4 *Inside and outside Niuean space*

WOLFGANG B. SPERLICH

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

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)

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 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)

(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

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 *fafo* 'outside' [PN **fafo*, '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.

References

Bennardo, G., 1996a, Towards a computational approach to spatial cognition: representing spatial relationships in Tongan language and culture. Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois.

1996b, A conceptual analysis of Tongan spatial nouns: from grammar to mind. MS and paper delivered at the 3rd International Conference on Oceanic Linguistics, Waikato, 7–15 January, 1996.

Biggs, B., n.d., A theory of verb classes in Niuean. MS.

Churchward, C.M., 1953, *Tongan grammar.* Nuku'alofa, Tonga: Vava'u Press.

1959, *Tongan dictionary.* Nuku'alofa, Tonga: Government Press.

Clark, R., 1976, *Aspects of Proto-Polynesian.* Auckland: Linguistic Society of New Zealand.

Finney, B.R., 1979, Voyaging. In J.D. Jennings, ed. *The prehistory of Polynesia*, 323–351. Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Kirikiri, R., 1974, Aspects of the case for Niuean. MA thesis: University of Auckland.

Krupa, V., 1982, *The Polynesian languages.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Loeb, E.M., 1926, *History and traditions of Niue.* Hawai'i: Bernice P. Bishop Museum.

McEwen, J.M., 1970, *Niue dictionary.* Department of Maori and Island Affairs: Wellington, New Zealand.

Pawley, A., 1966, Polynesian languages: a subgrouping based on shared innovations in morphology. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 75:39–64.

POLLEX (version 1991), Polynesian comparative lexicon project. (B. Biggs and R. Clark, eds) Database: University of Auckland.

Seiter, W., 1980, *Studies in Niuean syntax.* New York: Garland Press.

Sperlich, W.B., 1997, *Niuean dictionary.* Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press.