

**Variations in Predication: Verbal and Nominal Predication in Niuean**  
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In this paper I examine predication in Niuean (Polynesian). I begin by presenting a typical transitive verbal sentence (1). Niuean is a VSO language with ergative case marking: both of these properties raise questions for the standard view of predication as involving a subject and a [V+O] predicate. These issues are discussed, and it is argued that the essence of the standard view can be maintained, but with some refinements and modifications. We argue that within the extended VP domain, there is a predication relation between the VP and an (absolutive) argument, then another optional one between VoiceP and an (ergative) argument. We argue that at the grammatical level (i.e. TP), no subject-predicate relation exists in Niuean, rather, the verbal predicate fronts and there is a predicate-*arguments* relation.

[C = common, P = proper/pronominal]

- (1) Ne tutuli foki [he tau tagata] [a ia].  
 Pst chase also ErgC Pl person AbsP 3Sg  
 ‘The people also chased him.’ (NAH: 31)

Next, nominal predication is examined, as in (2).

- (2) a. Ko e kāmuta [a au].  
 Ko C carpenter AbsP I  
 ‘I am a carpenter.’ (Seiter:53)  
 b. Ko Manua [e motu ia].  
 Ko Manua AbsC island that  
 ‘That island was Manua.’ (NAH: 9)

In (2) the nominal predicates appear in the same initial position as the verb in (1). To be precise, both nominal and verbal predicates appear in exactly the same place in the sentence: after negation and before all adverbials and arguments. I argue predicates are in specifier of TP, although tense appears morphologically in Comp. Given that nominal predicates pattern fully with verbs, it would seem that nominal phrases can serve directly as predicates in Niuean, without the necessity for a copular verb. This has led some to claim that there is no N/V distinction in Tongan, Niuean’s sister language (Broschart 1997). However, in Niuean, the nominal predicate has a property distinct from nominal arguments, which is that it appears with the morpheme *ko*, as in (2). The question arises: what is *ko*? Is it a preposition, appearing in the left periphery of the nominal phrase (e.g. Clark 1976, Bauer 1991, Otsuka 2000, Massam, Lee and Rolle 2006), or is it a light verb (Massam 2005) or predicator (Baker 2003), taking the complete nominal phrase as its sister? Other options are also considered, such as the possibility that *ko* is a left-peripheral phrasal element such as a complementizer (Pearce 1999) or tense (Chung and Ladusaw 2004).

To address the question, I examine other uses of *ko*, which appears in 9 different constructions: focus, topicalization, predicate nominals, equatives, appositives, titles and isolation contexts, specificational phrases, aspectuals, and fronted Wh-questions. I argue that *ko* is a preposition, appearing on all non-argument nominals, indicating non-saturation and marking the nominal as predicative. However, *ko* does not create a sentential predicate, as evidenced by some of its uses. Although its appearance is a prerequisite for a nominal to serve as a sentential predicate, it only becomes a sentential predicate when it is embedded in a predicative context (under *v*). This allows for a unified analysis of predication, while also explaining double *ko* constructions such as (5). Also explained is *ko*’s non-co-occurrence with Tense.

- (5) **Ko** Hetalaga mo Fakanaiki **ko** e tau leoleo ha Tehamau  
*Ko* Hetalaga with Fakanaiki *ko* C Pl bodyguards of Tehamau.  
 ‘Hetalaga and Fakanaiki were body guards at the time of Tehamau.’ (NAH: 14)

Having established the categorial identity of *ko* and the structure and functions of *ko* phrases, I discuss the implications of the analysis for various theories of predication (e.g. Heggie 1988, Doron 1988, Bowers 1993, Heycock 1994, Rothstein 1995, Zaring 1996, Moro 1997, Adger and Ramchand 2003, den Dikken 2006). In summary, Niuean displays quite different predication patterns, but a universal view of predication can be maintained, with some modifications.

### References in Abstract

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