

ONE POST-PREDICATE YES-NO QUESTION PARTICLE IN NIUEAN: WHERE DID IT COME FROM AND WHY DOES IT OCCUR WHERE IT DOES?

Donna Starks and Diane Massam

University of Auckland and University of Toronto

This paper considers data from the Niuean language, a Western Polynesian language with VSO word order and an extensive range of grammatical particles. These include pre-verbal particles, tense-aspect-mood [TAM] and negation, and a wide range of post-predicate particles, including the three yes-no question particles, *nakai*, *kia* and *ka*. In closely related languages the preferred means of forming a yes-no question is by intonation alone (i.e., NZ Maori, Samoan, Pukapukan, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan etc). Polynesian languages with yes-no question particles have forms which are lexically distinct to those found in Niuean (i.e., Samoan, Pukapukan, Tuvaluan). Further, in surveys of VSO languages, question particles typically occur in the left-most periphery of the clause (Haspelmath 2001); in Niuean the yes-no question particle occurs in post-predicate position (Seiter 1980).

Our paper presents an overview of the yes-no question particle *nakai* in Niuean, its functions and behaviour followed by an analysis of the origin of the particle using examples from elicitation and interview data. We argue that the unmarked question particle is derived from the negative. NEG and Q share a number of semantic properties, and in many languages this is reflected in similar form (Vietnamese *khong*) or behaviour (German word order) (see Haspelmath 2001; Saddock & Zwicky 1985). Although there is compelling evidence (phonological, semantic, comparative, historical and typological), Niuean NEG (*nākai* and *ai*) and Q (*nakai*) differ in their syntactic position. We argue that underlyingly, they occupy the same syntactic slot since they have similar co-occurrence restrictions (e.g. neither form of NEG can occur in a *nakai* question). Horn's (1989) Principles of Negation help account for both the different syntactic positions of Neg and Q and for the relative position of NEG. They do not explain, however, why Niuean Q occurs in post-predicate position. We posit that the position of the yes-no question particle is the result of its origin. In Proto-Polynesian and in most of the other daughter languages, the negative is a verb (Chung 1970 as qtd in Payne 1988). We show that although NEG has become a particle in Niuean, it has a number of residual verb-like properties (i.e., Neg raising). Horn & Yato (2000) have argued that NEG and Q differ in their scope. We posit that the position of Q may be another residual property from its original verbal status, and that this unusual characteristic may not only account for the post-predicate position of Q, but could provide a potential explanation as to why Niuean has more than one question particle.

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Contact: Dr. Donna Starks, Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics,
University of Auckland, PB 92019, Auckland, New Zealand
Ph: 61-7-4636-8602, Email: d.starks@auckland.ac.nz

Prof. Diane Massam, Department of Linguistics, 130 St. George St. Rm 1766,
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 3H1
Ph: 416 978-1766, Fax: 416 9712688, Email: diane.massam@utoronto.ca