free and optional, since if an ErgP were generated in an intransitive clause, the structure would be ruled out since the Erg features would have no morphology to be checked against. In the case assignment view, it is harder to rule out such structures. One needs to appeal to extra-structural constraints such as Levin and Massam's "Absolutive Case must be assigned" or Bobaljik's (here revised) "ABSP is strong" to ensure the matching of verb type with a particular array of functional projections. In the view outlined here, no such constraint is necessary, since this is an automatic consequence of the fact that each case is associated with a different feature on the verb (Abs with [+V] and Erg with [+trans]). The grammar of case is thus localized, falling out from lexical properties, rather than from troublesome, rather particular, abstract principles. In this, the view taken here follows Johns (1992) who also locates ergativity in lexical properties in her study of Inuktitut.

Case assignment takes place within VP, and in some instances (Abs and Erg), case requires structural checking. There are several satisfying consequences of this view. First, the nature of both absolutive and ergative case matches the analysis proposed. Absolutive case is assigned by all verbs and in all instances it is assigned to the closest argument available (closer arguments with inherent or prepositional case are overlooked). Ergative case

\[\text{12There is lexically governed agreement for plurality, whereby the verb agrees, by means of suppletion or reduplication, with a plural subject or object. The choice between subject and object is lexically determined by the verb in question. This does not appear to be an inflectional agreement.}\]
in general across languages appears to have some properties which are like those of inherent cases, and others which are like structural cases. By associating ergative case with a [+trans] feature on the verb, this is explained. It is in some sense an inherent case, in that it is assigned by a variable lexical feature (as opposed to the invariable feature [+V]). This ensures that ergative case will only be assigned to a thematic argument of the verb, and that raising to ergative will never be a possibility. But ergative case is not specifically tied to a particular thematic argument, nor to any rich semantic element of the verb, and thus it differs from inherent or prepositional case. The view outlined here is also consistent with the common view of Niuean verbs as in some sense passive, since the absolutive argument is closer and more central to the verb (cf. Sperlich, 1994).

In conclusion of this section, the theory of case outlined here consists of two parts. First, all case, structural and inherent, is localized with the verb. This captures the fact that case arrays are determined by verbs in Niuean. Case assignment takes place within VP according to the nature of the cases involved - verbal, transitive or lexical. If a case is not lexical, it must be structurally checked. Thus an ergative and an absolutive argument will externalize to a specifier of a Case functional projection. These two privileged arguments are then in a position to be identified, in contrast with other verbal arguments, and this is reflected in the syntax in operations such as pro-drop and wh-movement, which treat subject and object symmetrically (see Seiter, 1980). In addition, since case is not related in any way to tense, there are no mandatorily subjectless infinitives in Niuean.

4. Raising

As discussed above, Niuean exhibits Raising to Subject and Raising to Object. (These operations are much discussed in Seiter, 1980, and the following discussion is dependant on his analysis). An interesting feature of the language is that raising is possible from either subject or object position, but not from other positions. Raising from subject is seen above in (18) and (19) and below we see examples of Raising from object.

(21)
a. To nakai toka e au [ ke kai he pusi e ika]
Fut not let Erg I Sbj eat Erg cat Abs fish
"I won't let that the cat eat the fish."

b. To nakai toka e au e ika [ ke kai he pusi ]
Fut not let Erg I Abs fish Sbj eat Erg cat
"I won't let the fish be eaten by the cat"
("I won't let the fish that the cat eat.")
c. To maeke [ke lagomatai he ekekafo e tama e]
Fut possible Sbj help Erg doctor Abs child this
"The doctor could help this child"
(It is possible for the doctor to help this child)

d. To maeke e tama e [ke lagomatai he ekekafo]
fut possible Abs child this Sbj help Erg doctor
"This child could be helped by the doctor"
(This child is possible for the doctor to help)

These examples show that raising to object as well as to subject in Niuean
is non-vacuous, unlike in English, as the raised argument appears in a
different position from its non-raised counterpart. In Massam (1985) it was
argued that the movement cannot be direct, that is we cannot consider that
the element raised to subject, for example, in (21d) moves directly from its D-
structure position as object of the embedded verb to its S-structure position as
subject of the matrix verb. This is because such movement would violate
principles governing the binding of traces, since the object trace would not be
bound within its governing category. It would also form an A-chain with two
cases, since there is evidence (namely the ergative case on the embedded
subject) that the embedded object position is a case marked one. In addition,
principles such as Subjacency would be violated.

Instead of direct movement, Massam (1985) posits first a fronting operation
within the embedded clause, to the specifier of CTP (in the terms of this
current paper) with a subsequent movement to the matrix subject position.
The nature of this initial fronting movement is of acute interest. The
operation is not like A-bar movements, in that it is not successive, but must
occur from the clause immediately dominated by the VP in which the raising
verb appears. Hence (22) is ungrammatical.

(22) *Kua kamata [e tau tagata], ke fia-manako a tautolu [ki ai],
Perf begin [Abs Pl person] Sbj want Abs we [to them]
ke nonofo ti mo e mafola.
Sbj live with Abs peace
"We have begun to want people to live in peace."

Niuean Wh-movement, relativization and topicalization are unbounded.
In addition, Niuean Wh-movement is possible from subject and object
position, and also from oblique positions, where it is resumed by ai
pronominalization. This is not true for movement to subject which can take
place only from subject or object position. Other NPs cannot be moved,
whether or not a resumptive ai appears.

Furthermore if a subject is moved by Wh-movement it always leaves a
trace as opposed to a resumptive pronoun except if the embedded subject is
itself an A-binder, that is the antecedent of a reflexive object, when it may
optionally be resumed by a pronoun as in (23). This is not the case for a subject which has been moved to become the subject of a matrix verb, however. In this case, the embedded subject position must be empty even if it is an A-binder. Hence it appears that movement to subject behaves differently than movement to or through an A-bar position.

(23)

a. e tagatee ne hoka (e ia) a ia
   Abs man Nft stab Erg he Abs him
   "the man who stabbed himself"

b. Liga ai maeke e fifine ke logona (*e ia) a ia nii
   Likely not possible Abs woman Sbj hear (Erg she) Abs her Reflex
   "The woman couldn't hear herself."

In Massam (1985) it is argued that the fronting operation is to a subject position of an embedded CP small clause (inspired by Haik (1985)). This explains the A-like characteristics of the position. ECM and Raising verbs can optionally select a CP argument which is a predicate rather than a proposition. The subject of this predicate receives no theta role from it, and hence must be coindexed with a lower argument position. It is, in effect, as if an ECM or raising verb selects an embedded clause which must have a topic (i.e. I know Fred to be a liar = I know with respect to Fred, that he is a liar). Because it is selected, the topic is an argument, thus an A-position rather than an A-bar position. The position does not receive case from within its own clause, but rather from the matrix verb. In both Raising to Subject and Raising to Object, the case received is absolutive. This means that the fronted element must further move to Spec of ABSP in order to have this case checked, at S-structure.

Exceptional case marking is possible only by certain verbs, and only into subjunctive clauses. A verb may not assign case to a fronted topic of a tensed embedded clause. This can be explained if a tensed CT head absorbs absolutive case.

A problem so far unsolved is that the fronting in the embedded clause takes place both from and to a case marked position. Thus, an ergative NP can front to receive absolutive case, or an absolutive NP can front to receive absolutive case. This violates most theories of A-movement. In Massam (1985) this was addressed by considering the small clause subject position to constitute its own chain, independently of the base position of the item in the position. This was achieved by Chain formation mechanisms at S-structure. The non-thematic chain was licensed by being coindexed with a chain containing a theta position. We follow this view here. We revise the analysis, however so as to involve the base generation of an NP in the subject/topic position. This NP will receive its thematic identity through local coindexation with a pro in the predicate clause. This explains the non-A-bar properties discussed above. If only subject and object pros can be licensed, the
ECMed NP must be coreferential with a subject or object. The revision from a movement to an base generation analysis is motivated by the desire to maintain the view that A-movement is triggered solely by the need for Case.

As well as exceptional case marking of absolutive case, we find exceptional case marking of "middle" case, which is essentially prepositional in nature in Niuean (cf. Seiter, 1980 and Chung, 1978).

(24) 
a. Onoono e tama ke he tau gata
   look Abs child to Pl snake
   "The child is looking at the snakes."

b. Manak a ia ke he naa tama ke momohe
   want Abs he to pair child Sbj sleep,Pl
   "He wants the two children to sleep."

In order to accommodate this, we must posit that in such sentences, exceptional middle case is assigned to the NP fronted to the initial embedded position, but there is no subsequent movement of the NP to a Spec of a case projection, since it is not a structural case which is being assigned. This means that the sentence in (18b) and that in (24b) have slightly different structures, since in the former, the object is in Spec of AbsP while in the latter, it is in Spec of the embedded CTP. This explains why subsequent raising of the middle argument is ruled out. I know of no word order evidence which bears on this.

To conclude this section: We adopt essentially the analysis of Massam (1985) for Niuean raising. Raising involves two steps. The first is base generation of a CTP subject. This is permitted due to the base generation of a CTP small clause, and by the fact that the non-thematic NP is locally coindexed with an argument pro. The second step involves straightforward ECM under government to this CTP subject, with subsequent movement of the NP up to matrix SPEC ABSP. These operations obey basic principles of movement and case theory.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored three basic aspects of Niuean clause structure, namely V-fronting, case assignment and raising. It has been claimed that the verb moves to [±Q], that case is assigned within VP by verbal features, and that ergative and absolutive case require structural checking by Case functional heads. The unusual raising facts in Niuean are due to the fact that subjects and objects are essentially symmetrical, since both involve D-structure lexical government by the verb, and overt movement to the specifier of a functional projection. The three facets of Niuean syntax are thus seen to be inter-related. It is hoped that this paper, together with Steuart (this
volume), will constitute an initial description of Niuean clause structure so
that further work can be undertaken on the language.

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