Nominals in Fijian

Audrey Lai[1], Daniela Mena[2], Michinori Suzuki[1]

[1]*International Christian University, *[2]*Universidad de Concepción*

1 Introduction

This paper reports on the nominals in Fijian. Specifically, this paper describes the usage of two articles, *na* and *o*, pronouns, and the DP structure in Fijian. The data that is used in this report derives from past books on Fijian grammar and elicitations done in the spring of 2019 from a male Fijian speaker.

2 Nouns

This section reports basic patterns of nouns in Fijian; specifically about the articles *na* and *o* and pronouns that can be found. The Swadesh list used to elicit data from the native speaker and interesting finds from the elicitation session is also described in 2.1.

According to Moore (1881) are two articles in Fijian, *na* and *o*. From previous studies and elicitation sessions, it can be assumed that *na* is related to the English *the* but sometimes corresponds with the English *a* or nothing at all. Meanwhile, the Fijian *o* only appears before names of persons, officials and places.

Pronouns in Fijian are grammatical numbers, meaning that these pronouns describe how many people are involved and whether or not the listener is included or not. This is also known as inclusive or exclusive. This section mainly reports on how the grammatical number system is used in regards to kinship, specifically with the trial and plural forms.

2.1 *Nouns and Swadesh list*   Many observations of reduplication were made while eliciting data from a native speaker of Fijian. The Swadesh list included nouns, adjectives, and verbs. It included categories such as animals, body parts, and environment to create a small sample of words that could illustrate the sound system of Fijian and that illustrated some patterns if any. An interesting observation that was made from the Swadesh list was the use of the word [ðeβaṯa] 'freeze' to create words that did not occur within Fiji's natural environment such as 'snow' and 'ice'. The word for 'snow' or [uða ðeβaṯa] is created using the words 'rain' [uða] and 'freeze' [ðeβaṯa] thus creating a word that means freezing or frozen rain. Meanwhile, the word 'ice' or [waiðeβaṯa] is created from the words 'water' [wai] and 'freeze' [ðeβaṯa].

Most interestingly, every color that was elicited included reduplication as taken from numbers 79 - 83 on the Swadesh list or shown below in (1).

(1)   a.   'red' ^{n}damu^{n}damu
        b.   'green' ^{n}droka^{n}droka
        c.   'yellow' ^{n}dromo^{n}dromo
        d.   'white'   βulaβula
        e.   'black'   loaloa

Why this repetition occurs is unknown; however, words with just the first half of the color, for example [^{n}damu] and [^{n}dromo] do not exist. Thus, these words do not seem to be reduplication and there is no extra information from having two of the same sounds together.

2.1.1 *na ~ o*   According to the Handbook of the Fijian language, written by Rev. William Moore in 1881, there are two articles in Fijian: na and ko.

The article *na* can take different forms: *na*, *nai*, *a* and *ai*. The forms *na* and *nai* appear at the beginning of the sentence, while *a* and *ai* in word-medial position. Moore (1881) points out that all these forms are the same article. Regarding *nai* and *ai*, the form selected depends of the word. Moore (1881) provides the following example and its translation in English:

(2)   Ai sele   cava nai sele oqo.
        'a   knife, what the knife is?'

According to this example, the word *sele* 'knife' selects the article *ai* instead *a* at the beginning of the sentence, and in the middle the form *nai* instead *na*. Moore (1881) assigns the indefinite article to *ai* and the definite article to nai. Nevertheless, it seems the decision has been made considering the English grammar more than these two articles are different because of definitess in Fijian.

Moore (1881) mentions that it is important to be aware with *ai* in some context, for instance, *a matau* means 'an axe' and *ai matau* 'the right hand'. The same occurs with *a matai* 'a carpenter' and *ai matai* 'the first'. The meaning of these phrases has been corroborated with the data elicited in this report and also there is a change because of the article.

The other article described is *ko*, which also have the forms *koi*, *o*, and *oi*. Moore (1881) claims that *ko* and its forms only appear before names of persons, officials and places. Regarding their distribution, there is no information.

In the data elicited, just the form *na* and *o* has been found as it is shown in the following example:

(3)   a.   [e ɹaṯou a moðe ʈiko **na** ŋone]
                  'the children were sleeping'

        b.   [e βai kʰawia **o** ʈ̩ai]
                'Tai fed it'

As Moore (1881) claims, the article *o* occurs before names of persons, in this case, before the name Thai.

Milner (1972) points out that there are two nominal articles in Fijian: *na* and *ko*. They do not suffer changes due to gender or number. *Na* is categorized as a common article, and *ko* as a proper article, thus, *na* is used with common words and *ko* with proper words. What is proper or common depends on the language, for this reason there are differences between Fijian and English: *na Kalou* means 'God', in Fijian is a common noun, but en English is proper. *Ko vuravura* 'the world' is proper in Fijian, but common in English.

The common article *na* has also the form *a*, and the proper article *ko* has the form *o*. At the beginning of the utterance *a* and *o* occurred, while in word-medial position *na* or *ko*. Compared with Moore (1881), Milner (1972) do not find *koi* and *oi* as forms related with *ko*, neither *nai* and *ai* related with *na*.

In the data set analyzed, the article *o* occurs in word-medial position, but there are not phrases elicited with the article *o* at the beginning of the utterance (only with pronouns). The article *na* appears at the beginning of the utterance and in word-medial position as is illustrated in example (4):

(4)   [**na** ŋone e ʈ̩ʰaⁿdɹaβa **na** kʰakʰana]
        'the child is dreaming of food'

As Moore (1881) points out, *ko* or *o* appears before names of persons, officials and places. Milner (1978) adds that also before titles, occupations, grades, terms of kinship, and certain pronouns:

(5)   a.   O Vilikesa   'Vilikesa' (man's name)
        b.   O Qase ni Vuli   'a teacher'
        c.   O tapaqu   'father'
        d.   O iko   'you, yourself'

In the data collected, the proper article *o* occurs before names of persons as in example (5) and also it has been found before pronouns as in example (6), where the article is before the trial pronoun *iratou.*

        (6)   [e ɹaiða **o** iɹaʈ̩ʰou]
                                'They three see it'

According to Milner (1972), *na* is related with the definite article *the* in English, but he clarifies that sometimes can correspond to the indefinite article *a* in English or do not have any correspondence:

(7)   a.   na lako   'the/a journey'
        b.   na nona lako   'his journey'
        c.   na nona lako ki Suva 'his journey to Suva'
        d.   ko nona itau   'his friend'

Schütz (2014) claims the articles mark a distinction between proper and common/definite. The proper article is *o* and the common/definite article is *na*. The form *ko* is just found in written material, and there is no description of *a* as a form of *na*. This description agrees completely with what has been found in the data set analyzed in this

report.

Continuing with Schütz (2014), in a VP *o* appears when a proper noun specifies a grammatical subject, but when the proper noun specifies an object the proper article does not occur. In the example (8) provided by Schütz (2014), the subject is the proper noun *Jone* and it is determined for the proper article *o*. In the example (9) *Paula* is the object and for that reason it is not determined for *o*.

(8)   *Sa   vaka-yakavi   tiko o Jone*
        ASP MAN-evening CNT PRP J
        'John is having supper'

(9)   *E   a   rai-ci   Paula*
        3S PT see-TR P
        'She saw Paula'

In our data, also the proper article *o* determines the proper noun when it is a subject as in the example (8), and in agreement with Schütz (2014) when the proper noun is an object, it is not determined by the proper article as in (9)

(10)   [e solia βei piṯa] 'He gave it to Pita'

As Miner (1972) states, the proper article appears before some pronouns. According to Schütz (2014), *o* occurs before pronouns that specify subjects or objects in order to express emphasis. He provides the following example from Milner (1972) *Au sa cakava ko iau* 'I did it myself'. In this example the form *ko* appears instead *o*, *(k)o iau* is the first person exclusive singular.

The emphasis could be the reason that explains why the proper article can be omitted when the pronoun is at the beginning of the utterance as in (10). Therefore, the emphasis is indicated by the position of the pronoun in the utterance and *o* is not needed.

(11)   a.   [e ɹaiða **o** ɹau]
                 'They two see it'
           b.   [(**o**) ɹau a ɹaiða]
                 'They two see it'

Because a proper noun phrase refers to a specific person or place, Schütz (2014) states that it is semantically definite. In the case of *na*, it expresses definiteness in common noun phrases.

In Baumaa Fijian, Dixon (1988) claims that the common article *na* can be translated by the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a*, although the last one is less used. Regarding *o*, it appears in the same contexts established by Moore (1881), Milner (1972) and Schütz (2014).

2.2 *Pronouns   This section describes pronouns and grammatical numbers that are only applicable to persons. Within Fijian, there are pronouns for each of the following equivalents.*

(12)

	singular	dual	trial	plural
first inclusive	N/A	1st inc. dual	1st inc. trial	1st inc. plural
first exclusive	1st inc. sg	1st exc. dual	1st exc. trial	1st inc. plural
second	2nd sg	2nd dual	2nd trial	2nd plural
third	3rd sg	3rd dual	3rd trial	3rd plural

The respective pronouns in Fijian are as follows.

(13)

	singular	dual	trial	plural
first inclusive	N/A	*kedaru* [kʰeⁿdaɹu]	*kedatou* [kʰeⁿdaṯou]	*keda* [kʰeⁿda]
first exclusive	*au* [au]	*keirau* [kʰeiɹau]	*keitou* [kʰeiṯou]	*keimami* [kʰeimami]
second	*iko* [ikʰo]	*kemudrau* [kʰemuⁿdɹau]	*kemudou* [kʰemuⁿdou]	*kemuni* [kʰemuni:]
third	*koya* [kʰo:ja]	*rau* [ɹau]	*iratou* [iɹaṯʰou]	*ira* [iɹa]

As seen in (13) while the singular pronouns all have a single match, the Fijian pronoun system uses dual, trial, and plural to reference the amount of people involved. In general, singular refers to one and only one; dual refers to two; trial refers to three or few people, and plural refers to many people as in four or more (Milner, 1972) Not only this, but for first person dual, trial, and plural, there is a difference between inclusive and exclusive. Inclusive entails that the listener is included whereas exclusive entails that the listener is not included.

While singular and dual are straightforward and refer to one and two, trial and plural have more nuanced meanings than described in Milner (1972) in the third person.

(14)   a.   *Iratou na gone*   'my own three children'
        b.   *iratou ya na luvei Tomasi* 'the three children of Tomasi'
        c.   *ira na gone*   'the children (four or more) that are strangers'
        d.   *iratou na gone*   'more than four children that I know'

According to (14), while trial refers to three people at the least, it also holds a familial or a personal relation connotation. Meaning that the children or the children's parents are known to the speaker. The number of children does not matter if there is a personal connection to the children in some way. For example, hypothetically, if the speaker wanted to refer to the 100 children that are in the speaker's family, then *i ratou* is used rather than *i ra* despite there being more than 3 children because of the personal relationship between the speaker and the children. Meanwhile, the plural form is generally used for impersonal relationships or for formal situations.

As a pronoun, third person trial is quite irregular. While (14) lists third person trial as *iratou* the following describes trial when in a sentence such as 'They (three) went to the park.'

(15)   a.   *O*   *koya*   *a*   *lako i*   *na*   *rara.*
             PART+pers   3rd prs. sg PAST part   go PART+loc   the   park
             'They (sg.) went to the park.'

        b.   *O*   *rau*   *a*   *lako i*   *na*   *rara.*
             PART+pers   3rd prs. dl PAST part   go PART+loc   the   park
             'They (two) went to the park.'

        c.   *O*   *ratou*   *a*   *lako i*   *na*   *rara.*
             PART+pers   3rd prs. tr PAST part   go PART+loc   the   park
             'They (three) went to the park.'

        d.   *O*   *ira*   *a*   *lako i*   *na*   *rara.*
             PART+pers   3rd prs. pl PAST part   go PART+loc   the   park
             'They (pl.) went to the park.'

        e.   **O*   *Iratou*   *a*   *lako   i*   *na*   *rara.*
             PART+pers   3rd prs. tr PAST part   go PART+loc   the   park

In (15e) the use of iratou is unacceptable. This is an interesting note as the rest of the 3rd person pronouns use the same form as the one in (13).

3   DP Structure

This section reports the DP structure in Fijian, especially focusing on the ordering of adjectives. If there is two adjectives having different semantic meanings and prosodic weights in a NP, those adjectives show a different ordering before attaching a numeral and becoming a DP. There seems to be two possibilities causing this phenomenon: 1. Prosodic weight and 2. Phase theory. Examples not allowing to have a different adjective ordering support possibility 1.

First of all, two following examples show the difference in orderings of a determiner [o ŋgo] 'these', a numeral [tʰolu] 'three', adjectives [kaɹakaɹawa] 'blue' and [leβu] big' and a noun [βola] 'book'in English and Fijian. In English, the basic order of these entries are as follows.

(16)   These three big blue books of Tomasi. ('Tomasi' is a person's name)

In Fijian, the basic ordering is in (N+1).

(17)   *O ŋgo   tʰolu   na   βola   kaɹakaɹawa leβu   ne   i   Tomasi.*
        These   three   (the)   book   blue   big   of   Tomasi

Looking at the examples (16) and (17), the positions and orderings of [o ŋgo tʰolu] 'These three' and [ne i Tomasi] 'of Tomasi' are consistent. Instead, the ordering of words [βola] 'book', [kaɹakaɹawa] 'blue' and [leβu] 'big' is inverse. In other words, the difference between them is the orientation of modifications within the DP 'big blue book'. This follows the adjective ordering principle (AOR) proposed by Sproat and Shih (1991) in (18).

(18)   Quality >Size >Shape >Color >Provenance

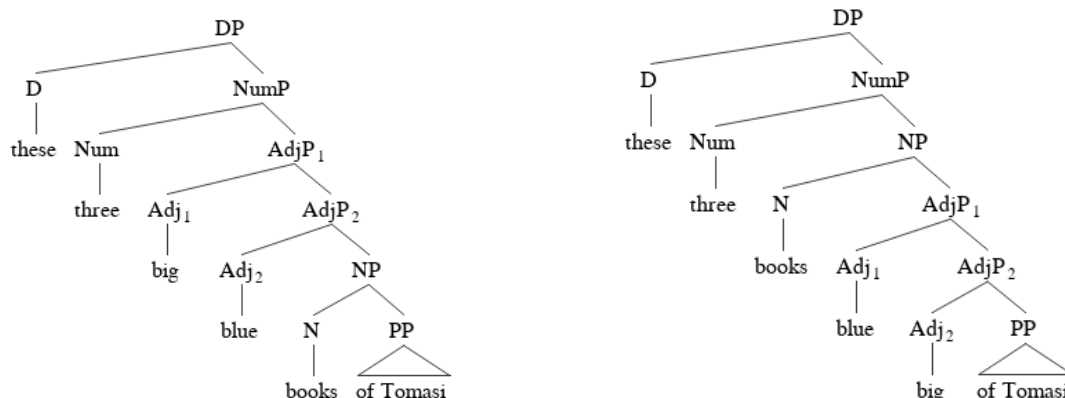The following structure in (19) is applied to the examples.

(19)

(19) indicates that it does not have X'-levels. Based on (19), structures of (16) and (17) are illustrated in (20). All the words are written in English.

(20)   DP structures in Fijian and English
          a.   English   b.   Fijian

As mentioned above, the distributions of the DP, NumP and PP are consistent. The difference between (a) and (b) is the distributions of the NP and AdjPs. At the same time, the ordering of the noun and adjectives in (b) can be changed without a numeral modifier as shown in (21) and (22).

(21)   _Kaɾakaɾawa 'blue' and leβu 'big':_ <u>_(5σ vs. 2σ)_</u>
      a.   _na_   _βola_   _kaɾakaɾawa_   _leβu_
          (the)   book   blue   big
      b.   _na_   _βola_   _leβu_   _kaɾakaɾawa_
          (the)   book   big   blue
      c.   _tʰolu_   _na_   _βola_   _kaɾakaɾawa_   _leβu_
          three   (the)   book   blue   big
      d.   *_tʰolu_   _na_   _βola_   _leβu_   _kaɾakaɾawa_
          three   (the)   book   big   blue

(22)   _Loaloa 'black', lailai 'small':_ <u>_(4σ vs. 2σ)_</u>
      a.   _na_   _βola_   _loaloa_   _lailai_
          (the)   book   black   small
      b.   _na_   _βola_   _lailai_   _loaloa_
          (the)   book   small   black
      c.   _tʰolu_   _na_   _βola_   _loaloa_   _lailai_
          three   (the)   book   black   small
      d.   *_tʰolu_   _na_   _βola_   _lailai_   _loaloa_
          three   (the)   book   small   black

According to (21) and (22), in Fijian, the order of two adjectives can be changed within the NP, but once a numeral modifier exists before the noun, this ordering is fixed to the original ordering that (13) shows. (23) describes the observed pattern more simply. In (23), "N", "A" and "Num" stand for "Noun", "Adjective" and "Numeral" respectively.

(23)   a.   [N A1   A2]NP
      b.   [N A2   A1]NP
      c.   [[Num N   A1]NP   A2]DP
      d.   *[[Num N   A2]NP   A1]DP

There are multiple ways to describe this pattern. First, in (21) and (22), A1 is longer than A2 regarding the syllable length, and thus longer materials can move to the end in the NP.[1] However, this is exclusively applied to the case of NP and phrases cannot move even though the phrase consists of more syllables than another one within a DP.

(24)   Possibility I: Prosodic Weight
      a.   N   A1   A2   (basic order)
      b.   N   A2   A1   (order change is allowed)
      c.   Num   N   A1   A2   (basic order)
      d.   *Num   N   A2   A1   (order change is not allowed)

(24a, c) indicate that the basic order is A1 - A2, and (24b) shows a movement of "heavy" item within the NP. However, as (24d) demonstrates, this movement is not allowed within the DP.

    Second possibility adopts a concept of "phase". It means that scrambling is allowed within NPs, but once a DP is merged to a NP, the phase ends and scrambling is not allowed.

(25)   Possibility II: Phase
      a.   [N A1   A2]NP
      b.   [N A2   A1]NP   (scrambling possibility within the NP)
      c.   [Num   [N   A1   A2]NP]DP
      d.   *[Num   [N   A2   A1]NP]DP

(25a, b) shows scrambling possibilities within a NP. (25c) is also grammatical since NP phase is completed with the basic order, then a DP is merged. However, once NP phase is over and DP is merged, no scrambling is allowed.

---

[1] There might be something to do with Heavy NP shift in English.

At the same time, some examples show that changing adjective orderings is impossible even within NPs.

(26)   *Baβaku 'thick' and ᵐbi 'heavy': (3σ vs. 1σ)* There is a connector between two adjectives

		na	*βola*	*βaβaku*	*ŋai*	*ᵐbi*
a.		(the)	book	thick	(connector)	heavy
b.	**na*	*βola*	*ᵐbi*	*ŋai*	*βaβaku*	
		(the)	book	heavy	(connector)	thick
c.	*tʰolu*	*na*	*βola*	*βaβaku*	*ŋai*	*ᵐbi*
	three	(the)	book	thick	(connector)	heavy
d.	**tʰolu*	*na*	*βola*	*ᵐbi*	*ŋai*	*βaβaku*
	three	(the)	book	heavy	(connector)	thick

(26) shows that there is some restrictions on changing adjective orderings. At the same time, examples in (26) have a connector [ŋai] between two adjectives. In this example, it might be possible to hypothesize that this connector is needed when both adjectives are in the same category shown in (18). For example, both 'heavy' and 'thick' can be regarded as 'quality'. (27) also shows a pattern not allowing to have ordering variation without the connector.

(27)   *ða 'bad' and ᵐbi 'heavy': (1σ vs. 1σ)*

		na	*βola*	*ða*	*ᵐbi*
a.		(the)	book	bad	heavy
b.	**na*	*βola*	*ᵐbi*	*ða*	
		(the)	book	heavy	bad
c.	*tʰolu*	*na*	*βola*	*ða*	*ᵐbi*
	three	(the)	book	bad	heavy
d.	**tʰolu*	*na*	*βola*	*ᵐbi*	*ða*
	three	(the)	book	heavy	bad

In (27), both adjectives have the same prosodic weight and they cannot have another ordering. This can be an evidence for the possibility I in (24) because the prosodic weight does affect the possibility of having another adjective ordering.To summarize the section, Fijian allows to have two adjective orderings if they belong to different semantic categories and have different prosodic weight.

4   Conclusion

In the data set analyzed in this report, two articles have been found: *na* and *o*. *Na* determines common nouns and *o* proper nouns and pronouns. *Na* has been commonly translated by the definite article *the* in English, but as Milner (1972) states, this form can be translated by *the* or *a* depending on the context. Schütz (2014) claims that *na* expresses definiteness in common noun phrases. Moore (1881) describes four different forms for each article: *nai*, *na*, *ai*, *a* and *ko*, *koi*, *o*, *oi*, then Milner (1972) describes *na, a* and *ko, o* which appear depending of the place in the sentence. Schütz (2014) states that *ko* is reported in writing.

It would be interesting to know if the forms reported by Moore (1881) are still used in Fijian spoken in Levuka, the place where the data come from, and also if the eight forms has been found in other dialects. In addition, Moore (1881) points out that there is a difference between *a* and *ai* in some context. The interesting fact is, although *a* and *ai* has not been found in the data set, the speaker can recognize the phrases provided by Moore (1881) and, in addition, to distinguish the different meanings.

The data also analyzes the use of grammatical pronouns. Kinship is a large part of Fijian culture and the speaker will never use the plural form with someone they know. However, if the person is outside of the speaker's known circle, the plural form is used regardless of the number. It is also interesting to note that the use of *o* cannot be used with *iratou* at the beginning of a sentence but can be used within a sentence. It may be interesting to do further research regarding why this is the case.

The rule of changing adjective orderings is also investigated from two perspectives: prosodic weight and phase theory. Prosodic weight means that two adjectives can change the ordering when the prosodic weights are different. Phase theory indicates that adjectives in a NP can change the orderings while they cannot oncea DP is attached to the NP. It was found that the adjective cannot change the orderings when 1. there is a "connector", 2. Two adjectives are in the same semantic category or 3. the prosodic weights of two adjectives are the same.

5 References

Dixon, R. M. W. (1988). *A grammar of Boumaa Fijian*. University of Chicago Press.

Milner, G. B. (1972). *Fijian grammar*. Suva : Government Press

Moore, W. (1881). *Handbook of the Fijian language*. GL Griffiths.

Schütz, A. J. (2014). *Fijian reference grammar*. PacificVoices.

Sproat, Richard, and Chilin Shih. 1991. The cross-linguistic distribution of adjective ordering restrictions. In Interdisciplinary approaches to language: Essays in honor of s.-y. kuroda, ed. C. Georgopoulos and R. Ishihara. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.