

NIUEAN DETERMINERS: EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE*

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In this paper we examine the structure of the nominal phrase in Niuean, a Polynesian language of the Tongic subgroup, paying particular attention to the left peripheral functional elements. We will address the question whether there is any functional category in Niuean that can be considered to serve the function of determiner, as found in languages such as English and French.

1. Introduction

In much theoretical work on phrasal structure, attention has turned markedly towards functional elements and domains (eg. Zamparelli 1995), stemming from Szabolcsi (1983) and Abney (1987), who proposed that a standard nominal phrase such as “the dog” should be analyzed as a DP taking an NP complement, and not an NP with a determiner in specifier position. In languages such as English, determiners (strong – *the, every, both, SOME*, and weak – *few s'm*: Milsark 1977, 1979, Carlson 1980, Diesing 1992, Chung 2006, and others) are generally (a) obligatory and (b) left-most or highest in the phrase, thus the name for nominal phrases has come to be Determiner Phrase (DP) rather than Noun Phrase (NP). In this way, determiners have taken on a privileged status among all of the various functional elements that appear in nominal phrases, which include case, number, quantifiers, classifiers, gender markers etc. It is worth asking therefore, whether determiners are universal, that is, do all languages have such a category? In order to ask this, we have to first understand what determiners are.

In English, determiners play three roles. First the determiner is the top-level, obligatory item, which serves to turn a nominal phrase into an argument, usable by syntax. The second and third roles are more semantic. First, a determiner has a particular semantic property with respect to features of definiteness and specificity, thus serving to point to a constant or variable in the domain of discourse (Enç 1991, Reinhart 1997, Heim 1982, Kratzer 1998, Matthewson 1996, 1999 and others). Second, for many linguists, nouns are viewed as predicative, and it is in fact the determiner that provides referentiality. (For discussion see Carlson 1980, Chierchia 2001, Chierchia and Turner 1988, Dayal 1999.)

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Given these two functions of determiners, in asking whether determiners are universal, we can ask first, whether all languages have some top-level obligatory functional head, which serves to render a nominal phrase usable by syntax, and we can also ask if such heads necessarily have the same semantic functions of providing determination and referentiality in all languages.

With this background, when we turn to the examination of the nominal system of Niuean, several questions arise, as outlined in (1).

- (1) a. What are the functional categories in the Niuean nominal phrase, and how can they best be characterized?
- b. How do they compare with similar categories in other languages?
- c. Is there any category among them that plays the role of determiner?

In this paper we will begin to address these questions.

Before laying out the details of the Niuean nominal phrase, let us look briefly at the basic syntax of Niuean. Niuean is a verb-initial isolating language with an ergative-absolutive case marking system. A few sample sentences are provided in (2). In looking at the case system in Niuean, it is important to be aware that generally, case markers are portmanteau items, which also encode information as to whether the noun is proper or common. Pronouns are classified with proper nouns. In (2a), we see an Absolutive Proper case marker, and in (2b) we see an Absolutive Common case marker. In (2c) we find an Ergative Proper case marker and in (2d) we find an Ergative Common case marker.¹

¹ Abbreviations used in the glosses of this paper are: ABS absolutive, ANAPH temporal/locative anaphor, C common, CLASS classifier, DESID desiderative, DIR directional, EMPH emphatic, ERG ergative, GEN genitive, LIG ligature, LOC locative, NFUT nonfuture, REL relative, P proper, PERS personal, PL plural, PERF Perfect, PRED predicative, PRES present, PST past, Q question, SG singular, SRC course, 1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person. Data sources are: B&T: Blanc and Togakilo 1965, FN: field notes, KTN: Asekona et al 2005, LM: Martin and Emmitt 1994, LMR: "Languages of Manukau Region" interview data based on research program of Bell et al 2000, S: Seiter 1980, Sp: Sperlich 1997, THK: Cole and Kulatea 1996. See also Kaulima and Beaumont 2002.

- (2) a. Ne tohitohi **a** **Sione**.
 PST writing ABSP Sione
 ‘Sione was writing.’ (FN1997)
- b. Kua egaega **e** **kau** **kauvehe**.
 PERF rosy ABSC PL cheek
 ‘The cheeks are rosy.’ (Sp.55)
- c. Ko e tele **e** **Sione** a Sefa.
 PRES kick ERGP Sione ABSP Sefa
 ‘Sione is kicking Sefa.’ (S.73d:29)
- d. Ne kai **he** **pusi** ia e moa.
 PST eat ERGC cat that ABSC bird
 ‘That cat ate the chicken.’ (S.73a:29)

We now turn to a detailed look at the functional elements in the Niuean nominal phrase.

2. Functional Elements in the Niuean Nominal Phrase

The chart below represents the principal ordering of elements in the Niuean nominal phrase (Massam and Sperlich 2000, Seiter 1980)

(3)

PREPOSITION	CASE	ARTICLE	QUANTIFIER	NUMBER	CLASSIFIER	NOUN	ADJECTIVE	NUMERAL	DEMONSTRATIVE	POSSESSOR	RELATIVE CLAUSE
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The element farthest from the noun in the left periphery is the preposition. It is somewhat outside of the nominal domain, but is included in this representation because of its interaction with case, which will be examined below. An instance of the source preposition, *mai*, can be found in example (4).

- (4) mai he falu a aelani
 SRC LOCC some island
 ‘from other islands’ (S:38:101)

The next element is a case marker, and following that, an article encoding the aforementioned proper-common distinction. We consider these to be separate morphemes on an abstract level, although the two elements are realized phonologically as a single morpheme encoding both case and article meanings. An example of this is in (5), where locative case, *h*, and common article, *e*, appear together as *he*. We return below to a discussion of prepositions, case, and the proper/common article.

- (5) he tau atu motu
 LOCC PL CLASS island
 ‘on a group of islands’ (B&T)

Following this we may find an element with quantificational properties. A number of types of morphemes may appear in this position, such as those listed below:

- (6) **Quantifiers:** *loga* “many”, *gāhoa* “few”, *taha* “a/one”, *falu a* “some”.

They include “true” quantifiers, such as *loga*, and the quantificational article *taha*, exemplified in (7) and (8), respectively.

- (7) (e) loga e tau mena fakaaloga
 ABSC many LIG PL thing gift
 ‘many gifts’ (THK)

- (8) he taha tagata ha kuki
 GENC a man GENP Cook
 ‘of a man of Cook’s’ (THK)

Possessors and numerals can occur either pre- or post-nominally, and in pre-nominal position they appear in the quantifier slot. An example of a prenominal possessor is in (9a), and a pre-nominal numeral is in (10a). For comparative purposes, examples of the post-nominal alternative to each are provided in (9b) and (10b).

- (9) a. e [ha Sione]a leo
 ABSC GENP Sione LIG voice
 ‘Sione’s voice’ (S:1980:92b)
- b. e leo [ha Sione]
 ABSC voice GENP Sione
 ‘Sione’s voice/voice of Sione’ (FN.97)

- (10) a. [toko-lima] e tagata loloa
 PERS-five LIG persontall
 ‘five tall people’ (de Sousa 2001:33)
- b. Maori [toko-ua]
 Maori PERS-three
 ‘three Maoris’ (B&T)

Numerals with human nouns bear the personal prefix *toko-*. In nominal phrases with quantifiers, absolutive case marking is optional. When possessors and numerals occur in quantifier position, they do so followed by a ligature item, *a* or *e*, which also occurs with some quantifiers (eg. *valu a*, *loga e*, *gāhoa e*) (Kahnemuyipour and Massam 2006). The quantifiers *taha* ‘a,one’ and *ha* ‘backgrounded’ (to be discussed below) appear with no ligature item. These differences and similarities between the quantifier slot elements are worthy of further study.

Following the quantifier, possessor, or numeral is a morpheme encoding number, either null (singular) or *tau* (plural), which can be seen in (5). Although they appear in a different slot from number itself, most quantifiers also bear inherent number information. For example, *taha* is singular, as it always refers to one indefinite item, and *loga* is plural, as it refers to many.

The final item on the left periphery of the noun is what we have termed a “quasi-classifier”. These encode meaning as to the type of noun, but they do not behave like true classifiers (see for eg. Cheng and Sybesma 1999). An example is in (5), where *atu* signifies a group or row of items, in this case islands. The complete list of classifiers can be found below.

- (11) **(Quasi-) Classifiers:** *atu* ‘row, group’, *lafu* ‘family group’, *nā* ‘pair’, *kau* ‘organized group of people’.

Although these items encode number, and can appear instead of the plural marker *tau*, they are considered to be in a separate category. Evidence for this is that they can also co-occur with *tau*, as shown in example (5).

We return now to further discussion of the items on the far left of the noun phrase. The interactions between prepositions, case, and the proper-common article have been noted in the literature on Niuean on several occasions. For example, Seiter (1980) collapses the three into one category called Case, as shown below in (12) (and see Chung 1978, Clark 1976).

- (12) Niuean Cases (as analyzed by Seiter 1980)

	<u>ABS</u>	<u>ERG</u>	<u>LOC</u>	<u>GOAL</u>	<u>POSS</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
COMMON	e	he	he	ke he	he	mai he
PROPER	a	e	i	ki	ha	mai

However, further examination of this paradigm shows that the data is capable of a finer morphological analysis, and we provide ours in (13).

(13) Niuean Functional Elements (as analyzed in this paper)

a. Common

	Prep	Case	Art _{pr/c}	Q	#	Class'r
Abs			<i>e</i>	<i>taha</i>	<i>tau</i>	<i>kau</i>
Erg		<i>h</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>falu a</i>	Null	<i>lafu</i>
Gen		<i>h</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>gāhoa</i>		etc.
Loc		<i>h</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>loga</i>		
Goal	<i>ke</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>e</i>	etc.		
Source	<i>mai</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>e</i>			
Ben	<i>ma</i>		<i>e</i>			
Comit	<i>mo</i>		<i>e</i>			
Instr	<i>aki</i>		<i>e</i>			

b. Proper

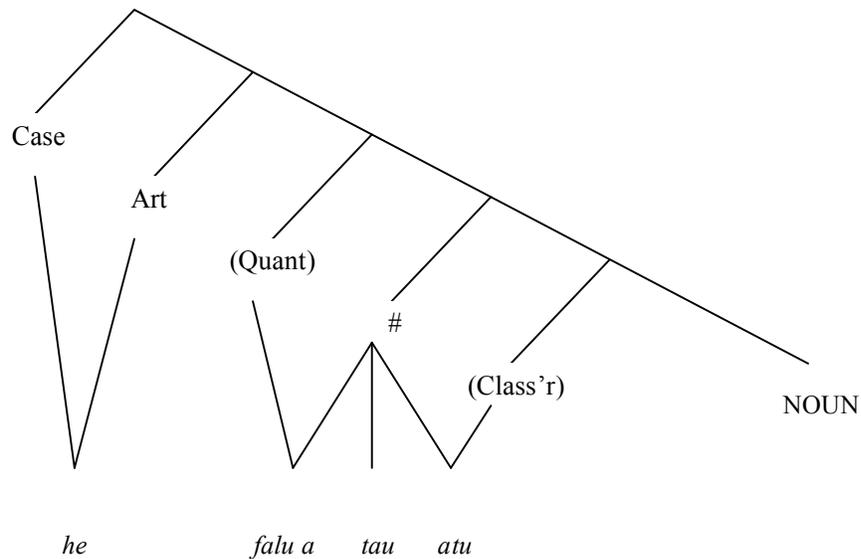
	Prep	Case +	Art _{pr/c}	Q	#	Class'r
Abs		<i>a</i>				
Erg		<i>e</i>				
Gen		<i>h</i>				<i>a</i> (Human)
Loc		<i>i</i>				<i>a</i> (Human)
Goal	<i>k</i>	<i>i</i>				<i>a</i> (Human)
Source	<i>mai</i>	(<i>i</i>)				<i>a</i> (Human)
Ben	<i>ma</i>					
Comit	<i>mo</i>					
Instr	<i>aki</i>					<i>a</i> (Human)

The first chart in (13) shows the common paradigm. On the far left are the prepositions, which only appear in the oblique cases: goal, source, benefactive, comitative and instrumental. After the preposition is the case marker, which is null in absolutive, benefactive, comitative and instrumental. Next there is a common article *e*. Following this is the position for quantifiers, followed by the number markers and finally the quasi-classifiers.

The second chart in (13) shows the proper paradigm. The proper class includes proper nouns and pronouns. As with the common series, the first column contains the prepositions in the oblique cases. Following the prepositions are the case markers, which in contrast to the common ones, are varied in this series. Number is never overt with proper nouns and they are always interpreted as singular, however number does appear with pronouns. Finally there is a proper quasi classifier *a*, which never occurs in absolutive, ergative, benefactive or comitative, and only occurs when the following noun is human.

The tree structure diagram for the left edge of the Niuean NP is found in (14), with each of the left periphery elements represented as a functional head.

(14) Schematic diagram of morpho-syntactic relations (see (5) and (15))



The lines connecting case and article show the aforementioned relationship between these two elements. What is interesting to note is the interaction between the other three morphemes – quantifier, number, and classifier. Quantifier can encode number, however as we can see below in example (15), number can also be independent, as the phrase contains both the quantifier *falu a* and the plural marker *tau*. We have yet to determine the conditions under which the two can and cannot co-occur. Similarly, classifier always encodes number, specifically plurality, but as can be seen in the above example (5), number can also occur separately, as (5) contains both *tau* and *atu*.

(15) ti kitia ai he falu a tau fuata Niue a lautolu
 then see ANAPH ERGC some PL youth Niue ABSP they'
 'Then some young Niueans like themselves met them.' (KTN)

This completes our examination of the pre-nominal items in the Niuean nominal phrase. To the right of the noun are adjectives, demonstratives and relative clause markers, as well as the alternate slots for numerals and possessors mentioned above. We set aside adjectives, relative clauses and demonstratives in this paper, simply noting that demonstratives are optional and in Niuean they do not function like determiners.

3. The Distributed Niuean Determiner

Now let us return to the question of whether any of these elements in the Niuean nominal phrase are comparable to the category of determiner. Recall the three principle functions of determiners. The first principle function of a determiner, as mentioned above, is that it is the top-level obligatory element that allows a noun to be treated by syntax. In this case, the case-article combination seems to be the prime candidate for determiner function, since it is obligatory for all grammatical arguments, namely subjects, objects, and objects of prepositions.

A determiner's second principle function is to provide the semantics of definiteness and specificity. On the one hand, this does not seem to be as relevant in Niuean as in a language such as English (contra Krupa 1982), an important point which will be further discussed below. On the other hand, the case-article morpheme does contain a proper-common feature providing a value for uniqueness, and might therefore be considered to belong in the semantics of determination.

The third function of the determiner is to provide the potential to refer. It is somewhat difficult to determine where this property comes in, however there is a clue in non-referential noun-incorporation contexts, as in (29) below. The best candidate for this role seems to be number because it (and all functional heads to its left) is ungrammatical in these contexts. Number, whether encoded in the quantifier, the classifier, or on its own, is the right-most feature not permitted in non-referential incorporation contexts: as soon as number is added, the noun must be referential (Massam 2001).

Thus, the features associated with determiners are found distributed across the functional heads in the Niuean nominal phrase, as illustrated in (16).

- (16) (a) Top-level, Obligatory, Allows nouns to be treated by syntax.
 =Case+Article
- (b) Semantics of definiteness/specificity
 = Not present (see below) or possibly Case+Article (if proper/common feature is equivalent to definiteness)
- (c) Provides potential to refer
 =Possibly Number – as encoded in Number, Quantifiers and Classifiers (illicit in non-referential NI contexts)

4. The Non-Existent Determiner

In this section, we will examine the differences between the semantic roles of the English determiner system and those of the Niuean functional heads of the left periphery of the nominal phrase with respect to definiteness and specificity.

The English determiner system encodes a definiteness distinction throughout; the English indefinite determiner further encodes a covert specificity distinction.

As we have shown, several functions of the English determiner are distributed over the Niuean pre-nominal functional projections. This, along with an intuition that specificity and definiteness are central to the semantics of determiners invites the hypothesis that Niuean also distributes the specificity and definiteness distinctions. We will demonstrate, however, that definiteness and specificity are not marked in Niuean, at least not in their usual uses. We will go on to propose a new hypothesis based on discourse novelty and salience.

4.1 Previous Analysis

In many familiar languages such as English and French, definiteness and specificity are encoded either overtly or covertly, and form an important part of their determiner systems. Seiter (1980) provides an analysis of the Niuean system of pre-nominal functional heads along these lines. Seiter uses number, definiteness, and specificity as the dimensions along which he organizes the Niuean morphemes. This analysis is given in chart form in (17).

(17) Analysis proposed by Seiter (1980)

		[-DEFINITE]		[+DEFINITE]	
		[-PLURAL]	[+PLURAL]	[-PLURAL]	[+PLURAL]
[-SPECIFIC]		<i>taha</i>			
		<i>ha</i>			
		\emptyset	<i>tau</i>	\emptyset	<i>tau</i>
			<i>falu a</i>		
[+SPECIFIC]		<i>taha</i>			
		\emptyset			

We will show that this analysis is descriptively accurate, but fails to predict in many cases which morpheme is to be used in a given context.

Firstly, Seiter's analysis correctly describes the distribution of *tau*: it only occurs in [+PLURAL] phrases. An example can be seen in (18). Seiter is correct in assigning the [+PLURAL] property to *falu a*, as well, as is shown in (19).

(18) ko e tau moa vao
 Pred ABSC PL wild.chicken
 '∅ wild fowls' (KTN)

- (19) ka e moua agaia ni **valu a** fua
 but have still EMPH **valu a** nut
 ‘that is why **some** coconuts...’
- ne nākai fai puke a lotu
 REL.NFUT not have juice inside
 ‘...have no milk inside from then till now.’ (KTN)

It seems that Seiter has conflated the categories of number and quantifier: *tau* has been placed in the same category as *valu a*. While the quantifiers (*valu a* and *taha*) do encode number, the plural quantifier *valu a* can co-occur with the plural number marker *tau*, as seen in (15). With respect to descriptive accuracy, the pair of examples in (20) show that *tau* can be used in both definite and indefinite phrases: in (20a), the group from Tonga had been introduced earlier in the discourse, which necessarily implies that it is definite. In (20b), *tau* appears in an existential construction, and is therefore indefinite.

- (20) a. ati hāhā ai agataha mo e pehē ai e **tau**
 then ask ANAPH immediately and say ANAPH ABSC **PL**
 ‘So **the** group from Tonga told the reason...’
- fuata mai he motu ko Tonga
 youth SRC LOCC island PRED Tonga
 ‘...(why they were visiting)’ (KTN)
- b. ha ha i ai e **tau** vahega
 EXIST ABSC **PL** class
 ‘...there were **some** classes...’ (LMR)

Similarly, it can be seen in (21) that the null quantifier can also be used both in definite nominal phrases, such as (21a), where the octopus in question had already been discussed; and in indefinite phrases, such as (21b), which contains the first mention of a Cook Islander in the discourse.

- (21) a. kua keli tuai e ia e **Ø** feke ti mate
 PERF beat PERF ERGP 3SG ABSC **Ø** octopus then die
 ‘She beat **the** octopus and it died.’ (NAH)
- b. ka e iloa nakai e koe ka pehē ko e **Ø** Atu Luga
 but know Q ERG.P 2SG if be.like PRED ABSC **Ø** Cook.Isl’r
 ‘But how would you know if it was **a** Cook Islander?’ (LMR)

From example (22), we can see that *tau* can also be used in specific contexts, as exemplified by (22a). In this example, the group that *tau fuata* refers to is a particular identifiable group. In (22b), however, *tau* is used in a nonspecific nominal phrase: here, *tau manu* does not refer to any birds in particular.

- (22) a. ne tā agataha e fakataki he tau fuata
REL.NFUT stand immediately ABSC leader GENC PL youth
'...when a leader from a Niuean group...'
- mai Niue mo e pehē atu
SRCP Niue and say DIR2
'...spoke to them...' (KTN)
- b. kua fia manaho a lautolu ke he tau manu
PERF DESID want ABSP 3PL GOAL LOCC PL bird
'They wanted Ø birds.' (KTN)

Since *tau* is not a quantifier but rather a number marker, it would not be expected to encode either definiteness or specificity. This is borne out by the fact that *tau* can occur in all plural contexts, whether definite or indefinite, specific or nonspecific.

The fact, though, that the null quantifier can occur freely in either definite or indefinite phrases casts doubt on the assertion that there is a definiteness contrast which runs through the Niuean system of prenominal functional heads. It seems then that the definiteness contrast is not a fundamental one in the Niuean system. There is, however, a clear instance of a definiteness contrast in that *taha* and *falu a* only occur in indefinite contexts.

In terms of specificity, the pattern repeats itself: the null quantifier can also appear in either a clearly specific phrase, such as *e Ø hetu* in (23a); or a nonspecific phrase, such as *he Ø hala o hui* in (23b).

- (23) a. liti hifo he tagata e Ø hetu
throw down ERGC person ABSC Ø comb
'...the man threw down a comb.' (NAH)
- b. o e tau tagata he Ø hala o hui
go;PL ABSC PL person LOCC Ø footpath
'People go on Ø footpaths.' (LM)

The same is true of *taha* and *falu a*, which can both indeed be used in both specific and nonspecific contexts. For example, in (24a), *taha tama* refers to a specific child, whereas in (24b), *taha tagata* does not refer to any particular person, but rather asks where any person would go to get help. With respect to *falu a*, a [+SPECIFIC] example is given in (25a), and an instance of [-SPECIFIC] use can be seen in (25b).

- (24) a. ne o a maua mo e taha tama ki
REL PST go.PL ABSP 1DU.EXCL COMC taha child GOALP
'I went with another child to...'
- Alofi
Alofi
'...Alofi' (S:40:105b)

- b. fano ki fē e **taha** tagata
 go.SG GOALP where ABSC **taha** person
 ‘Where does a person go...?’

ke moua taha lagomatai
 in.order.to get taha help
 ‘...to get help?’ (S.106a)

- (25) a. loga he tau tau kua mole atu, ne ha ha i ai
 many GENC PL year REL past DIR2 PST EXIST
 ‘Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was...’

falu a fuata mai i Tonga ne ō atu ai
falu a youth SRCP Tonga RELNFUT go.PL DIR2 ANAPH
 ‘...a group of young Tongans who arrived...’

ke he motu ko Niue
 GOAL LOCC island PRED Niue
 ‘at Niue Island.’ (KTN)

- b. e, e fakamua, ha ha i ai e tau hāhā e mogonei, fa e hāhā e haaku ka
 hāhā atu ki a ko e mogonei, a, ke lata ia ma e vagahau Niue,
 fakamua, to oti mogoia, ke ua aki, liu au mogoia ke hāhā atu e tau
 hāhā e ke lata ia mo e vagahau pālagi, ti oti mogoia ti liu ai e hāhā
 atu e tau hāhā e ke lata ia mo e vagahau, **falu a** vagahau foki ka
 eke kua fai.

Q: “...yes, yes firstly, there some questions here now, I have four
 questions here that I will ask you now, mm, for the Niue language,
 firstly, and then when finished then, secondly, I will again ask
 these questions for the English language, and then, I will again ask
 these questions for the language, **some other** languages if there are
 any.” (LMN)

Since any of the quantifiers can appear in either specific or nonspecific phrases, it seems that specificity is not contrastive in this system. This, along with the fact that definiteness only seems to make a difference in that *taha* and *falu a* never occur in definite contexts, strongly suggests that definiteness and specificity are simply not the right featural dimensions along which Niuean nominal functional elements are organized.

In fact, other than the lack of [+DEFINITE] occurrences of *taha* and *falu a*, the only role that definiteness or specificity plays is incidental: phrases with proper nouns, which in Niuean use a different series of case markers from the common nouns (as discussed above), are necessarily always fully unique; but phrases with common nouns may freely vary along the dimensions of definiteness and specificity. Whether this proper/common distinction is parallel in any formal or functional way to the English definite/indefinite distinction, is an open question.

4.2 A New Hypothesis

We propose that, instead of definiteness and specificity distinctions, the relevant feature for Niuean quantifier choice is a combination of discourse novelty and discourse salience. We have termed this feature [NEW/FOCUS]. Our preliminary study of the use of Niuean pre-nominal functional heads points towards the analysis in (26). Note that the number marker *tau* is only optional if something else (such as *falu a*) carries the [+PLURAL] feature.

(26) New Hypothesis

	[-PLURAL]	[+PLURAL]
	\emptyset	<i>(tau)</i> <small>optional</small>
NEW/FOCUS	<i>taha</i>	<i>falu a</i>
UNMARKED		\emptyset
BACKGROUNDED		<i>ha</i>
NON-REFERENTIAL		noun incorporation

When a new participant is introduced and that participant is focused, either *taha* or *falu a* is used (*taha* for [-PLURAL], *falu a* for [+PLURAL]). In (27a), for example, *taha* is used to introduce a participant, the octopus, which goes on to be important in the following sentences of the source text. That same octopus is referenced later in the text, and, while it is still an important participant in the discourse, it is no longer new, so it is marked not with *taha*, but with the null quantifier. This example can be found in (27b). Conversely, new participants that are not particularly discourse salient also take the null quantifier, as can be seen with “comb” in (23a). Both conditions of discourse novelty and discourse salience must be fulfilled in order to take a NEW/FOCUS morpheme.

- (27) a. ne kitia e ia e **taha** feke lahi
 PST see ERGP 3SG ABSC **taha** octopus big
 ‘Near the reef edge she saw **an** octopus...’
- ti oho atu a ia ke tapaki
 then jump DIR2 ABSP 3SG in.order.to catch
 ‘...and jumped at it to catch it.’ (NAH)
- b. kua keli tuai e ia e \emptyset feke ti mate
 PERF beat PERF ERGP 3SG ABSC \emptyset octopus then die
 ‘She beat **the** octopus and it died.’ (NAH)

The morphemes *taha* and *faʻlu a* can also be used to indicate contrastive focus, which lends credence to the NEW/FOCUS analysis. Note the use of the English words *other* and *another* in the translations of examples (24a) and (25b).

This hypothesis also explains why *taha* and *faʻlu a* appear only in [-DEFINITE] phrases: since newly introduced participants cannot be [+DEFINITE] (as they cannot be assumed to be familiar to the hearer), *taha* and *faʻlu a*, which only occur when the referent of the phrase is new to the discourse, can never appear in [+DEFINITE] phrases.

4.3 Backgrounding

One quantifier, *ha*, remains to be discussed. While we have not looked at *ha* extensively, it seems that *ha* is used in backgrounded contexts of reduced referentiality (cf. Chung and Ladusaw 2004). This can be seen in example (28). In this way, the use of *ha* is like the use of noun incorporation, which can be seen in example (29).

(28) fanogonogo nakai a koe ke he **ha** fakamatalaaga
listen Q ABSP 2SG GOAL LOCC **ha** speech
'Did you listen to a speech...'

he fonoaga
LOCC meeting
'...at the meeting?' (S.110d)

(29) takafaga ika tūmau nī a ia
hunt fish always EMPH ABSP 3SG
'He is always fishing (=fish-hunting).' (S.184a)

Our hypothesis outlined in (26) states that *ha* is used for highly non-salient, backgrounded participants in the discourse. Noun incorporation, in contrast, is used when a nominal phrase is entirely backgrounded so as to no longer constitute an argument or participant. In this case, the noun takes on a modification function, as has been discussed by many, including Mithun (1984) and Massam (2001).

5. Conclusion

Our conclusions regarding the status of determiner in Niuean are as follows.

- Case+Article and Number are obligatory categories and each has some determiner-like properties (top-level, referentiality)
- No Niuean pre-nominal element encodes definiteness or specificity, but proper/common is encoded rigidly in Case+Art
- Hypothesis: Focus (new salient information/contrastive) is a key feature in Niuean pre-nominal morphology

A remaining research question is: What is the typological relation between the definiteness/specificity dimension, the proper/common dimension, and the proposed new and focused dimension? Further examination of these issues will allow us to determine whether the category of determiner is universal across languages.

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