

Niuean *nākai* as a negative verb: Implications for the derivation of V1 order*

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SUMMARY

This paper considers the role of propositional negation in Niuean (Polynesian) in the derivation of verb-initial word order in the language, which is standardly treated as VP(-remnant)-movement (Massam 2001). The negation strategy used in declarative verbal clauses has received both a negative particle (Massam 2009) and a negative auxiliary (e.g. Veselinova 2014) account. This paper argues that *nākai* is best characterized as negative verb, which is more easily reconciled with an X^0 -raising account of Niuean clause structure as compared to a VP(-remnant)-movement account. One benefit of this analysis is that it is consistent with the Head Movement Constraint (Travis 1984), which is a desirable outcome in a language that otherwise obeys the locality conditions we associate with roll-up head movement.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie le rôle de la négation propositionnelle en niuéen (polynésien) dans la dérivation de l'ordre des mots verbe-initial dans la langue, ce que l'on considère habituellement comme mouvement SV (restant) (Massam 2001). La stratégie de négation employée dans les propositions déclaratives verbales a fait l'objet d'interprétations par le biais de particules de négation (Massam 2009) et d'auxiliaires de négation (par ex. Veselinova 2014). Cet article avance que *nākai* devrait être classé comme verbe de négation, ce qui concorde plus facilement avec un modèle de X^0 montant des structures propositionnelles niuéennes comparé au modèle de mouvement SV (restant). Un avantage de cette analyse est qu'elle concorde avec la Contrainte de mouvement de tête (Travis 1984), ce qui est une conséquence souhaitable dans une langue qui obéit autrement aux conditions de localité que l'on associe au mouvement de tête roll up.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Niuean (Austronesian; Polynesian subgroup) is a language in which the major constituents of the clause typically surface in VSO order. As is the case for many predominantly VSO languages, successive cyclic head movement (Travis 1984) straightforwardly accounts for most aspects of Niuean clause structure.¹ Yet, Niuean word order is typically treated as an instance of VP-(remnant) movement, following Massam’s (2001) influential paper on pseudo-noun incorporation (PNI). Indeed, the VOS order of PNI constructions cannot be captured by V⁰-raising alone. On Massam’s account, VOS order is derived via VP-movement, while canonical VSO order arises when DP objects are evacuated from the VP before VP-fronting ensues. An alternative account is found in Clemens (2014), where the verb undergoes V⁰-raising in both VSO and PNI clauses, but a high-ranking constraint on prosodic well-formedness results in the repositioning of non-phasal objects into a position adjacent to the verb in PNI contexts.

The purpose of the present paper is to consider how Niuean’s system of propositional negation might inform our understanding of Niuean clause structure more generally. One of two assumptions is typically made about the negation strategy used in declarative verbal clauses. The negative marker *nākai* is alternatively treated as a negative auxiliary (e.g. Veselinova 2014) or a negative particle (Massam 2009). Drawing on a comparison between Niuean and closely related Tongan and Māori, I argue that *nākai* is better characterized as negative verb and discuss the implications of this analysis for the derivation of verb-initial word order in Niuean with particular attention to the VP-(remnant) raising and V⁰-raising analyses.

2 NEGATION DATA

2.1 NIUEAN

Niuean’s negative marker *nākai* (italicized in the examples that follow) typically surfaces before the main verb and after the T/A marker, as shown in (1) below.²

- (1) Kua *nākai* gahua mitaki e tau hokohoko he tino haana.
 PFV NEG work MAN ABS PL nerves GEN body POSS
 ‘His nerves are not functioning well.’ (Sperlich 1997: 123)

In clause-initial position when no TAM marker is present, *nākai* is optionally realized as *ai*. Distributional differences between *nākai* and *ai* have not been systematically investigated; however,

¹ For more on the nature of head movement see Baker (1988); Rizzi (1990); Chomsky (2001); Matushansky (2006); Roberts (2010); Harizanov and Gribanova (to appear); Preminger (to appear) and others.

² Abbreviations used in glosses are as follows: 1, 2, 3 – person markers; ABS – absolutive; CAUS – causative; CLF – classifier; COMTV – comitative; DEF – definite; DEPT – dependent tense; DET – determiner; DU – dual; EMPH – emphatic; ERG – ergative; GEN – genitive; GL – goal; INTERR – interrogative; LK – linker; LOC – locative; MAN – manner; NEG – negation; NSP – nonspecific; PASS – passive; PFV – perfective; PERS – person; PL – plural; POSS – possessive; PST – past; PRED.NOM – nominal predicate; PRED.LOC – locative predicate; REDUP – reduplicative; SG – singular; SUB – subjunctive; T/A – tense/aspect.

speakers report that *ai* is a short form of *nākai* and that the choice between *nākai* and *ai* does not change the meaning of the sentence. An example is given in (2):

- (2) *(Nāk)ai* manako a au ke he vala povi.
 NEG like ABS 1SG LOC GL portion cow
 ‘I do not like beef.’ *author’s notes*

Although the negative marker typically precedes the main verb, certain aspectual particles can surface between them (Seiter 1980). Below, *lā* ‘just/yet’ and the perfective marker *tuai* (both shown in bold) are given in affirmative and negative clauses. In affirmative contexts, these aspectual particles follow the main verb, as shown in (3), while in negative contexts, they follow the negative marker and precede the main verb, as shown in (4).

- (3) a. Mai **lā** taha vala vai tote.
 give just NSP piece water little
 ‘Give me some water!’ (Seiter 1980: 21)
- b. Moua **tuai** e au.
 find PFV ERG 1SG
 ‘I’ve found it.’ (Haia 2010: 263)
- (4) a. Kua motua tuai e futi ka e *nākai* **lā** hio ia e moamoa.
 PFV mature PFV ABS banana but LK NEG yet cut PASS ABS end
 ‘The banana has matured but the end has not been cut off yet.’ (Sperlich 1997: 225)
- b. Kua *nākai* **tuai** liu e tahi.
 PFV NEG PFV turn ABS sea
 ‘The tide has not turned.’ (Seiter 1980: 26)

The non-neutral interrogative marker *kia*, also surfaces between *nākai* and the main verb, as in (5):

- (5) a. Tokotoko agaia **kia** e fuakau he fano?
 cane still INTERR ABS old.man in go
 ‘Does the old man still walk with a cane.’
- b. *Nākai* **kia** kitia e koe e lā tokoluga?
 NEG INTERR see ERG 2.SG ABS sun high
 ‘Didn’t you see the sun high?’ (Seiter 1980: 25-26)

Finally, we will also consider the structure of *nākai fakaai*, which is used both in isolation and in clausal contexts. When used alone, *nākai fakaai* translates into English ‘never’. In clausal contexts, like those shown in (6), *nākai fakaai* embeds a dependent clause headed by *ke*. The negative marker *fakaai* has been described as an ‘emphatic negative’ and ‘negative intensifier’ (Seiter 1980; Sperlich 1997) and it is only ever used in combination with (*nāk)ai*.

- (6) a. *Nākai fakaai* au ke ō mo koe.
 NEG EMPH 1.SG DEP.T go COMTV 2.SG
 ‘I would never go with you.’ (Sperlich 1997:45)

- b. *Nākai fakaai* taha ke age ha mena ki a ia.
 NEG EMPH NSP DEP.T give NSP thing LOC ABS 3.SG
 ‘No one at all gave him anything.’ (Tregear and Smith 1907: 29)

Section 2.4 discusses *nākai fakaai* in greater detail and in the context of two other Polynesian languages: Māori (Nuclear Polynesian) and Tongan, Niuean’s closest relative.

2.2 MĀORI NEGATION

Māori expresses basic propositional negation with the negative stative verb *hore*, which embeds an affirmative clause to form a bi-clausal structure (Hohepa 1969; Bauer 1981, 1983; Chung 1970, 1978; Waite 1987). The negative verb *hore* combines with its T/A marker and might surface as *kaaore*, *kaahore*, or *kaare* (Bauer 1993).

- (7) Māori standard negation
- a. I te whakarongo a Hera.
 T/A listen PERS Hera
 ‘Hera was listening.’
- b. *Kaahore* a Hera_i i te whakarongo _____i.
 T/A.NEG PERS Hera T/A listen
 ‘Hera was not listening.’ (Bauer 1993: 140)

Māori is V1 language (7a), and while SVO clauses are also possible, definite subjects like *a Hera* do not appear in clause-initial position without the topic marker *ko* (Bauer 1993: 89). The fact that *a Hera* precedes the verb *whakarongo* ‘listen’ in (7b), means that it has been raised into the subject position of the negative verb. Thus, the negative verb *hore* is a raising verb, although raising is not obligatory, as indicated by (8):

- (8) *Kaaore* e tipu te hua whenua ki reira.
 T/A.NEG T/A grow the fruit land to there
 ‘Vegetables will not grow there.’ (Bauer 1993: 141)

2.3 TONGAN NEGATION

Like Māori, Tongan expresses propositional negation with a bi-clausal structure (Ball 2008). Tongan’s negative verb *’ikai* embeds an affirmative clause headed by the subjunctive *ke*, as in (9b).

- (9) Tongan negation with subjunctive *ke*
- a. Na’e kei kata ’a e ongo ki’i ta’ahiné.
 PST still laugh ABS DET DU CLF girl.DEF
 ‘The two little girls were still laughing.’
- b. Na’e ’ikai ke kata ’a Pita.
 PST NEG SUB laugh ABS Pita
 ‘Pita did not laugh.’ (Broschart 1999: 97, 104)

Tongan also has the option of using *'ikai* to embed an affirmative predicate directly, i.e. without the subjunctive marker *ke*, as in (10b).

- (10) Tongan negation without subjunctive *ke*
- a. Na'e tō 'e Sione 'a e manioke.
 PST plant ERG Sione ABS DET cassava
 'Sione planted the cassava.'
- b. Na'e *'ikai* tō 'e Sione 'a e manioke.
 PST NEG plant ERG Sione ABS DET cassava
 'Sione didn't plant the cassava.' (Ball 2008: 46)

Example (9b) more transparently consists of two clauses than example (10b), because (9b) contains two T/A markers. However, Ball (2008) reasons that the difference between (9b) and (10b) is only a matter of subcategorization. In both cases, *'ikai* is a verbal head, but it can select either a TP or vP. There is no mitigating reason to adopt the more cumbersome alternative, that *'ikai* heads a verbal projection in (9b), but is a nonverbal modificational element in (10b).

2.4 NIUEAN'S *nā kai fakaai*

Niuean's *nā kai fakaai* negation strategy, briefly introduced in 2.1, is reminiscent of Tongan's negation under *'ikai* in the way that the negative element combines with a clause headed by a dependent marker. In both languages, the dependent marker takes the form *ke* (glossed DEP.T for 'dependent tense' in Niuean and SUB for 'subjunctive' for Tongan). Example (11) shows a side-by-side comparison on Niuean and Tongan, repeated from (9b) above.

- (11) Niuean *nā kai fakaai* and Tongan *'ikai*
- a. *Nā kai fakaai* ke kata a Pita.
 NEG EMPH DEP.T laugh ABS Pita
 'Pita did not laugh.' *author's notes*
- b. Na'e *'ikai* ke kata 'a Pita.
 PST NEG SUB laugh ABS Pita
 'Pita did not laugh.' (Broschart 1999: 97, 104)

Unlike Tongan's *'ikai* and more like Māori's *hore*, Niuean's *nā kai fakaai* negation strategy optionally involves raising, i.e. an argument associated with the embedded clause may surface in the root clause.³ Examples are given in (12). Note that *nā kai* cannot function as a raising predicate independently, and as mentioned in 2.1, *fakaai* cannot appear without *nā kai* in any context.

- (12) a. *Nā kai* *(*fakaai*) au_i ke ō ____i mo koe.
 NEG EMPH 1.SG DEP.T go COMTV 2.SG
 'I would never go with you.' (Sperlich 1997:45)

³ Here, I rely on 'raising' as a descriptive term and do not mean to espouse a particular analysis. See Longenbaugh and Polinsky (to appear) for copy-raising account of these structures.

- b. *Nā kai *(fakaai) taha_i ke age ____i ha mena ki a ia.*
 NEG EMPH NSP DEP.T give NSP thing LOC ABS 3.SG
 ‘No one at all gave him anything.’ (Tregear and Smith 1907: 29)

Because *nā kai fakaai* constructions involve raising, they are necessarily biclausal. Therefore, either *nā kai* or *fakaai* must be a negative verbal element, but it is not immediately clear whether *nā kai* modifies *fakaai* or vice versa. Perhaps because *fakaai* only appears in raising contexts, Seiter (1980:157) treats *fakaai* as a negative raising verb that *nā kai* modifies. In contrast, Sperlich (1997:45) refers to *fakaai* as an ‘intensifier’ and says that ‘it is used with *ai* or *nakāi* to form an intensive negative’. Tregear and Smith (1907:29) describe *fakaai* as an ‘intensifier to *ai* and *nā kai*.’ Both of these descriptions imply that *fakaai* modifies *nā kai*, which would mean that *nā kai* is a negative verb.

The use of *fakaai* as an interjection supports the idea that *fakaai* modifies *nā kai*. In isolation, *nā kai* means ‘no,’ while *nā kai fakaai* means something stronger, e.g., ‘never,’ or ‘decidedly not.’ Similarly, *nā kai* ‘no’ can also be modified by the particle *lā* ‘just/yet’ to mean ‘not yet.’

Another reason to treat *fakaai* as modifying *nā kai* in the raising construction is that *fakaai* shares certain characteristics with manner adverbs in Niuean. Manner adverbs follow the verb, as *fakaai* follows *nā kai*. Second, it appears that *fakaai* is formed by combining the causative prefix *faka* with the negative element *ai*. Manner adverbs are often formed in this way, by combining the causative prefix *faka* with a verbal root, such as *ene* ‘insert’ in example (13).

- (13) Ne tunu faka-ene-ene e au e tau talo.
 PST cook CAUS-insert-REDUP ERG 1SG ABS PL taro
 ‘I carefully cooked the taro.’ (Seiter 1980:17)

If *nā kai* heads the negative raising predicate *nā kai fakaai*, then we must ask whether *nā kai* is a verbal element even in cases that are not obviously biclausal, as in (1) above.

3 WHAT IS *nā kai*?

In the spirit of Ball’s (2008) analysis of Tongan *’ikai*, I propose that *nā kai* is a negative verb that subcategorizes for either TP (as in the *nā kai fakaai* construction) or *vP*, as discussed below. This analysis is more straightforward than the alternative in which *nā kai* is a negative raising verb in some contexts and a negative particle in others.

Massam (2000, 2002, 2009) gives two arguments against a verbal analysis of *nā kai*. The first is that the complement of *nā kai* is only ever a verb phrase. Whether or not this is true depends on the status of *nā kai fakaai*. As argued above, if *fakaai* modifies *nā kai* in the *nā kai fakaai* raising construction, then *nā kai* must also be able to embed an XP headed by the dependent tense marker.

The second observation that Massam cites as evidence against a verbal analysis of *nā kai* is that it does not appear with a wide range of postverbal particles, unlike lexical verbs in the language. On one hand, the emphatic particle *lā* ‘just/yet,’ the perfective marker *tuai*, and the nonneutral interrogative marker *kia* can all follow *nā kai*, but they represent only a small subset of the language’s postverbal elements. On the other hand, the fact that *nā kai* hosts any postverbal particles is note-

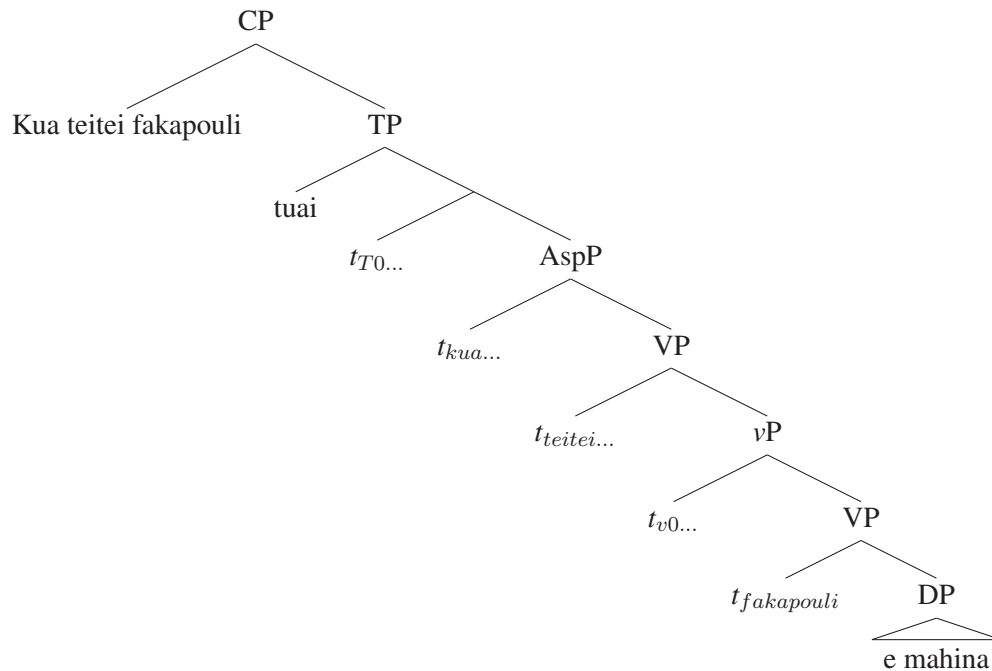
worthy. Why other emphatic markers, interrogative particles, etc., cannot combine with *nākai* is a lingering question that may come down to polarity. For example, if it could be shown that affirmative contexts license the majority of postverbal particles in Niuean, those items may be unable to modify the negative verb *nākai* for semantic reasons.

In sum, while negation in Niuean deserves more in depth consideration, there is good reason to believe that Niuean uses a negative verb strategy to negate propositions, albeit less transparently so than in related languages. When *nākai* is modified by *fakaai* it selects a TP headed by the dependent tense marker *ke* and allows raising from the embedded clause into the root clause. In other contexts, *nākai* selects a *vP* and no raising is allowed. The remainder of this section incorporates the negative verb analysis of *nākai* into V^0 -raising analysis of Niuean V1 word order and briefly discusses why a negative verb analysis of *nākai* is problematic for a VP-(remnant) approach to Niuean.

3.1 V^0 -RAISING AND NEGATION

In addition to *nākai*, Niuean has two other verbs, *teitei* ‘nearly’ and *kamata* ‘begin’, that allow raising in some contexts, but not others. When these verbs allow raising, they embed a clause headed by a T/A marker. Otherwise, Clemens (2014) applies a functional restructuring analysis (Wurmbrand 2001; Fukuda 2009; Takahashi 2012), in part, because of their lack of argument-sharing properties (Massam 2013).

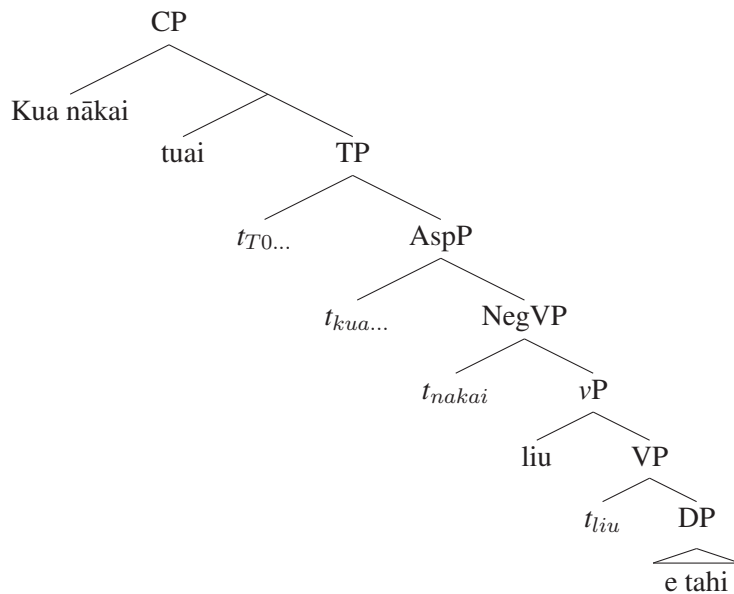
- (14) Kua teitei fakapouli tuai e mahina.
 PFV nearly darken PFV ABS moon
 ‘The moon has nearly darkened.’ (Seiter 1980:14)



The functional restructuring analysis of these verbs is illustrated below (14). Note that *teitei* ‘nearly’ merges with a *vP*. The lower predicate, *fakapouli* ‘darken’ in this example, raises to *teitei* on its way to C^0 . This accounts for the location of *tuai*, which surfaces after the second verb.⁴

A functional restructuring analysis, similar to the one shown in (14), is also fitting for *nākai*, which is verbal but non- θ -assigning. However, *nākai* differs from other functional restructuring predicates with respect to the fact that certain postverbal elements surface between *nākai* and the main verb. As (15) illustrates, this difference can be accounted for by stipulating that the main verb is not attracted to the negative verb. Instead, the negative verb moves through to C^0 on its own.

- (15) Kua **nākai** tuai liu e tahi .
 PFV NEG PFV turn ABS sea
 ‘The tide has not turned.’ (Seiter 1980:26)



When a transitive verb falls under the scope of negation, the analysis in (15) incorrectly predicts TAM-Neg-S-V-O word order, because if V^0 stops at v^0 , it is in a position below where the transitive subject is generated. The solution to this problem may be found in the structure of nonverbal predicates, which are introduced by overt predicate heads. For example, nominal and locative predicates in Niuean are headed by *ko* and *hā(hā)*, respectively. Examples are given in (16) and (17), where it is also shown that *nākai* can combine directly with nominal and locative predicates.

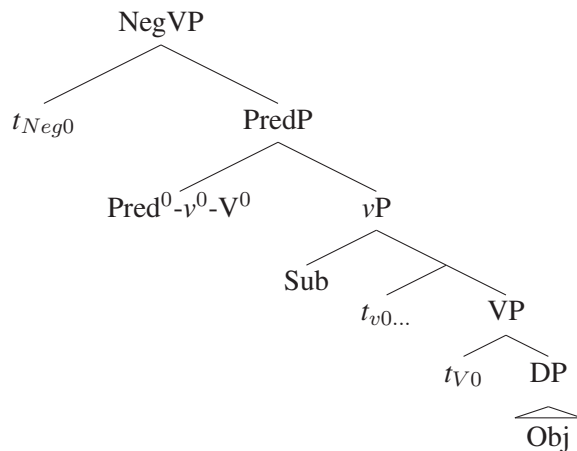
- (16) a. Ko e ekekafo a ia.
 PRED.NOM ABS doctor ABS 3SG
 ‘He was a doctor.’ (Seiter 1980:54)

⁴ Note that the complex head located in C^0 in examples like (14) does not necessarily map onto a single phonological word. See Collins (2016) and Clemens (2018) for different perspectives on the use of prosodic constituency to diagnose X^0 -raising in the context of the derivation of verb-initial word order.

- b. Nākai ko e vagahau tohi e vagahau Niue.
 NEG PRED.NOM ABS language write ABS language Niue
 ‘The Niuean language is not a written language.’ (Sperlich 1997:xv)
- (17) a. Hāhā i loto he fale e kau kaihā.
 PRED.LOC in inside GEN house ABS group thief
 ‘A group of thieves was inside the house.’ (Seiter 1980:55)
- b. Nākai hāhā he taane e tonuhia ke puipui haana hoana.
 NEG PRED.LOC GL man ABS right DEP.T defend POSS wife
 ‘The husband did not have the right to defend his wife.’ (Massam et al. 2006:7)

It stands to reason that verbal predicates are also introduced by a predicate head, but in the case of verbal predicates, $Pred^0$ is null. Thus, V^0 raises as far as $Pred^0$, where it is in position to precede the subject, even in negative clauses where the verb does not move to Neg^0 , as illustrated in (18):

- (18) X^0 -raising to a null $Pred^0$

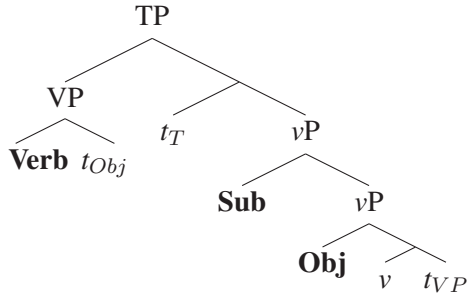


The introduction of a null $Pred^0$ into verbal predicate structure is a tentative solution to the problem of word order and *nākai*'s status as a negative verb. Future work will have to determine whether null $Pred^0$ is part of all verbal predicates in Niuean, or whether $PredP$ is inserted in the context of *nākai* as a last resort to satisfy selectional requirements of the latter.

3.2 VP-(REMNANT) RAISING AND NEGATION

Before concluding, I will briefly discuss the challenges the negative verb analysis of *nākai* presents for a VP-(remnant) raising account of V1 word order in Niuean. Massam (2001) derives V1 order by fronting the VP to TP. Movement of the predicate to the specifier of TP is motivated by T^0 's EPP feature, which attracts predicates. When a transitive verb selects a DP object, the object leaves the VP for case-checking purposes and the resulting structure is VSO, as in (19). On this account, $NegP$ must be located above TP, or *nākai* would surface after the predicate.

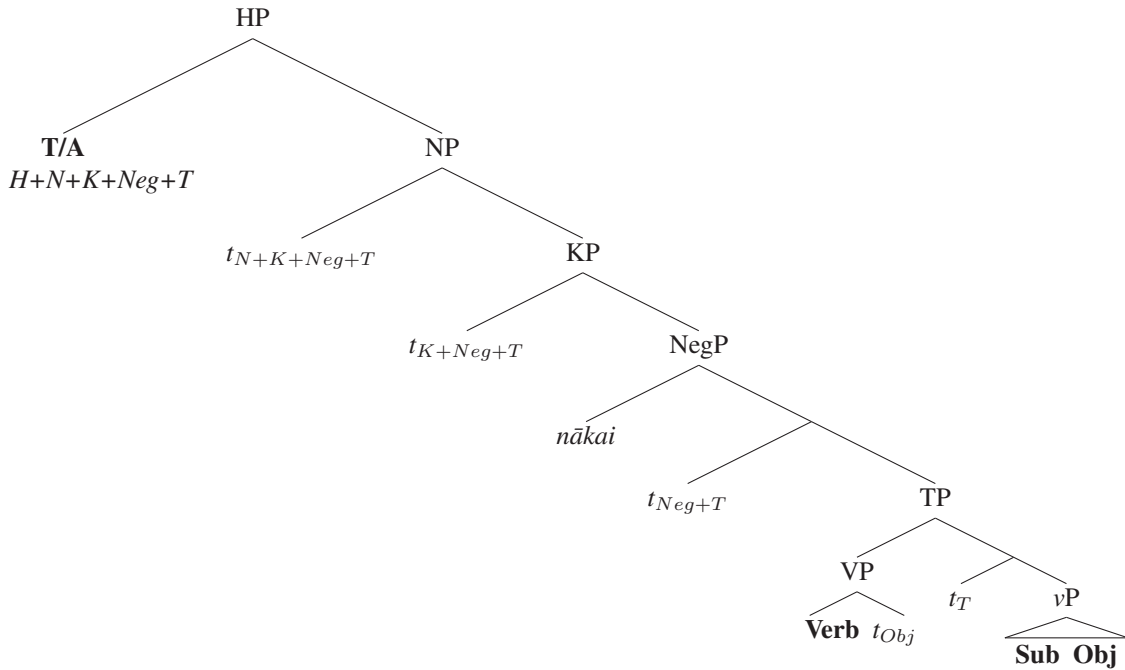
(19) VP-remnant raising



In a more articulated analysis of Niuean clause structure Massam (2009), proposes that after the predicate has undergone phrasal movement to the specifier of TP, T^0 undergoes head movement to the highest projection of the extended CP (HP in Massam’s terms), as shown in (20). This addition captures the distribution and morphological makeup of Niuean’s T/A markers.

In consideration of negative clauses, Massam (2009) proposes that *nākai* is a negative particle located in the specifier of NegP, which is located above TP. As shown in (20), Neg^0 is null and implicated in roll-up head movement, but *nākai* remains in its adjoined position where it is pronounced between the T/A marker and the predicate.

(20) Extended CP



With reason to believe that *nākai* is a negative verb and, thus, a syntactic head, the challenge for the analysis illustrated in (20) is why *nākai* is not implicated in the roll-up head movement of T^0 .

The Head Movement Constraint (Travis 1984) prohibits a head from skipping intervening heads in the process of X^0 -raising. If *nākai* were the head of its phrase, it would count as intervening between T^0 and KP, if nothing else were to change about the tree in (20). Subsequently, we would expect T^0 to collect *nākai* on its way through the extended CP projection.

4 CONCLUSION

After considering the status of Niuean propositional negation, I concluded that *nākai* is a negative verb that shares properties with negative verbs in related languages. The verb *nākai* selects a TP headed by *ke* when *nākai* is modified by *fakaai* and otherwise it selects a smaller projection, namely vP . With minor modifications, a restructuring analysis developed for *teitei* ‘likely’ and *kamata* ‘begin’ (Clemens 2014) was extended to the negative verb *nākai* so that it could be incorporated into a larger X^0 -raising account of Niuean clause structure. One benefit of this analysis is that it is consistent with the Head Movement Constraint (Travis 1984), which is a desirable outcome in a language that otherwise obeys the locality conditions we associate with roll-up head movement.

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