

4 *Inside and outside Niuean space*

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1 Introduction

Niuean is one of only two Tongic languages (Pawley 1966)—Tongan being the other one. Niuean has received less attention in Polynesian (Oceanic/Austronesian/general) linguistics than Tongan, often with the covert assumption that what works for Tongan also works for Niuean. As more detailed studies of Tongan become available, it is tempting to test this assumption. Given Bennardo's (1996a, b) recent seminal work on Tongan spatial relationships, the challenge was to compare Tongan with Niuean to see what light could be thrown from one to the other and perhaps *vice versa*. As such Bennardo (1996b:10) asserts that there are 'only three sets of lexical items that participate in the linguistic description of spatial relationships in Tongan'. He cites prepositions, directionals and spatial nouns as the three sets, but discusses in depth only spatial nouns. In this paper I will follow this scheme for Niuean, and along the way I will make comparisons with Bennardo's (1996b) Tongan data and his conclusions as appropriate. Note that in the language data cited, Tongan and Niuean orthography differs only in that the velar nasal is written as *ng*, while the Niuean equivalent is *g*.

2 Prepositions

Bennardo (1996b:2) makes the observation that spatial relationships in English are expressed mainly by means of spatial prepositions, while Tongan has only three spatial prepositions (and most other spatial relationships are expressed by means of spatial nouns), namely 'i [at], ki [to] and mei [from]. While Niuean also has this set as *i*, *ki* and *mai* there are quite a few more prepositions that can be considered as expressing spatial relationships. This expanded view may also be applicable to Tongan in that 'prepositions' in Niuean include all case markers, most of which carry spatio-temporal connotations, and as such the relative importance of 'prepositions' for spatial relationships in these two languages is perhaps far greater than previously thought. This would also concur with the general view taken for

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Polynesian spatial orientation by Krupa (1982:111) when he notes that ‘the spatial orientation markers form a paradigm of prepositions occurring in the nominal phrase’.

For Niuean, at any rate, the view that case markers (or particles) are classified as prepositions is well supported:

It has been established that that nearly all NPs in Niuean bear an overt prepositional case particle. (Seiter 1980:45)

The case markers are the prepositions *ki* [goal], *i* [cause], *i* [locative], *e* [agent], *ha*, *a* [genitive], *ma* [benefactive], and *he*. This last occurs only before common nouns and is always the combination of a case marker *i*, *a* or *e* and the common article *e* (which was originally **he*). (Biggs, n.d.)

According to my analysis, the following prepositions can express spatial relationships in Niuean (example sentences from Sperlich 1997, unless indicated otherwise):¹

- Hā* in, at, there
- (1) *Hā he fale a ia.*
in PREP house ABS there
‘He is in the house.’
- he, (i he)* in, into, from, out of, of (used with common noun phrases only; the bracketed version is the historical derivation still used by older speakers)
- (2) *Nofo e taokete haana (i) he maaga ha mautilu.*
stay ABS big brother his in the village of us
‘His big brother lives in our village.’
- i* in, at, from (after verbs of motion, used with proper noun phrases— including locative nouns)
- (3) *Kua hiki e ia e vaka haan i Nukututaha.*
T land ERG he ABS canoe his at N
‘He landed his canoe at Nukututaha.’
- (4) *Ne mohe a ia i loto he motokā.*
T sleep ABS he in inside ART car
‘He slept in the car (lit. he slept in the inside of the car).’
- ke* to, concerning, in, at, on, with (used with common noun phrases and followed by *he* in place of *e*)
- (5) *Ō ha ne fai a tautolu ke he fale kava.*
go while T make ABS we to ART house kava
‘We’re about to go to the pub.’

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper are:

ABS – absolutive case marker, ART – article, EMPH – emphatic particle, ERG – ergative case marker, IR – interrogative marker, POSS – possessive marker, PRED – predicate marker, PREP – preposition, REL – relative clause marker, T – tense marker

- ki* to (used with proper nouns, pronouns and local nouns)
- (6) *Hake a ia ki Makefu.*
 go ABS he to M
 'He went to Makefu.'

- mai* from
- (7) *Mamao lahi e laā mai he lalolagi.*
 to be away far ABS sun from ART earth
 'The sun is far away from the earth.'

3 Directionals

These are commonly used (as adverbs) after verbs, but not with *hau* (come) and *fano* (go) which are verbs which express direction themselves. However, directionals are also used as full verbs. Bennardo (1996b:10) notes that for Tongan this set can be split into two subsets according to the axial orientation, that is vertical (*hake*, *hifo*) and horizontal (*mai*, *atu*, *ange*), although the latter is less well defined as such. One can make a similar claim for Niuean except that the vertical *hake* and *hifo* also take on compass direction (although clearly derived from the vertical notions of sunrise (east) and sunset (west)—where an interesting innovation/confusion is added due to the Western compass notion of 'north' being associated with 'up', hence *hake* acquiring this as a second meaning—however, no parallel development for *hifo* as 'south (down)' has been observed). Traditional cardinal directions are discussed in §4 on 'spatial nouns'.

Vertical axis:

- hake*, adv. up, upwards, eastwards, to the north
hake, v.i. to go up, to climb, to ascend
- (8) *Ne onono hake a ia ke he mahina.*
 T look up ABS he to ART moon
 'He was looking up to the moon.' [adverb]
- (9) *Ne hake e tama ki luga he mouga.*
 T up ABS child to top ART mountain
 'The child went up the mountain.' [verb]
- hifo*, adv. down, downwards, westwards
hifo, v.i. to go down, to descend
- (10) *Liu hifo ā a koe ki tahi.*
 return down EMPH ABS you to sea
 'Go back down to the sea!' [adverb]
- (11) *Hifo mai lā.*
 Down from EMPH
 'Come down from there!' [verb]

Of further grammatical interest is the rule that *hake* and *hifo* as adverbs cannot co-occur with any other directionals, while as verbs they can co-occur with at least *mai*. As verbs, they

also have plural suppletive forms whereby the plural form of *fano* (go), namely *ō*, is prefixed, to yield *ōhake* and *ōhifo*.

Horizontal axis (or perhaps better defined as any nonvertical axis, and not only in physical space but also with reference to abstract space such as emotional space):

mai, adv. to, here, hither, towards, this way (towards the speaker)

mai, v.i. to give (to speaker)

(12) *Une mai!*

move here

'Move over here (to speaker)!' [adverb]

(13) *Mai lā taha vala vai tote!*

Give EMPH one portion water small

'Give me some water!' [verb]

atu, adv. to, there, thither, that way (towards the person addressed, directly or indirectly); also used in comparative constructions

atu, v.i. to give (to person addressed, directly or indirectly)

(14) *To fakamaama atu e au ki a koe.*

T explain to ERG I to ABS you

'I will explain it to you.' [adverb]

(15) *Kua fakafono atu he matua taane a ia ki Niu Silani.*

T send away ERG parent male ABS he to NZ

'His father sent him away to New Zealand.' [adverb]

(16) *Atu lā ia e au lima e talā.*

give EMPH that ERG I five ABS dollar

'I just gave you five dollars.' [verb]

(17) *Homo atu e pene ē he tau pene oti.*

Surpass than ABS pen EMPH ART PL pen all

'This pen is better than all the others.' [comparative, adverb]

The use of *atu* in comparative constructions seems only loosely connected with directionals, perhaps in the sense of the 'orientation/reference to the thing/being compared' coming within the wider thematic base of *atu*.

age, adv. (orientation away from both speaker and person addressed; use restricted to psychological verbs and verbs of hitting and giving)

age, v.i. to give (orientation away from both speaker and person addressed)

(18) *Tala age ki a ia e tala haau.*

tell away to ABS he ABS story your

'Tell him your story!'

(19) *To age e au taki lima e talā ki lautolu.*

T give ERG I each five ABS dollar to them

'I will give each of them five dollars.'

With *mai*, *atu* and *age* being common directionals in many Polynesian languages, it has become accepted practice to denote them with 'toward speaker' for *mai*, 'away from speaker' for *atu* 'along, obliquely/away from speaker and hearer' and for *age* (Clark 1976:34,

POLLEX). As can be seen in Tongan and Niuean, this approach either needs further clarification, especially for *atu* and *age*, or a re-analysis. Bennardo (1996b:10) suggests the following classification for Tongan: *mai* [toward centre, where 'centre' is equal to centre of attention, canonically the speaker], *atu* [away from centre 1]/[toward addressee] (when centre is speaker), *ange* [away from centre 2] (centre 2 = speaker and addressee). I am not sure if this scheme can successfully be applied to sentence example (15), unless one stipulates that in (15) the 'centre' is not the speaker but rather the discourse centre is the subject of the sentence, namely the 'father'. I think the fundamental point for *atu* is not so much the notion of 'away from speaker/centre', but rather the notion of 'towards addressee, directly or indirectly' (as also noted by Seiter 1980:20), thus maintaining the semantic parallel with *mai*. The directional *age/ange* on the other hand almost seems synonymous with *atu*, except that *age/ange* is more restricted to certain classes of verbs (that is psychological, giving, hitting, in the case of Niuean).

4 Spatial nouns

It has long been noted that Polynesian languages have an abundance of proper names given over not only to human beings but also to all manner of features of the natural terrain (Krupa 1982:163). Niue as an upraised coral island with nothing but the sea in sight has practically no landmarks that could be seen from all parts of the island. Instead, there is a huge array of micro-landmarks that define the immediate environment of perhaps only a few square kilometres at a time (between villages), especially on the coastal side. Loeb (1926) recorded nearly 400 such placenames in Niue, and even today, the local geography confounds modern land titling issues because the traditional boundary markers are often known by one proper name to one family and by another proper name to another family (giving rise to land disputes). It is perhaps only natural that this intense personification of place has had an impact on the syntax of spatial concepts, giving rise to the well-known Polynesian languages phenomena of 'local nouns (or spatial nouns)'. The unusual feature is not that spatial reference is expressed by nouns (English too nominalises, for example the front, the back, the side, at the bottom of), but that these 'local nouns' are treated syntactically (via pronominal case marking or 'proper' article) like proper nouns (or pronouns).

In Niuean, setting aside various exceptions to the rule, there are two syntactic indicators. First, there are the two 'locative' prepositions *i* and *ki* which have direct scope only over proper nouns (local/locative/spatial nouns included), as in:

(20) *Ne fano ai ki Samoa.*
 T go he to S
 'He went to Samoa.' (McEwen 1970:126)

(21) *Aua neke tunu e moa i loto he fale!*
 NEG lest cook ABS chicken in inside ART house
 'Don't cook the chicken inside the house!' (Seiter 1980:52)

These locative prepositions also have scope over pronouns but then the appropriate pronominal article (or case marker) must come between preposition and pronoun, as in (McEwen 1970:126):

- (22) *Tala age ki a ia!*
 tell away to ABS he
 'Tell him!'

Second, if a local/spatial noun appears in subject or direct object position it will be case marked (or have the appropriate article) as if a proper noun and/or a pronoun—hence as differentiated from common nouns which take a different set of case markers (articles). This is demonstrated in Seiter (1980:52) and Kirikiri (1974:19) for examples (24)–(26):

- (23) *Kua teitei pouli tei a fafo.*
 T nearly dark nearly ABS outside
 'It's just about getting dark outside.'

- (24) *Ne fano a Sione.*
 T go ABS J
 'John went.'

- (25) *Ne fano a ia.*
 T go ABS he
 'He went.'

- (26) *Kua fano e kulī.*
 T go ABS dog
 'The dog went.'

Bennardo (1996b) has classified some 25 Tongan spatial nouns according to conceptual content and structural context (however the diagnostic criteria described for Niuean seem only to partly apply to Tongan, in that Bennardo only cites syntactic structures which have the initial preposition 'i as an indicator). Eighteen conceptual and 5 structural features give rise to spatial noun groupings with variously shared features. While I will not repeat this exercise for Niuean, I will analyse the conclusions reached as compared to their Niuean counterparts (where applicable), and I will advance alternative descriptive models for the Niuean data where applicable. Firstly, I will compare the Niuean data with Bennardo's set of spatial nouns as grouped according to conceptual content. Where available I will cite POLLEX reconstructions as supporting (but not decisive) evidence whether or not a given term is a local/spatial noun or not.

4.1 Group 1

The first grouping involves the 4 cardinal directions given as *hahake* [east], *hififo* [west], *tokelau* [north], and *tonga* [south]. Together with only two others (*kō* [yonder], *'olunga* [above]) these spatial nouns share the unique feature called 'locus' (defined as the result of a projection, the collapse of a 'place' onto any of its interior points, Bennardo 1996b:6).

The Niuean equivalents of *hake*, *hifo*, *tokelau*, and *toga* are indeed used to denote the 4 cardinal points, but only as translation into English (and what has become accepted as modern compass direction). Note however that *hake* and *hifo* are not used as spatial nouns in Niuan (they operate only as adverbial and verbal directionals, see above, see also McEwen 1970; Seiter 1980). On etymological grounds, too, I would strongly disagree to group these 4 words together. For a start there is little evidence in Polynesian in general, and for Tongan and Niuean in particular, that any of these languages had developed a cardinal point directional

system (but which did not mean, for example, that they did not know how to navigate, Finney 1979:333). Of course the sun's movement provides a major anchor point, but only to the degree that the sunrise (*hake* = upwards) and the sunset (*hifo* = downwards) are familiar points of departure in an otherwise uneventful cycle of events. Of far greater importance in this scheme of things were the winds and the directions they came from (Finney 1979:333) and as such we have as the key axis the wind that blows—it so happens—from north to south, namely *tokelau*. In Niuean traditional society *tokelau* was (and still is to a certain degree) a key directional concept and the very word has many mythological and metaphorical extensions, occurs in many placenames, embedded in folklore, and is the subject of many a song. The term used to translate 'south' is *toga*, but its primary meaning in Niuean is 'foreign' and may be related to the observation that traditionally the island could only be safely approached from the south (that is, if any 'foreigner' turned up they always landed in the southern parts of the island). Nevertheless POLLEX reconstructs PN **toga* 'south, south wind', so the Niuean *toga* may well derive from that protoform and as such establish the all-important wind axis *tokelau-toga* even more clearly. There can be no dispute, however, that the pair *hake* [PN **hake*, 'upwards'] and *hifo* [PN **hifo*, 'downwards'] are quite unrelated (etymologically) to the pair of *tokelau* [PN **tokelau*, 'northerly quarter and wind from that quarter'] and *toga*.

If, on the other hand, one can make the claim that synchronically all these 4 terms denote the cardinal points (as borrowed from English) then they may well belong to a unique group as given by Bennardo (1996b). However, I am confident for Niuean at least to say that while *hake* and *hifo* are used (but not as nouns) for the cardinal points, their canonical use is still that of 'up' and 'down'. It is quite likely that Tongan has taken that a step further in 'nominalising' the partially reduplicated forms *hahake* and *hihifo* for the exclusive use in denoting the cardinal points.

4.2 Group 2

Next on Bennardo's list is *kō* [yonder] as a unitary group (having 3 additional features to those shared with the cardinal points group, namely 'contact, vicinity and visibility'). The Niuean equivalent *kō* [PN **koo*, 'yonder'] has a very similar semantic scope but is less securely defined as a 'spatial noun'. McEwen (1970) only gives it as an adverb, while Seiter (1980) does refer to it as a 'local noun'. In Sperlich (1997) it is categorised as a 'demonstrative pronoun' as in:

- (27) *Fano ki kō!*
 go to there
 'Go over there!'

If classified as a 'pronoun' we should note at this stage that pronouns in general play an important role in deixis; demonstrative and possessive pronouns in Polynesian have also been singled out as featuring prominently in 'orientation in space' (Krupa 1982:162). While Bennardo (1996b) does not feature any Tongan equivalents, I take the opportunity here to exemplify the Niuean range of demonstrative pronouns (as an alternative to 'demonstrative pronouns' one may also call them 'demonstrative local nouns' if one considers their semantic content as a nominal/substantive 'place'):

Hī here, away (movement away from a specific place in the direction of the speaker)

- (28) *Hau ki hē he puhalatū!*
 come to here ART road
 ‘Come here, away from the road!’

hinei this place here (no specific departure point)

- (29) *Hau ki hinei!*
 come to here
 ‘Come to this place here!’

hinā that place there

- (30) *Fano ki hinā!*
 go to there
 ‘Go to that place over there!’

hanei this (in physical contact with referent)

- (31) *Hanei e toki ne kumi a koe ki ai.*
 this ABS axe T look ABS you to it
 ‘This is the axe (in my hand) you are looking for.’

hanā that (in physical contact with referent)

- (32) *Hanā e pene.*
 that ABS pen
 ‘That’s the pen (the one you’re holding).’

konei this place here (implies remaining stationary when others are moving or have moved away)

- (33) *Konei agaia nī kia a mutolu?*
 Here still EMPH IR ABS you
 ‘You are still here?’

kunā that place there

- (34) *Kitia, hā i kunā!*
 look at in there
 ‘Look it’s (that place) there!’

The forms used in examples (29) to (34) derive from the demonstratives *nei/nai* and *nā* which by themselves can also be used as demonstrative pronouns when preposed with the personal article (case marker) *a*, as for example:

- (35) *Ko e tohi a nei ne kumi a koe ki ai.*
 PRED ABS book ABS this T look ABS you to it
 ‘This is (the sort of) book you were looking for.’

The usually anaphoric pronoun, *ia*, can also be used as a locative, combining, as it were, a new locus with an aforementioned object, as in:

- (36) *Ia e mena kai ke kai a koe.*
 it ABS thing eat REL eat ABS you
 ‘Here it is, the food for you.’

The demonstratives in Niuean make up a complex paradigm that cannot be easily categorised in terms of a universal spatio-referential system as proposed by Bennardo (1996b). The many contextual subtleties defy analysis by the expatriate linguist (at least within the realm of the present investigation).

4.3 Group 3

Tongan *'olunga* [above], *funga* [top], *fukahi* [top] and *tumu'aki* [peak] have as a special feature (shared only with 1 other item *mata* [front]) what is termed ‘increasing angle (a sub-unit of verticality)’. The Niuean equivalents are *luga*, *fuga* and *tumuaki*, but none exists for the Tongan *fukahi*.

Niuean *luga* [above, upon, over, top] is certainly a classical ‘spatial noun’ [PN **luga*, ‘above, top (locative noun)’], as exemplified in:

- (37) *Hake ki luga he akau!*
 go to top ART tree
 ‘Climb to the top of the tree!’

Note however that a fully reduplicated form, *lugaluga*, does not operate as a spatial noun, but rather as a verb meaning ‘to feel on the top of the world’.

There is less certainty about *fuga* [PN **fuga*, ‘(upper) surface’] for which I have no instances as occurring as a spatial noun. Various compounds with *fuga* as head certainly operate as common nouns only.

The word, *tumuaki*, has two specialised meanings, ‘top/height of achievement’ and ‘crown of head’, and it cannot be considered a spatial noun in Niuean as it fulfils none of the criteria required. The PN reconstruction of **tumuqaki* ‘top of head’ would point to a Tongan innovation if indeed Tongan *tumu'aki* is a spatial noun as claimed by Bennardo (1996b)—in Churchward’s 1959 *Tongan Dictionary* it is listed as a common noun and in Churchward’s (1953) *Tongan Grammar* it is explained as a ‘preposed noun’ entering into a compound-like structure with other nouns. Other such labelled nouns are *ve'e* [border], *funga* (see above) and *mata* [front]. Bennardo (1996b) however, makes the convincing case that these nouns should also be called ‘spatial nouns’ because they fit in with the grammatical and conceptual structures that apply to ‘spatial nouns’.

4.4 Group 4

The following 4 Tongan items *lalo* [below], *faliki* [bottom], *kilisi* [bottom] and *takele* [bottom] all share the unique conceptual feature of ‘decreasing angle’.

The equivalent Niuean, *lalo*, ‘below, under, beneath, bottom’ [PN **lalo*, ‘below, under’] is certainly classified as a local/spatial noun, as in:

- (38) *Kua nofo a ia i lalo he laulau.*
 T stay ABS he in below ART table
 ‘He sat under the table.’

Of the next 3 items, only *faliki* and *takele* have Niuean equivalents but they cannot be considered spatial nouns. However, before we detail them we should note that the 3 Tongan items are not cited by Churchward (1953, 1959) as either ‘local’ or ‘preposed’ nouns. Bennardo (1996b) notes that apart from Churchward’s items which all qualify as spatial nouns in the present scheme, additional items ‘turned up’ during Bennardo’s elicitations (the ones given are *kō*, *tuliki*, *fa’ahi*, *fukahi* and *kilisi*, but I cannot ascertain from the text how and where *faliki* and *takele* turn up). At any rate, Niuean *faliki* is given as ‘cover spread’ [PN **faaliki*, ‘cover floor with mats or grass; floor cover’] while *tākele* is only given as a verb meaning ‘to dwell, to be based’ (possibly derived from *kele* ‘ground’). In both items, however, we can see a connection with ‘bottom’ as evidently evolved in Tongan.

4.5 Group 5

This group of 3 items seems to have no unique features, but conceptually it is easy to see that *mu’a* [front], *mata* [front] and *mui* [back] are closely related. The Niuean equivalents of *mua* ‘front, in front of’ [PN **muqa*, ‘front, before’] and *mui* ‘bottom, back, behind’ [PN **muri*, ‘behind’] are firmly attested as local/spatial nouns. However, reduplicated forms of both *mua* and *mui* do not operate as spatial nouns even though some forms have clear spatial connotations.

The item, *mata*, is much more difficult to determine, not only because of many homonyms, but also as a fundamental word to do with ‘face, look, see, eye’. In virtually all Polynesian languages it has a wide semantic field and as such enters into a myriad of compounds and other lexical constructs.

The Niue dictionary (1997) recognises that, conceptually, *mata* can be used like a locative/spatial noun, but on syntactic grounds it is not. The particular *mata* so associated is given as a noun that only occurs in derivations, imparting meanings like ‘with sharp points, blades and cutting edges; the very tip, head or front of something’ [PN **mata*, ‘point, blade, cutting edge (of a weapon or instrument)’], as in:

- (39) *Kua tū a ia he mataulu he galue ke fakamatala.*
 T stand ABS he PREP head PREP feast REL speech
 ‘He stood at the head of the feast to make a speech.’

Note that *mataulu* (*mata* + *ulu*, front + head) takes the preposition *he* which is reserved for common nouns. Note also that Churchward (1959) categorises the Tongan, *mata*, as a preposed and not as local noun, and Bennardo (1996b) notes that *mata* was rarely elicited during his detailed investigations.

4.6 Group 6

The 2 Tongan items *to’omatu’a* [right] and *to’ohema* [left] (where *to’o* is prefixed) have their Niuean equivalents in *matau* ‘right (not left)’ [PN **mataqu*, ‘right (not left)’] and *hema* ‘left, to be left-handed’ [PN **sema*, ‘left, sinistral’]. Sperlich (1997) lists *matau* only as a qualifier and *hema* both as qualifier and verb. To indicate a nominal direction a lexical compound must be used by preposing the noun *faahi* ‘side’, hence *faahi matau* ‘right side’ and *faahi hema* ‘left side’. However, neither operates syntactically as local/spatial nouns. Interestingly the Tongan equivalent of *faahi* which is *fa’ahi* (see also next group) does operate

as a spatial noun while the Niuean word does not. Possibly the Tongan prefix *to'o* has the same function as the Niuean *faahi* in forming a nominal expression.

4.7 Group 7

Niuean *loto* [inside], *vaha'a* [space between] and *fa'ahi* [(in)side] appear to be distinguished as having only few conceptual features (some 4 or 5 out of a possible 18). Niuean, *loto*, too is used as a spatial noun, as in:

- (40) *Kua nofo a ia i loto he fale.*
 T stay ABS he in inside ART house
 'He stays inside the house.'

Of interest is that Niuean, *loto*, [PN **loto*, 'inside, lagoon'] also operates as a common noun meaning 'mind, heart' (as a metaphorical extension perhaps of the 'emotional inside') and as a verb meaning 'to wish, to desire (that is, heart's desire)'. As a fully reduplicated form *lotoloto* also has conceptual spatial meanings such as 'amongst, in the middle of' but is used syntactically only as a common noun or as a verb.

In the case of the Tongan, *vaha'a*, [space between] we have an interesting scenario for Niuean. While the equivalents *vahā* 'time, season, space' [PN **waa*, 'interval (of space or time)] and *vehā* 'space in between' (probably a variation of *vahā*) do not operate as spatial nouns, Niuean (as opposed to Tongan) has a local noun in *vaha* meaning 'horizon, expanse of the ocean' [PN **wasa*, 'open sea'], as in:

- (41) *Ne aalo a ia ki vaha.*
 T paddle ABS he to horizon
 'He paddled out to the horizon.'

Note that this is in contrast to another Niuean spatial noun (and which is only a common noun in Tongan), namely, *tahi*, which typically refers to the shallow part of the ocean close to land, as in:

- (42) *Ne hifo a ia ki tahi.*
 T down ABS he to sea
 'He went down to the sea.'

Interestingly though Niuean, *tahi*, can also operate as a common noun (with common noun marker *e*) when it means 'sea, sea water', as in:

- (43) *Nākai mitaki ke ō ke futi ika kaeke kua loka e tahi.*
 NEG good REL go REL catch fish when T rough ABS sea
 'It's dangerous going out fishing when the sea is rough.'

Finally, in this group we already had occasion (in group 4.6) to mention Niuean, *faahi*, as the equivalent of Tongan, *fa'ahi*. While conceptually Niuean, *faahi*, has various spatial connotations such as 'side, part, section, direction' it still does not operate syntactically as a spatial noun, as in (taking the locative preposition and article reserved for common nouns, *ke he*):

- (44) *Kua aalo fakatū atu haana a vaka ke he faahi uta*
 T paddle start thither his POSS canoe to ART direction east

ki loto.

to west

‘He paddled his canoe in an easterly to westerly direction.’

4.8 Group 8

In this second last group, Bennardo (1996b) lists 3 Tongan spatial nouns, namely *tu’a* [outside], *ve’e* [border] and *tafa’aki* [side]. The Niuean equivalent, *tua*, ‘back, behind, outside, over, beyond’ [PN **tuqa*, ‘back’] is a spatial noun covering a wide semantic field of locational concepts. An example is:

- (45) *Kua hopo e tama ki tua he pā.*
 T jump ABS child to back ART fence
 ‘The child jumped over the fence.’

The spatial noun, *tua*, is also used prefixing numerals which yield ordinals, especially in the context of layers of things.

No Niuean equivalents for *ve’e* and *tafa’aki* come to mind, unless the latter is derived from *fa’ahi* (Niuean, *faahi*) which is discussed in §4.7 (Group 7). The Niuean word for ‘border, side, edge’ is *kala*, but is not a spatial noun.

4.9 Group 9

There is only 1 member in this last group, *tuliki* [corner]. No Niuean equivalent comes to mind here either. A remotely corresponding item might be *tila* ‘edge, corner’, but again it is not a spatial noun.

4.10 Niuean spatial nouns with no direct Tongan equivalents

It is perhaps to be expected that just as Tongan has some spatial nouns without equivalents in Niuean, the case can be reversed. We have already come across 2 such items in §4.7, namely *vaha* ‘horizon, open expanse of ocean’ and *tahi* ‘shallow part of the sea’. An additional item related to the former is *tutavaha*, synonymous with *vaha*. It is not clear how one is derived from the other as the prefixed *tuta-* is not an extant word in Niuean. To exemplify its use:

- (46) *Ne aalo atu a ia ki tutavaha.*
 T paddle thither ABS he to deep sea
 ‘He paddled out to the (deep) sea.’

Also related to this land–sea configuration is the spatial noun, *uta*, ‘inland, shore, ashore’ [PN **quta*, ‘shore (from sea), inland (from shore)’], as in:

- (47) *Ne hake atu taha a ia ki uta.*
 T go thither one ABS he to inland
 ‘He went further inland.’

Last is *faho* ‘outside’ [PN **faho*, ‘outside’] as in:

- (48) *Kua nofo a ia i fafo mo e tagi.*
 T stay ABS he in outside and ABS cry
 'He stayed outside and cried.'

PN **fafo* is retained in Tongan in the compound, *felemofafo*, 'to go in and out' (Churchward 1959:19).

4.11 Summary of spatial nouns compared

While there is broad agreement between Niuean and Tongan spatial nouns, there are nevertheless some interesting differences. With Bennardo (1996b) listing some 25 Tongan spatial nouns, there are clearly far fewer in Niuean. One reason may be that Niuean spatial nouns are more tightly constrained syntactically. To do an in-depth comparison on that level would require an intimate knowledge of both Tongan and Niuean syntax (an interesting point uncovered for Niuean spatial nouns is, for example, the observation that such forms do not usually enter into derivational processes such as reduplication).

Idiosyncratic language evolution explains the phenomenon of having certain items which do not have equivalents in the other language. While Tongan and Niuean are closely related languages they are nevertheless mutually unintelligible.

5 Conclusion

Bennardo (1996b) in his paper on Tongan spatial nouns concludes that such investigations 'help us in our effort to obtain a better understanding of the human mind'. The present comparison between Tongan and Niuean spatial nouns (and some other spatial expressions) may be smaller in scope, but it may help in our understanding of closely related languages. In particular, it may help us to understand better how so-called universal concepts such as orientation space can find such a diverse range of expression even among two closely related languages. To do such a detailed study for Polynesian languages in general would further advance our appreciation of not only the leap from grammar to mind (if there is one) but also of the realisation that both conceptual and grammatical analyses bite their own tails.

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