

Feature Packaging: Functional Categories in the Niuean Nominal Phrase

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This paper examines the categories found in the Niuean (Polynesian, Tongic) nominal phrase. Of particular interest is the fact that is not clear if there is a node in Niuean corresponding to Determiner, which in other languages is often posited as the key intermediary between the noun phrase and the sentence. Instead of determiners, Niuean exhibits a rich array of case markers which are inflected along a proper/common parameter (where proper includes pronominal), a set of complex and poorly understood personal articles and classifier/number particles, as well as demonstratives, and possessors and numerals which can appear in various places in the phrase and which bring a definite reading to the nominal when in pre-nominal position (Seiter 1980, Sperlich 1997, de Sousa 2001, Massam and Sperlich 2000, Kahnemuyipour and Massam in press, see also Chung, Mason and Milroy 1995). I explore the hypothesis that the features encoded as a complex in the determiner in some languages, appear separately in various places in the Niuean nominal phrase, parasitic on other functional categories such as case and number. Theoretical implications of this arrangement are addressed.

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