

**Māori subject extraction: An intervention account**  
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It is well-documented that in Māori only subjects can generally be  $\bar{A}$ -extracted (Keenan & Comrie 1977; Bauer 1993, 1997) and that subject focus/questioning is more restricted than subject topicalisation/relativisation (Bauer 1993, 1997; de Lacy 1999). I argue that, whilst subject topicalisation/relativisation is generally permitted in all constructions, subject focus/questioning is permitted in constructions whose predicate phrase is verbal or prepositional, as in (1), but prohibited in those whose predicate phrase is nominal, as in (2) (see also de Lacy 1999) (examples adapted from Bauer 1997; Māori has basic predicate-subject order in declaratives, the subject is in bold).

(1) Locational construction (a type of prepositional predicate construction)

a. *Declarative*

Kei roto i te kāpata rā **a Hera**.  
 at(PRES) inside at the cupboardDIST PERS Hera  
 ‘Hera is in that cupboard.’

b. *Subject topicalisation*

**Ko Hera** kei roto i te kāpata rā.  
 TOP Hera at(PRES) inside at the cupboardDIST  
 ‘Hera is in that cupboard.’

c. *Subject questioning*

**Ko wai** kei roto i te kāpata rā?  
 KO who at(PRES) inside at the cupboardDIST  
 ‘Who is in that cupboard?’

(2) Classifying-*he* construction (a type of nominal predicate construction)

a. *Declarative*

He māhita **a Hera**.  
 CLS teacher PERS Hera  
 ‘Hera is a teacher.’

b. *Subject topicalisation*

**Ko Hera** he māhita.  
 TOP Hera CLS teacher  
 ‘Hera is a teacher.’

c. *Subject questioning*

\***Ko wai** he māhita?  
 KO who CLS teacher  
 (‘Who is a teacher?’)

I assume that  $\bar{A}$ -movement is defined as movement into the C-domain, i.e. it is not defined by the features that trigger such movement. I propose that Topic and Focus heads in the Māori C-domain in fact probe for features recycled from nominal syntax, developing recent ideas that features are emergent (Wiltschko 2014; Biberauer 2017), and that the  $\bar{A}$ -extraction restrictions follow from intervention as defined by featural Relativised Minimality (Starke 2001). Specifically, I argue that Focus probes for a feature, which I call [D], that is found on argument and predicate nominals, whilst Topic probes for a feature, which I call [X], that is only found on argument nominals. Consequently, nominal predicates intervene for subject focus/questioning but non-nominal predicates do not, as in (3), and no predicate phrase intervenes for subject topicalisation (not shown).

(3) a. Nominal predicate construction: [DP Subject]<sub>i</sub> FOCUS<sub>[D]</sub> ... [DP Predicate] ... t<sub>i</sub> ✗  
 b. Non-nominal predicate construction: [DP Subject]<sub>i</sub> FOCUS<sub>[D]</sub> ... [PP/VP Predicate] ... t<sub>i</sub> ✓

By relativising  $\bar{A}$ -probes to nominal-features such as [D] and [X], we also straightforwardly account for why non-subjects cannot be  $\bar{A}$ -extracted in Māori: the subject would always intervene with the  $\bar{A}$ -extraction of lower arguments (Starke 2001; Belletti 2015; Levin 2017).

I argue that this intervention analysis provides a more accurate account of the extraction asymmetries than previous proposals. Previous proposals can be divided into two broad types. In the first, cases of legitimate subject questioning are analysed as clefts with an embedded headless relative clause (Bauer 1993, 1997), whilst in the second, subject questioning is ruled out in constructions where the predicate phrase actually occupies the position targeted by

questioning (de Lacy 1999; Pearce 1999). I point out several problems for these analyses, e.g. (i) headless relative clauses are independently attested in Māori, but never for subject relativisation, (ii) since the subject of all constructions can be relativised, it is unclear why nominal predicate constructions could not have a grammatical cleft analysis, and (iii) adverbial questioning is permitted in nominal predicate constructions suggesting that the position targeted by questioning is not necessarily occupied by the nominal predicate (contra de Lacy 1999). To overcome these problems, I propose a refinement to the cleft analysis. Instead of the embedded clause being a bona fide relative clause, I propose that it is an embedded focus construction, effectively extending Belletti's (2015) analysis of Romance clefts to Māori (and potentially other Polynesian languages as well). In essence, the focus construction in (3) is more properly viewed as the embedded clause of a cleft construction (note that Māori is generally assumed to have no overt copula (Bauer 1997)).

There are two potential exceptions to my proposal: Actor-Emphatic (AE) constructions and Existential Possessive (E-POSS) constructions. AE constructions have prepositional predicate phrases yet do not permit subject questioning. However, as the name suggests, the actor argument requires focus in AE constructions, and so questioning of subjects (which in AE constructions corresponds to the *internal* argument) is plausibly prohibited for independent reasons. As for E-POSS constructions, the predicate phrase looks nominal (also introduced by *he*, as in (2)) but subject questioning is permitted. However, E-POSS constructions seem to behave differently from the classifying-*he* construction in (2) in negative contexts (Bauer 1997), suggesting that underlyingly the predicate phrase may not be nominal.

Finally, given the standard cartographic idea that topic/focus interpretations for extracted elements result from moving those elements into dedicated topic/focus 'fields' (Rizzi 1997), I argue that languages may, in principle, use different features to encode topic/focus-movement. Some languages use features specialised for encoding movement into the C-domain (i.e. traditional 'Ā-features', e.g. [TOP] and [FOC], as in more familiar European languages), whilst others recycle features from the nominal domain. As for why languages can recycle features in the first place (and why Māori might recycle features from noun phrase syntax), I propose that acquirers attempt to 'Maximise Minimal Means' (Biberauer 2017), i.e. use as few features as possible and use them as much as possible. In other words, acquirers will first attempt to recycle features when encoding Ā-probes, yielding a more Māori-like system initially. Acquirers will then require positive evidence, e.g. evidence of Ā-extraction of non-subjects, to override 'Maximise Minimal Means' and posit the more traditional 'Ā-features', thus moving to a more English-like system. In the absence of such evidence, the Māori-like system will persist.

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