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Noun Phrase Structure and the Case Marking System in Niuean

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0. Introduction

Niuean is a Polynesian language of the Tongic branch. In this language, there is no clear-cut noun/ verb distinction at the word level, in a sense that the same word form can often function as a verb or a noun. The part of speech of a lexical item can only be determined at the syntax level: the nominal status of a word is established by the prefixing of a case marker. The syntactic structure of noun phrases will be discussed in the first section of this article, and the morphosyntactic properties of the case markers will be discussed in the second section.

This article is prepared after approximately forty-six hours of elicitation (over twelve weeks) with our language consultant, Ms. Ofania Ikiua, who is a native speaker of the southern variety of the Niuean language. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Ms. Ikiua, my fellow students and our convenor Dr. Frank Lichtenberk — *Fakaaue lahi ki a mutolu osi*¹.

¹ There are some aspects of the transcription used in this article which do not agree with the Niuean orthography. [s] is an allophone of /t/. In situations where it is pronounced as [s] (i.e., in front of /i/ or /e/), it is represented as <s> in this article, rather than <t> as in the Niuean orthography. /ŋ/ is represented as <ŋ> in this article, and <g> in the Niuean orthography. Vowel length is not indicated in the Niuean orthography; long vowels are represented as vowels with a macron (e.g. ā) in this article. See also footnote 4 for the representational differences between the orthography and the transcription used in this article concerning the case markers.

1. Noun phrase structure

The vast majority of noun phrases consist solely of the head noun, which can be a proper name (e.g. *sione* 'Sione (John)', *tona* 'Tonga'), a pronoun (e.g. *au* 'I'), a locational noun (e.g. *luŋa* 'inside'), a numeral (e.g. *lima* 'five'), or a common noun (e.g. *kuli* 'dog'). There are no articles in this language. Number is grammaticised in this language: singular-plural for common nouns (section 1.1.), and singular-dual-plural for personal pronouns (section 1.2.). Various noun modifiers will be introduced in section 1.3.

1.1. The Plural marker *tau*

Common nouns have a two-way number distinction: singular and plural. *Tau* is preposed to a head noun to signify plurality, e.g. *tau seliŋa* 'ears' / *seliŋa* 'ear', *tau mokopuna* 'grand children' / *mokopuna* 'grand child'. Some nouns are inherently plural, e.g. *mamatua* 'parents', but they still take the plural prefix: *tau mamatua*. *Tau* is not used when the noun has a generic interpretation.

The plural prefix *tau* is not always used. Some nouns cannot take the plural prefix *tau* when a numeral is used predicatively:

(1) valu e (*tau) apala
 eight ABS:C PL apple
 'Eight apples'

However, for other nouns, its occurrence is optional in this situation (there is no general rule as to whether the use of the plural prefix *tau* is optional or ungrammatical):

(2) ono e (tau) taŋa
 six ABS:C PL bag
 ‘Six bags’

(3) toko-valu e (tau) fānau
 PERS-eight ABS:C PL child
 ‘Eight children’

(When human beings are counted, the prefix *toko-* is prefixed to the numeral)

No case markers or other noun modifiers are marked for number, except for adjectives (see 1.3.2. for plural adjectives). For personal pronouns, there is a three-way number distinction: singular, dual and plural (see 1.2.).

1.2. Personal pronouns

All personal pronouns in Niuean are free morphemes, and they can only refer to human beings. Verbs are not indexed for person (but they are marked for number, see 1.3.2.):

	first person; exclusive	first person; inclusive	second person	third person
singular	<i>au</i>	<hr/>	<i>koe</i>	<i>ia</i>
dual	<i>maua</i>	<i>taua</i>	<i>mua</i>	<i>laua</i>
plural	<i>mautolu</i>	<i>tautolu</i>	<i>mutolu</i>	<i>lautolu</i>

1.3. Types of noun modifiers

Except for possessive pronouns, which can precede or follow the head noun (see 1.3.3.), and quantifiers/ adverbs which can occur at various positions (see 1.3.6. and 1.4.), all other noun modifiers follow the head noun if they are not used predicatively.

1.3.1 Relative clauses

All relative clauses include a verb, and it is always marked with an overt tense or aspect marker. If the position relativised is a subject or direct object, the position relativised is left empty:

- (4) taŋata [ne fusi e ika ē]
person T/A catch ABS:C fish this

'The person who caught this fish'

*do not use capital letter of the phrase
it not a sentence*

- (5) fale [ka tā e au]
house T/A build ERG:P 1:SG

'The house which I shall build'

Indirect objects are also relativisable. In that case, the resumptive pronoun *ai* is used, together with the PI-allative case *ki* (see 2.1. for noun and case marker classes, and 2.5. for allative case):

what is this? not explained previously

- (6) fifine [ne aŋe e moka e simala ki ai]
woman T/A give ERG:P M ABS:C sweet:potato ALL:PI R-PRO

'The woman whom Moka gave the sweet potato to'

For the relativisation of oblique objects, the resumptive pronoun *ai* is placed after the verb of the relative clause, without any case markers intervening between the verb and *ai*:

- (7) kiva e mataonone [ne pelē ai e tama-tāne]
dirty ABS:C beach T/A play R-PRO ABS:C child-male

'The beach where the boy was playing is dirty.'

- (8) koe matakavi [ne hau ai a ia]
 TOP:C place T/A come R-PRO ABS:P 3:SG
 loŋa e tau mauŋa
 many ABS:C PL mountain
 'The place where he/ she came from has a lot of mountains.'

Multiple instances of relative clauses are tolerated, and the order of the relative clauses is interchangeable. In the following sentence, the order of the two relative clauses can be reversed, with no semantic differences:

- (9) koe tama tāne [ne loloŋo] [ne ŋaŋao] - this is confusing!
 FOC:C child male T/A sing T/A sick there is only one relative clause at a time
 'The boy who sang is sick' or 'The boy who is sick sang.'
 (lit. 'The boy who sang who is sick.')
- these are not
 synonymous

1.3.2. Adjectives

Syntactically, the adjectives are a class of verb in Niuean (for simplicity sake, they will be called 'adjectives' rather than 'descriptive verbs' in this article). Adjectives can be used predicatively, where ^{it} it occupies the sentence initial position in this VSO language (e.g. (7)), or attributively, where it is postposed to the head noun:

- (10) akau loa
 tree tall
 'Tall tree'

- (11) tāpulu kiva
 dress dirty
 'Dirty dress'

Adjectives, like other verbs, mark for plurality. This is usually done by reduplicating the first mora of the adjective/verb²:

(12) tau akau loloa
 PL tree tall:PL
 'Tall trees'

(13) tau ika ua lalahi
 PL fish two big:PL
 'Two big fish'

Niuean does not tolerate the same noun to be modified by two or more adjectives. In that case, at least one of the adjectives needs to be transformed into a relative clause:

(14) fisi kula [ne lahi]
 flower red T/A big
 'Big red flower' (lit. 'Red flower which is big')

A separate comparative form of adjectives does not exist. An adjective can ^{this is not surprising because the form are verbs and not (true) adjectives} also have a comparative interpretation (see also (110)):

(15) fialoto Ø au kehe hiapo ne tose
 want ABS:P I:SG ALL:C bark:cloth T/A small
 'I want the small/ smaller bark cloth.'

Superlative meaning for adjectives is achieved by putting the adjective into the subject slot of the relative clause *ne mua-atu e ____* (the verb *mua-atu* literally means 'win-away'):

² Some verbs have suppletive plural form. e.g. *hau* (sg.)/ *omai* (pl) 'come', *fano* (sg.)/ *ō* (pl.) 'go'.

- (16) fialoto Ø au kehe fua-niu ne mua-atu e lahi
 want ABS:P I:SG ALL:C fruit-coconut T/A win-away ABS:C size
 'I want the largest coconut.'
 (lit. 'I want the coconut which the size is most.')

adjective,
verb or
noun?

The 'equivalent' construction (i.e. 'as ___ as') involves the conjunction *tujanī* 'like':

- (17) fuluola e hiapo tose tujanī e hiapo lahi
 beautiful ABS:C bark:cloth small like ABS:C bark:cloth big
 'The small bark cloth is as beautiful as the large bark cloth.'
 (lit. 'The small bark cloth like the large bark cloth is beautiful.')

For the comparison construction (e.g. 'X is clever^{er} than Y.'), see 2.6.

1.3.3. Possessive modifiers

A possessive modifier acts as the possessor to the possessum head noun. A possessive modifier is placed after the head noun (although possessive pronouns can also occur in front of the head noun, see below). There is no alienability/inalienability distinction for possession in Niuean. The possessor noun phrase is preceded by the genitive case marker *of ha* or *he* (see 2.3. for the distribution of the two genitive case markers and more examples of genitive noun phrases):

- (18) laupepa ha feleŋe
 paper GEN:P F
 'Feleŋe's paper'

- (19) matua fifine ha Sione
 parent female GEN:P S
 'Sione's mother'

why capital?

- (20) kai he pusi
 food GEN:C cat
 'The cat's food'

For the dual and plural personal pronouns, their respective possessive pronouns are constructed by preposing the personal pronouns with *ha*:

or prefixing?

	first person, exclusive	first person, inclusive	second person	third person
dual	<i>ha-maua</i>	<i>ha-taua</i>	<i>ha-mua</i>	<i>ha-laua</i>
plural	<i>ha-mautolu</i>	<i>ha-tautolu</i>	<i>ha-mutolu</i>	<i>ha-lautolu</i>

- (21) tama ha taua
 child GEN:P 1:DU:IN
 'Our (dual, inclusive) child'

? why not ha maua, etc. of ha feloge on p. 7.

The singular possessive pronouns are suppletive: *? in what sense is this suppletive?*

	first person	second person	third person
singular	<i>haaku</i>	<i>haau</i>	<i>haana</i>

- (22) pene haana
 pen GEN:P:3:SG
 'Her/his pen'

The possessive pronoun can also exist in a pre-noun position. When a possessive pronoun is used before the head noun, the case marker (of the whole noun phrase) is usually omitted. A ligature is usually used to separate the pre-noun possessive pronoun ^{from} with the head noun. The following pairs of sentences have the same meaning:

(23) lajomatai e ia [e tau mamatua haana]
 help ERG:P 3:SG ABS:C PL parent:PL GEN:P:3:SG
 ‘He/she helps his/her parents.’

(24) lajomatai e ia [haana a tau mamatua]
 help ERG:P 3:SG GEN:P:3:SG LIG PL parent:PL
 ‘He/she helps his/her parents.’

The ligature is not compulsory, and the case marker can optionally appear:

(25) ko fe (e) haaku (a) tāpulu
 TOP:P where ABS:C GEN:P:1:SG LIG dress
 ‘Where is my dress?’

(26) ŋaŋao (a) haaku (a) sione he aho nei
 sick ABS:P GEN:P:1:SG LIG S LOC:C day this
 ‘My Sione is sick today.’

1.3.4. Demonstratives

There are two sets of demonstratives: *ē/ nei* ‘this (near speaker)’, *ia/ nā* ‘that (near addressee)’, *kō/ rā* ‘that (far from both speaker and addressee)’. They are not marked for number, and the two sets of demonstratives are basically interchangeable:

(27) mena ē/ nei
 thing this
 ‘This thing’

(28) sisipi ia/ nā
 knife that
 ‘That knife (near you)’

- (29) akau loa kō/ rā
 tree tall that
 'That tall tree (over there)'

For temporal nouns, the use of the *nei* set of demonstratives signifies absolute, instantaneous temporal location:

- (30) totou pepa Ø au moŋo nei
 read book ABS:P 1:SG time this
 'I am reading a book at the moment.'

While the use of the *ē* set of demonstratives with temporal nouns signifies a longer period of time: *moŋo ē* 'these days.'

Ia can be used as an anaphor to refer back to an entity in the discourse *mentioned?* previously:

- (31) fano Ø au ineafi kehe faletapu lamosā
 go ABS:P 1:SG yesterday ALL:C church Presbyterian
 'I went to the Presbyterian church yesterday,'

- (31a) puke e (faletapu) ia
 ? crowded ABS:C church that
 'That (church) was crowded.'

- (31b) ko fē e (faletapu) ia
 TOP:P where ABS:C church that
 'Where is that church?'

1.3.5. Numerals

The cardinal numerals, from zero to ten, are: *nākai*, *taha*, *ua*, *tolu*, *fā*, *lima*, *ono*, *fitu*, *valu*, *hiva*, *hoŋofulu*. Twenty is *uafulu*, and the tens from thirty to ninety are *toluŋofulu* & *hivaŋofulu*. 'Hundred' is *seau*, and 'thousand' is *afe*.

Larger value digits precede smaller value digits. The digits are placed next to each other, except:

- From the hundreds, the first digit and the second digit are separated by the absolutive case marker *e*, in effect making the first digit a verb, and rest of the numeral the 'subject': 160 = *taha e seau onoŋofulu*; 1290 = *taha e afe ua seau hivaŋofulu*. The vowel before the case marker *e* is usually deleted in casual pronunciation, e.g. 1000 = *taheafe* instead of *taha e afe*
- *Ma* is used to separate the units and tens: 43 = *fāŋofolu ma tolu*. But in casual speech, the two digits can be presented as a juxtaposition of two unit digits: 43 = *fā tolu*.

Toko- is suffixed to the numeral if humans are counted (e.g. (3) and (33)).

prefix

Numerals usually function as verbs, and occupy the clause initial verbal position:

*'but see p 2 per individual they
among heads of 20'*

(32) hoŋofulu e kulī

ten ABS:C dog

'Ten dogs' (lit. 'The dogs are ten.')

The sentence initial verb position is the most preferable position for numerals.

If the sentence initial position is not available, it will either force the whole noun phrase to become a subordinate clause, therefore making the initial verb position of the subordinate clause available for the numeral (the case marker within the subordinate clause is optional):

(33) *kisia e au [toko-lima (e) taʔata loloa]*
saw ERG:P 1:SG PERS-five ABS:C people tall:PL
'I saw five tall people.'

is it a V?

(34) *ka tohi e au [taha (e) pepa] to kū*
if write ERG:P 1:SG one ABS:C book T/A short
'If I write a (one) book, it will be short.'

Or it will make the numeral part of a relative clause (especially in cases where a lot of other noun modifiers are present, e.g. (50)).

The numerals can also be used attributively (if few other noun modifiers are present):

(35) *tau ika ua lalahi ē*
PL fish two big:PL this
'These two big fish'

also used with cardinal (?)

Ordinal numerals are constructed by suffixing -aki to the cardinals for numerals from two to ninety-nine. 'First' is *fakamua* (*faka-* is the causative marker, and *mua* signifies 'win' or 'go-ahead'). With larger numerals (from hundred upwards), the ordinal suffix is not used. When an ordinal numeral is used to modify a noun, the ordinal numeral is presented as a complement clause:

- (36) fale [ke tolu-aki] maihe kainai
 house COMP three-ORD ABL:C here
 'The third house from here.'

1.3.6. *Non-numeric quantifiers and adverbials: very, all, some, only, any, none.*

Lahi, other than being a verb/ adjective meaning 'big', can also act as an intensifier ('very'). The intensifier is placed after the verb/ adjective:

- (37) lahi lahi e fisi kō
 big INTS ABS:C flower that
 'That flower is very big.'

Osi 'all' can exist in various positions, depending of the scope relation. *Osi* can also act as a verb meaning 'all' or 'finish'.

- (38) fiafia osi e tau pusi ka faŋai
 happy all ABS:C PL cat if feed
 'The cats are all happy if they are fed.'

- (39) faka-alofa atu kia mutolu osi
 CAUS-love away ALL:PA 2:PL all
 'Greetings to all of you.'

- (40) osi e tau kulī
 all ABS:C PL dog
 'All the dogs'

Falu conveys the meaning of 'some'. If is it not used as a verb (as in (43)), it is placed in front of the head noun, with the ligature *a* separating *falu* and the head noun:

(41) maama falu a kupu
understand some LIG word
'To understand some words.'

(42) falu a tau taŋata
some LIG PL people
'Some people'

Nī conveys the meaning of 'only'. It can be placed after the noun, or after the noun (in a position amongst the other noun modifiers, depending on the scope interpretation):

(43) falu nī ia lautolu ne nonofo i ausetālia
some only LOC:PA 3:PL T/A live:PL LOC:PI A
'Only some of them live in Australia.'

(44) koe tau puaka tolu lalahi nī ne tāmase
FOC:C PL pig three big:PL only T/A kill
'Only the three big pigs were killed.'

The difference in the placement of *nī* signifies a difference in scope interpretation:

(45) koe tau kosi nī ha maka ne tāmase
FOC:C PL goat only GEN:P M T/A kill
'Only Maka's goats were killed.' (He still has other animals)

(46) koe tau kosi ha maka nī ne tāmase
FOC:C PL goat GEN:P M only T/A kill
'Only Maka's goats were killed.'
(Other people's goats ^{were} are not killed, or he still has other animals)

Ha is placed in front of the head noun to signify 'any':

(47) *ha kī nī ka maeke ke hafaŋi-aki e loka*
any key only T/A able COMP unlock-APPL ABS:C lock
'Any keys can unlock that lock.'

(48) *ha tau kato nī he tau kato*
any PL bag only GEN:C PL bag
'Any bags.' (lit. 'Any bags of the bags.')

'None' is conveyed by the negative form of the verb plus *ha* 'any' preposing the nominal.

(49) *ai fiamanako ha tama-tāne ke faka-vaiŋa*
NEG like any child-male COMP CAUS-tease
'No boys like to be teased.' (lit. 'Any boys do not like to be teased.')

1.4. Order of head and the various types of modifier

The usual order of the 'non-phrasal' (excluding ^{possessive phrase} possessive phrase) modifiers around the noun head is:

- 2 *halu a* 'some' / *ha* 'any'
- 1 *tau* plural
- 0 head noun
- 1 numeral
- 2 adjective
- 3 intensifier
- 4 demonstrative
- 5 possessive phrase

All other clausal or phrasal modifiers follow the modifiers mentioned above.

Numerals tend not to be used attributively (e.g. in (50), it has become part of a relative clause after the possessive phrase, see also 1.3.5.). Quantifiers like *osi* ‘all’ or *nī* ‘any’ can occur in various position, depending on the scope interpretation (they can also occupy a post-verbal position).

In (50), the numeral *lima* ‘five’ is part of the relative clause *ne lima*. Other phrasal modifiers include *i niuē* ‘in Niue’ and *ne mai e sione* ‘which I have inherited from Sione’ (*lit.* ‘which Sione gave (me)’):

- (50) *fiamanako* Ø *au* *ke* *sela e* [*tau koloa ikiiki osi ia*
 want ABS:P 1:SG COMP sell ABS:C PL store small all that
haaku *ne lima i* *niuē ne mai e* *sione*]
 GEN:P:1:SG T/A five LOC:PI N T/A give ERG:P S
 ‘I want to sell all those five small shops of mine in Niue which I
 have inherited from Sione.’

2. Case markers

All noun phrases in Niuean are preceded by a case marker to signify their grammatical relation³. The case markers are free morphemes, and can be one or more morae in length (in contrast, lexical words must be at least two morae long). All case markers have two or three allomorphs, and they are grammatically conditioned by the class of the nominal they precede.

³ The absolutive/ nominative case marker for *au* ‘I’ is zero. The noun component of a noun-incorporated verb does not have a case marker:

- (i) *kai-laisi* Ø *au*
 eat-rice ABS:P 1:SG
 ‘I am eating rice’ (*lit.* ‘I am rice-eating.’)

2.1. P and C-class nouns/ case makers

As mentioned above, the allomorphs of the case markers are grammatically conditioned by the nominal they precede. The nominals can be divided into two classes: P-class and C-class. P-class nouns include proper names, pronouns and locational nouns (e.g. *fafo* 'outside'). C-class nouns include all other common nouns (including temporal nouns like 'yesterday', 'Sunday' or 'three o'clock'). Case markers which co-occur with P-nouns are called P-case markers, and case makers which co-occur with C-nouns are called C-case makers.

Three case makers (locative, allative and ablative) have two separate P-allomorphs: PA-class includes proper names of animate objects, e.g. names of human and pets (e.g. *luka* 'Luka (Luke)'); PI-class includes proper names of inanimate objects, e.g. place names (e.g. *fisī* 'Fiji'), and locational nouns (e.g. *loto* 'inside', *lalo* 'downward/ bottom', *luŋa* 'above').

2.2. Split ergativity: ergative/ absolutive cases and nominative/ accusative cases

The default 'core' case marking system is the ergative-absolutive system, for sentences of all tenses. For example, the following sentence can either have a past or present interpretation:

- (51) *kisia e au a ia*
see ERG:P 1:SG ABS:P 3:SG
'I see him/her.' or 'I saw him/her.'

The following sentence, also in the ergative-absolutive case marking system, has a future interpretation:

- (52) to kisia e au a ia
T/A see ERG:P 1:SG ABS:P 3:SG
'I will see him/her.'

For the subject of an intransitive verb, the absolutive case marker *a* is used for P-nouns and *e* is used for C-nouns. Note that the absolutive case marker for *au* 'I' is zero:

- (53) loloŋo Ø au
sing ABS:P 1:SG
'I sang/ sing.'
- (54) ne taji a moka
T/A cry ABS:P M
'Moka is crying/ cried.'
- (55) lahi e fisi ē
big ABS:C flower this
'This flower is big.'
- (56) fano e povi
walk ABS:C cow
'The cow walked/ walks.'

For transitive verbs, the subject is marked with the ergative case (*e* for P-nouns, *he* for C-nouns), and the object is marked with the absolutive case (*a* for P-nouns, *e* for C-nouns). When no overt tense or aspect markers are present, a nominative-accusative case marking system can be optionally employed to specify a

non-past interpretation. For non-past transitive verbs, the subject can be marked with the nominative case (*a* for P-nouns, *e* for C-nouns, i.e. the same form as the absolutive case markers), and the object can be marked with the accusative case (*e* for P-nouns, *he* for C-nouns, i.e. the same form as the ergative markers):

	P-class	C-class
ERGATIVE/ ACCUSATIVE	<i>e</i>	<i>he</i>
ABSOLUTIVE/ NOMINATIVE	<i>a</i>	<i>e</i>
	(\emptyset for <i>au</i> 'I')	

Compare the following pairs of sentences. Both of the following sentences have no overt tense or aspect markers. While (57) can be interpreted as either present or past, (58) can only have a present interpretation because it has a nominative-accusative case marking system:

(57) tunu he matua fifine e simala
 cook ERG:C parent female ABS:C sweet:potato
 'The mother cooked/ cooks the sweet potato.'

(58) tunu e matua fifine he simala
 cook NOM:C parent female ACC:C sweet:potato
 'The mother is cooking the sweet potato.'

The following are a few more examples in the default ergative-absolutive case marking system:

(59) ne faka-koukou e sifa a mele
 T/A CAUS-bath ERG:P S ABS:P M
 'Sifa bathed Mele.'

(60) tunu e ia e kai
 cook ERG:P 3:SG ABS:C food
 ‘She/he cooked the food.’ or ‘She/he is cooking the food.’

(61) kua kai he pusi e simala
 T/A eat ERG:C cat ABS:C sweet:potato
 ‘The cat ate the sweet potato.’

The following are a few more examples of non-past sentences in the nominative-accusative case marking system:

(62) tunu a ia he talo
 cook NOM:P 3:SG ACC:C taro
 ‘She/he is cooking the taro.’

(63) selo e punua-pusi e ia
 lick NOM:C young-cat ACC:P 3:SG
 ‘The kitten is licking him/her.’

2.3. Genitive case

The genitive marker is used to indicate that the noun phrase it precedes is a possessor.

There are two allomorphs of the genitive case marker:

	P-class	C-class
GENITIVE	<i>ha</i>	<i>he</i>

The possessor noun phrase is usually placed after the possessum noun phrase (see also 1.3.3. for further examples):

- (64) matua tāne ha lautolu
parent male GEN:P 3:PL
'Their father'
- (65) posi ha maua
boat GEN:P 1:DU:EX
'Our (dual, exclusive) boat'
- (66) nofoa ha sione
chair GEN:P S
'Sione's chair'
- (67) patuiki fifine ha toŋa
king female GEN:P T
'Queen of Tonga'
- (68) tau kupu he loloŋo — could this indicate a different
PL word GEN:C song preserve relation & from he?
'The words of the song'

2.4. Focus/ Topic marker

The focus/ topic markers are *ko* for P-nouns and *koe* for C-nouns:

	P-class	C-class
FOCUS/ TOPIC	<i>ko</i>	<i>ko-e⁴</i>

They are used to mark a topicalised noun phrase or a focused question word. They are also used to mark the noun phrase(s) of an equative sentence.

⁴ The C-focus/ topic marker is written as <ko e> in Niuean orthography, to distinguish it from <koe> 'you (sg)'. Other case markers which fit in this situations include <i a> PA-locative case/ <ia> 'he/she/there', <ke he> C-allative case/ <kehe> 'different'. The homophonous words will be represented in this article by the word form which lacks a space (*koe*, *ia*, *kehe*, etc.) In the orthography, all the case markers with two or more syllables are written as separate words (one word for each syllable), except the *aki* constituent for the instrumental case and the *mai* constituent for the ablative case.

2.4.1. Topicalised noun phrases

Niuean is a verb-initial language, but noun phrases can exist pre-verbally if it is ^{the) are} topicalised. The topicalised noun phrase is marked by a topic marker *ko/ koe*.

Compare the following pair of sentence. (70) is a topicalised version of (69):

(69) to tohi e au e pepa
T/A write ERG:P I:SG ABS:C book
'I will write a book.'

(70) koe pepa to tohi e au
TOP:C book T/A write ERG:P I:SG
'The book, I will write.'

2.4.2. Focused question words

In a question word interrogative sentence, the question word is placed at the beginning of a sentence, and marked by a focus marker (*ko* or *koe*). Question words which take the P-focus marker include *hai* 'who/ whom', *fe* 'where', *hiŋo* 'what'. Question words which take the ^{focus?} C-topic marker include *ha-hai* 'whose' (i.e. 'certain things belong to who'), *hiŋoa* 'what of something' (i.e. 'what thing belonging to certain people'):

(71) ko fe a tule
FOC:P where ABS:P T
'Where is Tule?'

(72) ko hai ne faka-malipi e kalase
FOC:P who T/A CAUS-brake ABS:C glass
'Who broke the glass?'

(73) ko hai ne aŋe e moka e talo ki ai
 FOC:P who T/A give ERG:P M ABS:C taro ALL:PI R-PRO
 ‘Whom did Moka gave the taro to?’

(74) ko hiŋo he tama ne kai
 FOC:P what ERG:C child T/A eat
 ‘What did the child eat?’

(75) koe ha hai e kuli kō
 FOC:C GEN:P who ABS:C dog that
 ‘Whose is that dog?’

(76) koe hiŋoa haau ka tause
 FOC:C what GEN:P:2:SG T/A do
 ‘What will you do?’ (lit. ‘It is what of yours which you will do.’)

2.4.3. Focus/topic markers in equative sentences

Niuean does not have an overt copula. Equative sentences in Niuean are constructed by juxtaposing the two equating noun phrases. If the equative sentence has a *focus-topic* constituent order, the focus noun phrase is marked by a focus marker *ko/ koe*, and the topic noun phrase is marked by an absolutive case marker *a/ e*:

(77) [koe leoleo] [a vaka]
 FOC:C policeman ABS:P V
 ‘Vaka is a policeman.’
 (i.e. a possible answer to ‘What does Vaka do?’. Vaka’s occupation is a policeman, not a teacher or minister.)

(78) [koe taŋata fā kaihā] [a ia]
 FOC:C person T/A steel ABS:P 3:SG
 ‘She/he is a person who steels.’
 (i.e. a possible answer to ‘What does she/ he do?’)

(79) [ko mele] [a ia]
 FOC:P M ABS:P there

'Mele is there.'

(i.e. a possible answer to 'Who is that person there?'. It is Mele, not Vaka or Tule, who is there.)

If the equative sentence has a *topic-focus* constituent order, the topic noun phrase is marked by a topic marker *ko/ koe*, and the focus noun phrase is marked by a focus case marker *ko/ koe*:

(80) [ko ia] [ko mele]
 TOP:P 3:SG FOC:P M

'She is Mele.'

(i.e. She is Mele, not Tule or the cat.)

(81) [ko ia] [koe matua fifine ha vaka]
 TOP:P 3:SG FOC:C parent female GEN:P V

'She is Vaka's mother.'

A single noun phrase can also be preceded by a focus marker. In such case, it can either be interpreted as an 'existential' sentence (somewhat similar to English copular sentences where the subject is expletive, e.g. 'it is me'), or an equative sentence where one of the equative noun phrase is a genitive or some other oblique noun phrase:

(82) koe tau-tama haana
 FOC:C PL-child GEN:P:I:SG

'It is her children.' or 'The child is hers.'

(83) ko ia i honolulu
 FOC:P 3:SG LOC:PA H

‘It is s/he who is in Honolulu.’ or ‘S/he is in Honolulu.’

2.5. Allative case and ablative case

The allative case has a number of functions:

- Marking the recipient noun phrase of a ‘giving’ verb (e.g. ‘I gave the key to you’);
- Marking the stimulus in a sentence containing an experiential verb (e.g. ‘I love you’);
- Signifying ‘motion towards’ of an action or state, physically or metaphorically (both spatially and temporally speaking).

The ablative case marker signifies ‘motion from’, similar to the English preposition ‘from’.

Both allative and ablative case markers have three allomorphs:

	PA-class	PI-class	C-class
ALLATIVE	<i>ki-a</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>ke-he</i>
ABLATIVE	<i>mai-i-a</i>	<i>mai-i</i>	<i>mai-he</i>

(84) aŋe e moka e talo kia ia
 give ERG:P M ABS:C taro ALL:PA 3:SG
 ‘Moka gave the taro to him/her.’ (Recipient ALL:PA)

(85) aŋe e kai kehe kulī
 give ABS:C food ALL:C dog
 ‘The food was given to the dog.’ (Recipient ALL:C)

- (86) faka-alofa Ø au kia koe
 CAUS-love ABS:P 1:SG ALL:PA 2:SG
 ‘I love you.’ (lit. ‘I am in love to you.’) (Stimulus ALL:PA)
- (87) fiafia a moka kehe pelē-lakapī
 happy ABS:P M ALL:C game-rugby
 ‘Moka likes rugby.’ (lit. ‘Moka is happy towards rugby-playing.’)
 (Stimulus ALL:C)
- (88) mataono e punua-pusi kia au
 stare ABS:C young-cat ALL:PA 1:SG
 ‘The kitten stared at me.’ (Spatial ALL:PA)
- (89) ne poi e pusi maihe falevao kehe peito
 T/A run ABS:C cat ABL:C toilet ALL:C kitchen
 ‘The cat ran from the toilet to the kitchen.’ (Spatial ABL/ALL:C)
- (90) maihe hola tolu kehe hola lima
 ABL:C hour three ALL:C hour five
 ‘From three o’clock to five o’clock.’ (Temporal ABL/ALL:C)
- (91) lele e vakalele maii toŋa ki niuē
 fly ABS:C aeroplane ABL:PI T ALL:PI N
 ‘The aeroplane flies from Tonga to Niue.’ (Spatial ABL/ALL:PI)
- (92) loŋona e au e tala ia maiia luka
 hear ERG:P 1:SG ABS:C story that ABL:PA L
 ‘I heard that story from Luka.’ (Spatial ABS:PA)

The *ke* constituent of the allative case marker *ke-he* is sometimes optional if the noun phrase is unlikely to have a locative thematic role (the C-locative case marker has the form of *he*):

- (93) kua fano tuai a moka (ke)he aonga
 T/A go T/A ABS:P M ALL:C school
 'Moka has already gone to school.'

Locational nouns take PI-case makers:

- (94) nofo ki lalo
 sit ALL:PI down
 'Sit down.'

For the C-nouns of *fale* 'house' and *kaina* 'home' only (and not even compounds which include them, e.g. *fale tapu* 'church' (lit. 'house-sacred')), they take both the C- and PI- directional case markers of *kehe/ maihe* and *ki/maii*. The use of the PI-markers signifies 'internal' meanings of 'into' (*ki* 'illative case') and 'from inside' (*mai-i* 'elative case'), contrasting with the 'external' meanings of 'towards' (*ke-he* 'allative case') and 'from' (*mai-he* 'ablative case') meaning conveyed by the C-markers:

- (95) poi faka-mafisi [kehe/ maihe] fale
 run CAUS-fast ALL:C ABL:C house
 'Run quickly [towards/ from] the house.'

- (96) poi faka-mafisi [ki/ maii] fale
 run CAUS-fast ILL:PI ELL:PI house
 'Run quickly [into/ out from] the house.'

2.6. Locative case

Locative case marks the location, either spatial or temporal, of an action, an occasion, or an existence. It can also signify means of transport. The locative case marker has three allomorphs:

	PA-class	PI-class	C-class
LOCATIVE	<i>i-a</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>he</i>

(97) fai-hoana a koe he aho-tapu
 make-wife ABS:P 2:SG LOC:C day-sacred
 'You got married (got a wife) on Sunday.' (Temporal location)

(98) ko ia he aoŋa
 FOC:P 3:SG LOC:C school
 'She/ he is at school.' (Spatial location)

(99) ŋahua lahi a moka he kātene
 work hard ABS:P M LOC:C garden
 'Moka works hard in the garden.' (Spatial location)

(100) ŋahua a ia i honolulu
 work ABS:P 3:SG LOC:PI H
 'She/ he works in Honolulu.' (Spatial location)

(101) toka e mele e tau pepa ia au
 leave ERG:P M ABS:C PL book LOC:PA 1:SG
 'Mele left the books with me.' (Spatial location)
 (i.e. the book is 'located at me')

(102) to fano a mele aponji he posi kehe aonja
 T/A go ABS:P M tomorrow LOC:C boat ALL:C school
 ‘Tomorrow Mele will go to school by (western-style) boat.’
 (Means of transport, i.e. Mele is going to school ‘on a boat’)

Similar to the use of PI-directional case markers with *fale* ‘house’ and *kaina* ‘home’, the use of PI-locative case marker signifies ‘interior location’ (*i* ‘inessive case’), and the use of C-locative case marker signifies ‘exterior location’ (*he* ‘adessive case’, e.g. on top of, immediately next to):

(103) ne loloŋo Ø au i kaina
 T/A sing ABS:P I:SG INN:PI home
 ‘I sang at home.’ (i.e., inside my home)

(104) ne tuku he taŋata ŋahua e setalata he fale
 T/A put ERG:C people work ABS:C satellite:dish ADD:C house
 ‘The workers put the satellite dish on the house’
 (i.e., on top of or immediately next to the house).

The locative case is also used to mark the object of comparison in a comparative sentence (in this case all P nouns use *ia*):

(105) kū a tule ia moka
 short ABS:P T LOC:P M
 ‘Tule is shorter than Moka.’

(106) lahi a niuē ia lalotoŋa
 large ABS:P N LOC:P L
 ‘Niue is larger than Rarotonga.’

(107) tose e maŋō he tafuā
 small ABS:C shark LOC:C whale
 'Sharks are smaller than whales.'

2.7. Comitative case

Comitative case can be translated into English as 'and' or 'with'. This case marker can be used to conjoin two noun phrases, or to show that the two participants are involved with the same action or state together:

	P-class	C-class
COMITATIVE	<i>mo</i>	<i>mo-e</i>

(108) kua ō tuai a moka mo tule
 T/A go:PL T/A ABS:P M COM:P T
 'Moka and Tule has already left.' or 'Moka has left with Tule.'

(109) tamai e patuō moe kākau
 bring ABS:C stone COM:C stick
 'Bring a stone and a stick.'

2.8. 'Disjunctive case'

is this a case or a conjunction to form NPs coordinate NPs?
 The 'disjunctive case' is used for disjunction of noun phrases ('or'): *same question, about the and use of mo and mo*

	P-class	C-class
DISJUNCTIVE	<i>po-ko</i>	<i>po-ke</i>

(110) ko hai ne mata mitaki sione poko luka
 TOP:P who T/A face good S DISJ:P L
 'Who is (more) handsome? Sione or Luka?'

(111) simala poke laisi
 sweet:potato DISJ:C rice
 ‘Sweet potato or rice?’

2.9. Benefactive case

Benefactive can be translated into English as ‘for’. It marks the noun phrase as having a beneficiary thematic role.

	P-class	C-class
BENEFACTIVE	<i>ma/ma-ha</i>	<i>ma-e</i>

(112) koe fale [ma/maha] moka
 FOC:C house BEN:P M
 ‘The house is for Moka.’

(113) ne liliŋi e au e huhu mae pusi
 T/A pour ERG:P I:SG ABS:C milk BEN:C cat
 ‘I poured milk for the cat.’

2.10. Instrumental case

The instrumental case is used to mark a non-argument noun phrase as having instrumental thematic role:

	P-class	C-class
INSTRUMENTAL	<i>aki-a</i>	<i>aki-e</i>

(114) hele e toua akie sisipi (or hele akie sisipi e toua)
 cut ABS:C rope INSTR:C knife INSTR:C ABS:C
 ‘Cut the rope with a knife.’

(115) ne fufū e au e maihi he kaupū akia moka
 T/A hide ERG:P 1:SG ABS:C crack LOC:C wall INSTR:P M
 'I hid the crack on the wall with Moka.' (e.g. M. is a child or pet)

Another way of indicating the presence of an instrumental noun phrase is to
 ✓ make *aki* the applicative suffix to the verb. This applicative construction signifies that
 the direct object noun phrase of the sentence has an instrumental thematic role. In this
 case, the instrumental noun phrase is marked with an absolutive case marker *a/ e*:

(116) ne keli-aki e ia e kākau e kurī
 T/A hit-APPL ERG:P 3:SG ABS:C stick ABS:C dog
 'She/he hit the dog with a stick.'
 (lit. 'She hit-using the stick the dog.')

The *-aki* applicative suffix can also mark a gap in the complement clause as
 having an instrumental thematic role:

(117) ne faka-oŋa e au e hiapo [ke
 T/A CAUS-be:used ERG:P 1:SG ABS:C bark:cloth COMP
 fufū-aki _____ e maihi he kaupā]
 hide-APPL ABS:C crack LOC:C wall
 'I used the bark cloth to hide the crack on the wall.'

The resumptive pronoun *ai* is not used if a subject or direct object is
 relativised. In an applicative sentence, the resumptive pronoun is not used if the
 instrumental noun phrase is relativised. This shows that the instrumental noun phrase
 is not an oblique object: ✓

(118) kiva e hiapo ne fufū-aki e au e maihi
 dirty ABS:C bark:cloth T/A cover-APPL ERG:P 1:SG ABS:C crack
 ‘The bark cloth which I cover the crack with is dirty.’

The fact that an applicative sentence would not be (as) grammatical if the supposedly instrumental noun phrase is placed at an oblique noun phrase position (in (119) and (120), the outer absolutive noun phrase) further supports that *-aki* can only take an argument noun phrase as having an instrumental thematic role:

(119) ?? ne keli-aki e ia e kurī e kākau
 T/A hit-APPL ERG:P 3:SG ABS:C dog ABS:C stick

(120)* hele-aki e toua e sisipi
 cut-APL ABS:C rope ABS:C knife

3. Conclusion

In the first section of this paper, the noun phrase structure of Niuean was discussed, and in this language:

- There are no articles;
- The possessive construction has no alienability/ inalienability distinction; and
- Plurality for common nouns is marked by the plural prefix *tau*.

These traits are rather atypical of Polynesian languages. Polynesian languages usually have some sort of alienability distinction for their possessive construction(s). Many also indicate number difference for noun phrases by the use of different number-marking articles.

The case marking system in Niuean is discussed in the second section. There are at least two allomorphs for every case marker in Niuean. The P-case markers are used for pronouns, proper names and locational nouns. The C-case markers are used for common nouns. Three cases, ablative, allative and locative, make a further distinction within the P-class: PA-case markers are used for proper names of animate objects, e.g. human, pets; PI-case markers are used for proper names of inanimate objects, e.g. place names, and locational nouns. Here is a summary of the case markers:

	P-class	C-class
ERGATIVE/ ACCUSATIVE	<i>e</i>	<i>he</i>
ABSOLUTIVE/ NOMINATIVE	<i>a</i>	<i>e</i>
	(\emptyset for <i>au</i> 'I')	
GENITIVE	<i>ha</i>	<i>he</i>
FOCUS/ TOPIC	<i>ko</i>	<i>ko-e</i>
COMITATIVE	<i>mo</i>	<i>mo-e</i>
DISJUNCTIVE	<i>po-ko</i>	<i>po-ke</i>
BENEFACTIVE	<i>ma/ma-ha</i>	<i>ma-e</i>
INSTRUMENTAL	<i>aki-a</i>	<i>aki-e</i>

	PA-class	PI-class	C-class
ALLATIVE	<i>ki-a</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>ke-he</i>
ABLATIVE	<i>mai-i-a</i>	<i>mai-i</i>	<i>mai-he</i>
LOCATIVE	<i>i-a</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>he</i>

(For the C-nouns of *fale* 'house' and *kaina* 'home', the three PI-markers above are used as the 'internal' local cases of illative ('into'), elative ('from inside') and inessive ('inside'). The three C-markers above are used as the 'external' local cases of allative ('towards'), ablative ('from the exterior') and adessive ('on top of/ next to').

Notes

The following abbreviations have been used in this paper:

ABL	ablative case	IN	inclusive person
ABS	absolutive case	INN	inessive case
ACC	accusative case	INSTR	instrumental case
ADD	adessive case	LIG	ligature
ALL	allative case	LOC	locative case
APPL	applicative	NOM	nominative case
BEN	benefactive case	ORD	ordinal numeral
C	C-class case markers	P	P-class case markers
CAUS	causative	PA	PA-class case markers
COM	comitative case	PERS	personal
COMP	complimentiser	PI	PI-class case markers
DU	dual number	PL	plural number
ELL	elative case	R-PRO	resumptive pronoun
ERG	ergative case	SG	singular number
EX	exclusive person	T/A	tense or aspect marker
FOC	focus marker	TOP	topic marker
GEN	genitive case	1	first person
ILL	illative case	2	second person
		3	third person

Excellent. Some attention to detail necessary.

~~65/70~~ 65/70 A+