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Predicate landing sites in verb-initial languages

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1 Introduction[1]

The derivation of verb-initial word order, either through V-movement or VP-movement, has raised the important question of where the landing site for the moved constituent is. For predicate-fronting languages, an early proposal was that the EPP feature on T˚ differed between SVO and V-initial languages (Massam and Smallwood 1997; Otsuka 2005). This was claimed to be a parametric contrast: in subject-initial languages, the feature is [+D], while in predicate-initial languages, the feature is [+pred]. The result is that in predicate-initial languages, the predicate raises to SpecTP to check the $EPP_{[+pred]}$ feature, leading to the verb-initial order.

However, pre-verbal particles such as tense/aspect/modal (TAM), pre-verbal pronouns and negation have led other authors to reject SpecTP and propose other landing sites, such as SpecFP or SpecFinP. Doner (2021) claims TAM sits in T˚ in Tongan (thus below SpecTP), while Collins (2017) argues that pre-verbal pronouns raise to SpecTP, and NegP is dominated by TP, in Samoan. As TAM, pre-verbal pronouns and negation all precede the predicate, both analyses are forced to consider a new projection (FP) below TP (and NegP) for the landing site of the predicate. Meanwhile, Massam (2020) proposes that TAM and negation are generated in the high left periphery in Niuean, and the predicate raises to SpecFinP, in the low end of the left periphery. In these alternative models, the projection claimed to host the predicate lacks any overt head, and there is no explanation as to why the EPP feature resides on different heads in different languages.

Tokelauan, a predicate-raising Polynesian language (Middleton and Syed 2022), also has pre-verbal TAM, subject pronouns and negation. However, unlike previous proposals, these may be accounted for without changing the EPP on T˚ analysis of predicate-movement. The specific claim is that negation and pre-verbal pronouns are clitics which attach to TAM, which thereafter raises to the left periphery. As such, this paper presents evidence that the predicate raises to SpecTP, without the need for ad hoc functional projections.

This paper is ordered as follows. Section 2 introduces the concept of the $EPP_{[+pred]}$ feature, while the following subsections show how pre-verbal particles in several Polynesian languages derail the SpecTP landing site hypothesis.

[1] This work could not have been undertaken without the generous help of Iutana Pue, whom I thank for sharing his language with me. I would also like to thank the audience of CLS 58 for their helpful comments with this research. Data is in Tokelauan, unless otherwise marked.
Abbreviations used in the data follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules. Additional abbreviations include: ANP=anaphoric particle; CIA=agentive verbal suffix; DIR =directional particle; INT=intensifier; TAM=tense/aspect/modal particle.

Section 3 examines Tokelauan and demonstrates that each of the pre-verbal particles can be accounted for without blocking SpecTP as the predicate-landing site. Section 4 concludes.

2 Predicate landing sites in other languages

The EPP feature was originally suggested to trigger the obligatory raising of the subject DP to SpecTP in English (Chomsky 1982). The uninterpretable $EPP_{[+D]}$ feature resides on T˚, and probes for the closest constituent with a [+D] feature. This means the subject, generated in SpecvP (and therefore the closest DP to the EPP feature) is required to raise to the specifier position of TP, satisfying the $EPP_{[+D]}$ feature.

In many analyses of verb-initial languages, an EPP feature is posited to cause the movement of verb or predicate. Massam and Smallwood (1997) suggest that the EPP feature of T˚ is parametrically different in verb-initial languages. They argue that instead of a [+D] feature, the EPP feature in verb-initial languages can be checked by a predicate. Expanding on this concept, Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998) claim the EPP feature may license the movement of a head or a phrasal constituent. For verb-initial languages, this meant the EPP feature could be adopted for both head-movement and predicate-movement models.

A parametric difference between the EPP feature of T˚ alternating between [+D] and [+V] at first appeared completely suitable for verb-initial languages (for example, Lee 2000; Massam 2000). However, one of the major issues which became evident in later research was that the position of the raised verb did not always seem to match up with SpecTP. Most problematically, multiple particles which are argued to be generated lower than SpecTP surface preceding the raised verb. In verb-initial Polynesian languages, these include TAM, pre-verbal pronouns and negation. The presence of these particles has lead several authors to suggest that the EPP feature is actually found on a different functional projection, be that higher in the C-domain, or lower than TP.

2.1 Tongan

In most Polynesian literature, the TAM particle is generated in T˚ (Massam 2000, 2001; Otsuka 2005; Collins 2017; Middleton 2021). Doner (2021) notes that the TAM particle in Tongan precedes the predicate (1).

(1) **Na‘e** ‘alu ‘a Siale.
TAM go.SG ABS Siale
‘Siale went.’ (*Tongan*, Churchward 1953:56)

If the EPP feature which licences predicate-movement remains on T˚, we would expect the predicate to raise to SpecTP and precede the TAM particle in T˚.[2] As

[2] Note that while Doner (2021) argues for a predicate-movement account of Tongan, other authors have suggested that a head-movement model is more appropriate (Custis 2004; Otsuka 2005).

TAM precedes the predicate on the surface, Doner proposes that the EPP feature is instead found on a lower functional projection, FP, which is immediately dominated by TP.

2.2 Samoan

Like Tongan, Samoan has a clause-initial TAM particle. Collins (2017) proposes that TAM raises to the complementiser position, via T-to-C movement.[3] This removes the problematic ordering issue of the TAM particle and the predicate found in the analysis of Tongan above. The TAM particle raises above TP, meaning SpecTP is a viable landing site for the predicate.

However, Samoan exhibits pre-verbal pronouns which surface between the TAM particle and the verb (2).

(2) Ua **‘ou** manatua ai nei fo‘i upu.
PRF **1SG** remember ANP now also word(PL)
‘I now also remember the words.’
(*Samoan*, Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992:333)

Collins (2017) argues these pronouns are DPs which raise to SpecTP due to an $EPP_{[+D]}$ feature. This feature only targets weak pronouns, which explains why not all subject pronouns are fronted. With the specifier of TP filled, Collins proposes that the EPP feature which fronts the predicate in Samoan is on FP, a functional projection below TP. As such, the predicate raises to SpecFP, rather than SpecTP. Negation is also found preceding the predicate (3), so Collins (2017) argues that FP must also be below NegP.

(3) Sā ‘ou **lē** fia ‘ai.
PST 1SG **NEG** want eat
‘I did not want to eat.’ (*Samoan*, Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992:332)

2.2 Niuean

Massam (2020) argues that TP does not exist in Niuean. Massam argues that the TAM particle in generated in the highest complementiser position in the left periphery (ForceP), due to various characteristics that TAM and complementisers share in Niuean. Furthermore, it is claimed there is no agreement in the language, which means the roles normally played by TP are not required in Niuean, and as such TP is made redundant.

With TAM in ForceP, two other functional projections exist in the C-domain: PolP and FinP. Negation is argued to be generated in PolP (due to its complementary distribution with the question particle usually generated in this

[3] Note that T-to-C movement has been proposed in some analyses of Tongan as well (Custis 2004; Otsuka 2005).

position), just below ForceP. Negation is found following TAM, but preceding the predicate (4).

(4) **Ne** **nākai** fetataiaki e tau tagata pulotu . . .
PST **NEG** agree ABS PL person expert
'The experts didn't agree . . . ' (*Niuean*, Massam 2020:28)

With both TAM and negation preceding the predicate, the landing site cannot be in the specifier positions of ForceP or PolP. No TP exists, meaning the last remaining position for the predicate is SpecFinP. Therefore, Massam (2020) argues the EPP feature resides on Fin˚, forcing the moment of the predicate to SpecFinP.

3 Predicate landing sites in Tokelauan

This paper presents data that demonstrates the pre-verbal particles in Tokelauan do not present a problem for a SpecTP predicate-landing site. In (5), three particles including TAM, negation and pre-verbal pronouns precede the predicate (in square brackets). Each of these will be discussed in the following subjections.

(5) **E** **hē** **kō** [tuki-a] ia Rangi.
TAM **NEG** **1SG** hit-CIA ABS Rangi
'I will not hit Rangi.'

3.1 TAM movement

Like the three Polynesian languages discussed above, Tokelauan has a clause-initial TAM particle, preceding the predicate. TAM is base-generated in T˚ (Middleton 2021; Otsuka 2005; Collins 2017). If TAM remains in-situ, then SpecTP is problematic for the landing site for the predicate, as SpecTP linearly precedes T˚. However, Middleton (2021) claims that TAM raises to the functional projection above TP, FinP (the lowest projection in the left periphery).[4] A critical piece of evidence for TAM-raising is that TAM is in complementary distribution with the complementisers *ke* and *oi*, which are generated in Fin˚ (6).

(6) Na taumafai ia John **ke** (***na**) hao
PST try ABS John **COMP** **PST** escape
te vaka mai te afā.
DEF boat from DEF hurricane
'John tried to escape the ship from the hurricane.'

Middleton (2021) suggests that when a complementiser is generated in Fin˚, TAM is blocked from undergoing T-to-Fin movement, so it stays covert. This accounts

[4] This movement is the equivalent to T-to-C movement proposed for other Polynesian languages (Otsuka 2005; Collins 2017).

for the distribution seen in (6). In summary, as TAM raises above SpecTP to Fin˚, SpecTP remains a potential landing site for the predicate.

3.2 Pre-verbal pronouns are clitics

Pre-verbal pronouns precede the predicate and follow the TAM particle in Tokelauan (7a). Only ergative subject pronouns may appear in a pre-verbal position, and this is only optionally (7b). This makes Tokelauan pre-verbal pronouns the most restricted in the Polynesian family (Moyse-Faurie 1997).

(7) a. Na **ia** velo-a te ika.
PST **3SG** spear-CIA DEF fish
'He speared the fish.' (Hooper 1993:62)

b. Na velo **e** **ia** te ika.
PST spear **ERG** **3SG** DEF fish
'He speared the fish.' (Hooper 1993:62)

In most Polynesian literature, pre-verbal pronouns are understood to be clitics (Moyse-Faurie 1997), in much the same way as the clitic pronouns in Romance languages (for example, Zwicky 1977).[5] As they are clitics, the pre-verbal pronouns must attach to a clitic host. For Tongan, pre-verbal pronouns have been argued to attach to TAM (Otsuka 2000, 2005; Ball 2008) or the verb (Custis 2004). This paper adopts the stance that TAM is the clitic host, for various syntactic reasons.

As clitics are D heads, they should display head-like properties, as opposed to a full DP which would display phrasal properties (Cardinaletti and Starke 1999). Only phrasal constituents are able to be coordinated (Sportiche 1996; Monachesi 1999), meaning that we predict that pre-verbal pronouns should not coordinate if they are clitics. As (8) shows, this is true.

(8) *Na **kē** **ma** **ia** tunu nā ika.
TAM **2SG** **CONJ** **3SG** cook DEF.PL fish
Intended: 'You and him cooked the fish.'

Furthermore, if pre-verbal pronouns are clitics, they would be weak pronouns, generated in D˚. As only strong pronouns bear case marking, we would expect clitic pronouns to be caseless (Doner 2021). This turns out to be correct: preverbal pronouns are ungrammatical with case-markers (9).

(9) *Na **e** **ia** velo-a te ika.
PST **ERG** **3SG** spear-CIA DEF fish
Intended: 'He speared the fish.'

[5] Collins (2017) is the exception - he makes a case that in Samoan, pre-verbal pronouns are full DPs which undergo movement (see section 2.2).

Additionally, pre-verbal pronouns cannot cooccur with post-verbal pronouns (10), as expected if they are clitics, rather than some kind of agreement marker (Otsuka 2005).

(10) *Na **ia** velo-a (**e**) **ia** te ika.
TAM **3SG** spear-CIA **ERG** **3SG** DEF fish
Intended: 'He speared the fish.'

As an adverb may intervene between the clitic and the verb (11), this paper suggests that pre-verbal pronouns are enclitics, attaching to TAM, rather than pro-clitics adjoined to the verb.

(11) Na ia **toe** velo-a te ika.
PST 3SG **again** spear-CIA DEF fish
'He speared the fish again.'

The final piece of evidence is that clitics require an overt host. This makes a prediction that pre-verbal pronouns should require a host TAM particle if they are clitics. Therefore, in constructions without TAM, we expect pre-verbal pronouns will be ungrammatical. In Tokelauan, imperatives do not have TAM particles (12a), meaning there is no clitic host for the pronoun to attach to. As predicted, pre-verbal pronouns are not accepted in imperatives (12b).

(12) a. Tipi te lakau!
cut DEF wood
'Cut the wood!'

b. (***Kē**) tipi-a te fafie!
2SG cut-CIA DEF wood
'You cut the wood!'

Analysing pre-verbal pronouns as clitics attaching to TAM in verbal sentences presents a problem when examining negation, which intervenes between TAM and pre-verbal pronouns (13). However, this issue becomes nullified if we analyse negation as another clitic.

(13) Na **hēki** ia velo-a te ika
PST **NEG** 3SG spear-CIA DEF fish
'He didn't spear the fish.'

3.3 Negation is a clitic

In Tokelauan, negation sits between the TAM particle and the verb.[6] Two main analyses exist for Polynesian negation. One is that negation is a particle (phrasal head), and the other is that negation is itself a predicate, which takes a verbal subordinating clause as its complement (Hovdhaugen and Mosel 1999). Although the negative predicate concept has been successfully argued for a variety of Polynesian languages (Hohepa 1969; Chung 1970, 1978, 2021; Waite 1987; Custis 2004; Ball 2008; Potsdam and Polinsky 2017; Clemens 2018), this paper argues that it is not appropriate for Tokelauan.

We can rule negative predicates out by examining *ko*-topicalization, the process by which a topicalised nominal raises to a clause-initial position. In Tokelauan, *ko*-topicalization is a mono-clausal process; arguments do not raise beyond the left periphery of the clause in which they originate (14).

(14) Ko John na lea mai
TOP John PST say DIR
ko te ika na tunu e Rangi.
TOP DEF fish PST cook ERG Rangi
'John said Rangi cooked the fish.'

If negation was a bi-clausal structure (with a negative predicate and a subordinate verbal predicate), then a *ko*-topicalised argument from the verbal clause appear in the left periphery of the verbal clause, but not raise above the negation. As is demonstrated in (15), *ko*-topics actually raise beyond both the verb and negation, indicating a mono-clausal structure.

(15) a. **Ko John** e hēki kiki e Rangi.
TOP John TAM NEG kick ERG Rangi
'John wasn't kicked by Rangi.'

b. *E hē **ko John** na kiki e Rangi.
TAM NEG **TOP John** PST kick ERG Rangi
Intended: 'John wasn't kicked by Rangi.'

Therefore, this paper assumes Tokelauan negation is a particle, not a predicate. In addition, it is proposed that negation is a clitic attaching to TAM, just like the pre-verbal pronouns.

Two different negative particles occur in Tokelauan: the imperfective *hē* negates states or situations and the perfective *hēki* negates events (Hooper 1993:55). The *hēki* negative can be also used to mean 'not yet'. Although both may occur for certain contexts like (16), the two cannot be coordinated (17), indicating that negation has clitic-like properties (Sportiche 1996; Monachesi 1999).

[6] However, unlike Samoan, Tokelauan negation precedes pre-verbal pronouns. An analysis of why this occurs, and the differing order for Samoan, is given in Middleton (to appear).

(16) a. E **hē** i kinei ia Rangi.
TAM **NEG** LOC here ABS Rangi
'Rangi is not here.'

b. E **hēki** i kinei ia Rangi.
TAM **NEG** LOC here ABS Rangi
'Rangi is not here yet.' or 'Rangi was not here.'

(17) E **hē** **ma** **hēki** i kinei ia Rangi.
TAM **NEG** **CONJ** **NEG** LOC here ABS Rangi
Intended: 'Rangi was and is not here.'

As clitics must have a host, we can use this as a diagnostic (just as we did for pre-verbal pronouns). If there are constructions where there is no potential clitic host, we expect negation to be unacceptable if it is indeed a clitic. Alternatively, if there is a clause-initial particle to act as the host, we expect negation to be possible. This latter scenario occurs for unmarked verbal clauses and nominalisations, which have a clause-initial TAM particle or determiner. As expected, negation may directly follow these clitic hosts:

(18) a. **E** **hēki** velo-a e ia te ika.
TAM **NEG** spear-CIA ERG 3SG DEF fish
'He didn't spear the fish.'

b. **te** **hē** kai-ga o te ika
DEF **NEG** eating-NMLZ GEN DEF fish
'the not eating of the fish'

However, imperatives do not have TAM particles in Tokelauan. Therefore, a clitic analysis of negation would suggest that negation cannot occur in imperatives. As observed in (19), this is indeed the case.[7]

(19) ***Hēki** tipi-a te fafie.
NEG cut-CIA DEF wood
Intended: 'Don't cut the wood!'

[7] Although several analyses have been proposed to deal with the ban on negative imperatives in head negation languages, none are viable for Tokelauan. In one, imperatives are formed when the verb head raises to TP/MoodP, and the negative head blocks head-movement of the verb (Zeijlstra 2004). As Tokelauan is a predicate-raising language, verbal head-movement does not occur, making this analysis unfeasible. Another analysis is that imperatives do not have a TP layer, and NegP sits above TP, so will not be found in imperatives (Zanuttini 1994). However, in Tokelauan, negation is dominated by the TP layer (as negation follows TAM), indicating this model is not suitable either.

Another structure which has no potential clitic host is an equative clause with a nominal predicate. These have a predicate marker *ko*, but no TAM particle (20a).[8] Like imperatives, nominal predicates cannot be negated using the normal negative particle preceding the predicate (20b).

(20) a. Ko he tautai te tamaloa.
PRED INDF fisherman DEF man
'The man is a fisherman.'

b. ***Hē** ko he tautai te tamaloa.
NEG PRED INDF fisherman DEF man
Intended: 'The man is not a fisherman.'

For both imperatives and nominal predicates, this paper proposes the ban on negation is due to the lack of a suitable clitic host. Instead, some sort of last resort clitic host is needed in order to negate either construction.

Negative imperatives are formed with *nahe* (21). I suggest the *nahe* particle is a lexicalisation of the TAM particle *na* and the stative negative form *hē*. The TAM particle provides the negative particle a host to attach to, which has become lexicalised into a single particle over time.

(21) **Nahe** tipi-a te fafie!
NEG.IMP cut-CIA DEF wood
'Don't cut the wood!'

Similarly, nominal predicates employ a last resort TAM particle when the clause is negated (22). This precedes the negative particle and acts as the clitic host.

(22) **E** **hē** ko he tautai te tamaloa.
TAM **NEG** PRED INDF fisherman DEF man
'The man is not a fisherman.'

Assuming this is a last resort clitic host may account for the fact that TAM particles are unacceptable in positive nominal clauses, but must be found in negated nominal clauses. Furthermore, in cases when a suitable clitic host is available, we predict the last resort TAM will not be needed. As anticipated, in subordinate clauses with an overt complementiser, the last resort TAM particle is redundant, and disappears (23).

[8] Note that the *ko* particle in nominal predicates is not the same as the topic *ko* particle found in *ko*-topicalisation. This can be demonstrated by the fact that the argument of a nominal predicate may be *ko*-topicalised, resulting in two *ko*-marked nouns: the first being the topicalised argument and the second being the nominal predicate (Hooper 1993:208-209).

(23) E mafai **ke** **hē** ko Viliamu te faiaoga.
TAM possible **COMP** **NEG** PRED Viliamu DEF teacher
'It is possible that William is not the teacher.'

One last piece of evidence links negation with pre-verbal pronominal clitics. The -*Cia* affix is found in many Polynesian languages and appears for different reasons depending on language. For example, -*Cia* marks a passive verb in Eastern Polynesian languages (Sanders 1991). However, for Tokelauan, the function of -*Cia* is unclear (Hovdhaugen 2000).

In Tokelauan, the -*Cia* suffix appears on transitive verbs in four contexts. The suffix is observed when a transitive subject is *ko*-topicalised (24a), relativised (24b), or appears as a pre-verbal pronoun (24c). Note that in *ko*-topicalization and relativisation, pre-verbal pronouns are also obligatory. The other appearance of -*Cia* is when a transitive verb is negated (24d).

(24) a. **Ko** **John** na **ia** fau-**a** te vaka.
TOP **John** PST **3SG** build-**CIA** DEF boat
'John built a canoe.'

b. **te** **tamaloa** na **ia** kiki-**a** ia Rangi
DEF **man** PST **3SG** kick-**CIA** ABS Rangi
'the man who kicked Rangi'

c. Na **ia** kiki-**a** ia ia lava.
PST **3SG** kick-**CIA** ABS 3SG INT
'He kicked himself.'

d. Na **hēki** manatua-**gia** e au te meakai.
PST **NEG** remember-**CIA** ERG 1SG DEF food
'I didn't remember the food.'

The one thing that all of these construction have in common is that they either have a pre-verbal pronoun or are negated. I tentatively suggest that this suffix is therefore linked to cliticization, occurring when a clitic attaches to TAM.

The following section discusses how TAM, pre-verbal pronouns and negation interact to form a single complex head.

3.4 SpecTP predicate landing side

If we adopt a movement-approach for clitics (Kayne 1975, 1989; Uriagereka 1995; Anagnostopoulou 2003), we gain a relatively straightforward account of the pre-verbal particles in Tokelauan.

The clitic pronoun is generated in the D˚ head of the subject DP (Sportiche 1996). The subject is generated in SpecvP like normal, but the pronoun undergoes head-movement, raising to T˚ and attaching as an enclitic to TAM.[9]

The analysis for negation is very similar. The negative head undergoes head-movement to TAM, adjoining to the right. The ordering of TAM-NEG-*pro* falls out if we assume NegP is generated above SpecvP where the pronoun is formed (see Collins 2017 for evidence of this in Samoan). Therefore, the pronoun raises to Neg˚, right-adjoins, and subsequently the NEG-*pro* complex head raises and right-adjoins to TAM (see Middleton to appear for more detailed discussion).

At this juncture, TAM-NEG-*pro* is a single complex head. With TAM undergoing T-to-Fin movement, all three particles are found in the left periphery, higher than TP. Nothing else intervenes between these three particles and the predicate, which means positing SpecTP as the predicate landing site is appropriate for this language. This allows us to maintain the $EPP_{[+pred]}$ or $EPP_{[+D]}$ parametric contrast first suggested by Massam and Smallwood (1997). For Tokelauan, this makes the concept of predicate-fronting much tidier than in closely related languages. Instead of positing new functional projections to deal with pre-verbal particles, this paper is able to account for the pre-verbal material while maintaining a standard SpecTP landing site for the predicate.

4 Conclusion

This paper examines Tokelauan pre-verbal particles. I demonstrate that SpecTP is a suitable predicate-landing site, despite the pre-verbal material which has caused other authors to suggest new functional projections for the predicate to raise to. While TAM, pre-verbal pronouns and negation are all generated below TP, it is argued that all reside above TP post-movements. Pre-verbal pronouns are understood to be clitics attaching to TAM. Syntactic evidence and morphological parallels to pre-verbal pronouns suggests that negation is also a clitic. Both clitics form a complex head with TAM, and this head raises above TP to FinP. The result is that the predicate raises to SpecTP due to an $EPP_{[+pred]}$ feature, which follows TAM, negation and pre-verbal pronouns.

This paper does not make any claims on the predicate landing site in other Polynesian languages like Tongan, Samoan and Niuean. However, it does suggest that the pre-verbal particles found in Polynesian languages do not necessarily rule out a SpecTP predicate landing site. Further research is needed to determine whether similar analyses are possible for related languages.

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[9] Custis (2004) proposes a similar analysis for Tongan pre-verbal pronouns.

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