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Expressing (non)existence in some Oceanic languages

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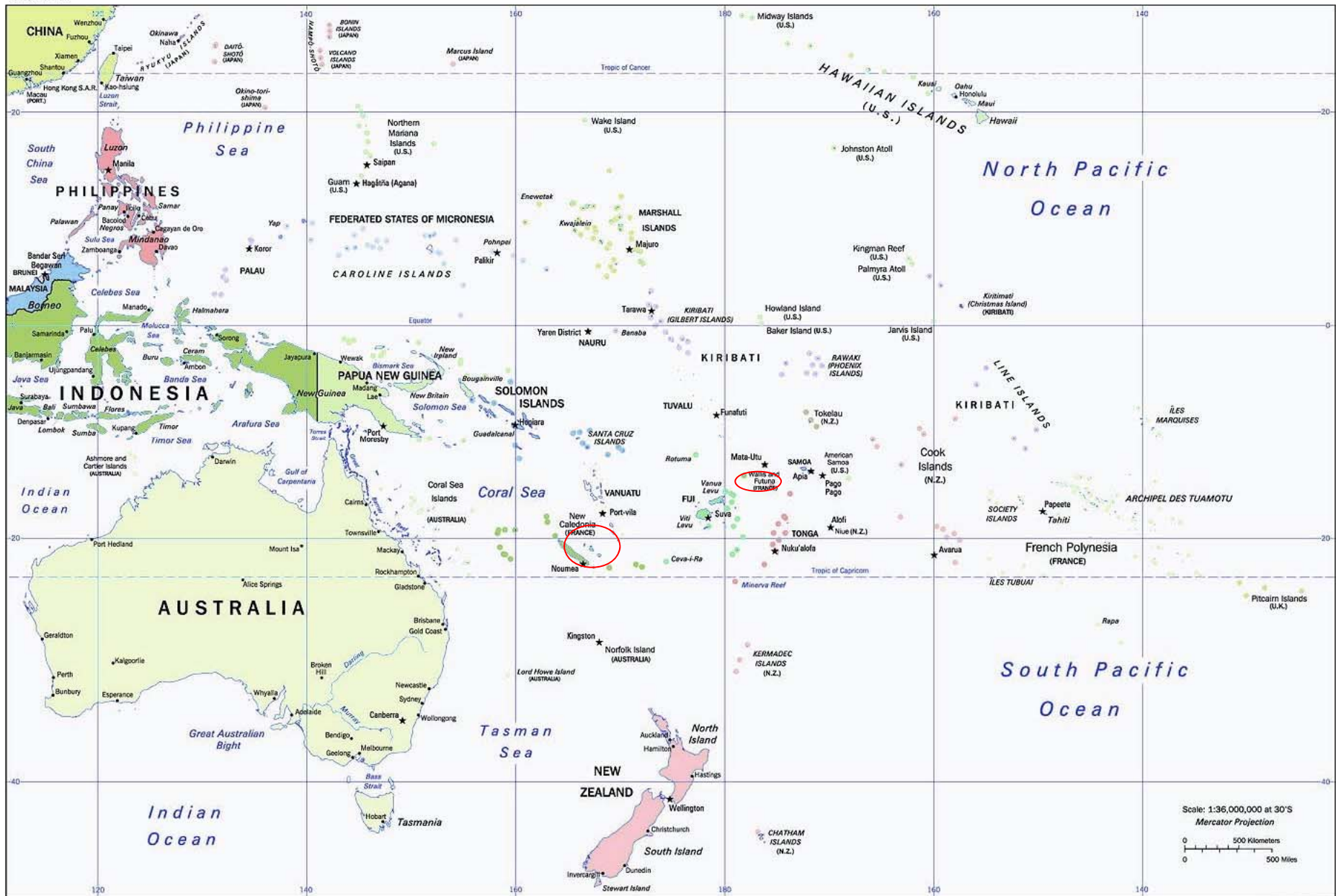
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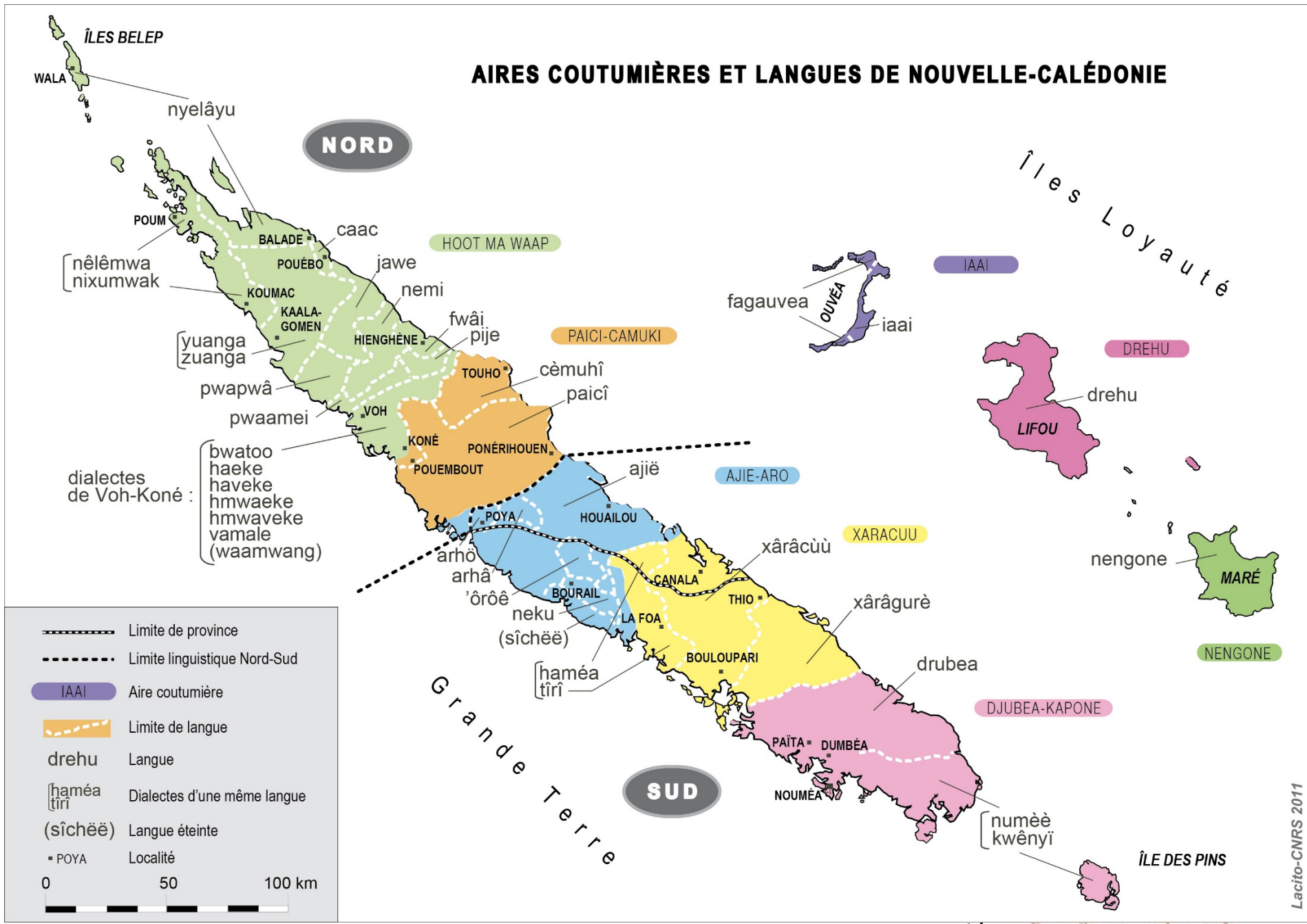
LACITO
Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale

INSHS
Institut des sciences humaines
et sociales

Oceania



AIRES COUTUMIÈRES ET LANGUES DE NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE



nyelâyu

NORD

POUM
[nêlêmwa
nixumwak]

[yuanga
zuanga]
pwapwâ
pwaamei

dialectes
de Voh-Koné :
[bwatoo
haeke
haveke
hmwaeke
hmwaveke
vamale
(waamwang)]

HOOT MA WAAP

PAICI-CAMUKI

fagauvea
OUVÉA
iaai

IAAI

Îles Loyauté

DREHU

drehu
LIFOU

nengone

MARÉ

NENGONE

AJIE-ARO

XARACUU

Grande Terre

SUD

arhō
arhâ
'ôrôê
neku
(sîchëë)

xârâcùù

xârâgurè

drubea

DJUBEA-KAPONE

PAÏTA
DUMBÉA

numèè
kwênÿi

ÎLE DES PINS

- Limite de province
- Limite linguistique Nord-Sud
- IAAI Aire coutumière
- Limite de langue
- drehu Langue
- [haméa
tîrî] Dialectes d'une même langue
- (sîchëë) Langue éteinte
- POYA Localité

0 50 100 km

Structure of the talk

1. Existence and Location

- 1.1. Locative existential predicates
 - 1.1.1. Locative predication
 - 1.1.2. Locative and posture verbs
- 1.2. Dedicated existential predicator
 - 1.2.1. The verb 'do, make' > existential verb
 - 1.2.2. Relexicalisation of the preposition *i* + deictic *ai* > *iai*

2. Non-existence

- 2.1. What we know about negative existential constructions
- 2.2. Dedicated negative existential verbs

3. Absence

- Dedicated absence verbs
- existential verbs + standard negation

4. (Non-)Existence and (Non-)Possession

Existence versus location versus posture

* “Oceanic languages typically have verbs that serve to express what one might call locative, existential, and possessive situations or relations. In some languages such verbs also have posture meanings; in others they do not” (Lichtenberk 2002:271).

definite subject > locative meaning

indefinite subject > existential meaning

* There are also “verbs used to encode the location and existence of an entity, without any necessary implication of posture or spatial orientation” (Lichtenberk 2002:305).

Localisation, Existence and Possession...

- In some Oceanic languages, such as Kanak languages, existential verbs have neither location nor posture nor possession as their origin but notions such as 'do, make', that is, actions which are evidence of existence.
- In other Oceanic languages, such as Western Polynesian languages, existential verbs do have a locative origin, but lexicalisation have occurred and their origin is no longer relevant for the speakers.
- In all these languages, existential verbs also express possession.

Locative predication without verbs

Thematic locations – Static events – Specific subjects

Drehu (Lifu, Loyalty Islands)

Eni me Drilë e celë.
1SG and Drilë AT DEIC

'I am here with Drilë.'

East Uvean (Wallis Island)

'E i fale ia te 'ofafine o te pule o Lausikulá.
NPAST AT **house** ABS SPEC daughter POSS SPEC chief POSS Lausikula

'The daughter of the chief from Lausikula is at home.'

'E mole i fale ia te 'ofafine o te pule o Lausikulá.
NPAST **NEG** AT **house** ABS SPEC daughter POSS SPEC chief POSS L.

'The daughter of the chief from Lausikula is not at home.'

Locative predicates (1)

1. Pure locative verbs

Xârâcùù (New Caledonia Mainland)

Chaa mârâdii nöö nèmèi.

one snake **stay** bush

‘There is a snake in the bush.’

Haméa (New Caledonia Mainland)

Nrâ ni truu nû nrâ mwâ loto anâ.

3SG FUT **stay** for.ever SM DEM car there

‘This car will stay there for ever.’

East Futunan (Wallis and Futuna)

E na'a le matu'a i loku kogafale.

NPAST **be.at** SPEC old.man AT his room

‘The old man is (staying) in his room.’

Locative predicates (2)

2. Posture verbs

Haméa (New Caledonia Mainland)

Vé mē mwâ ö nrâ yoo rrö nrîtoo.
take DIR DEM cooking.pot 3SG **sit** AT ground
'Bring the cooking pot which is on the ground.'

Nrâ mérrö nrâ chaa chôbwi rrö drôô-taapërë
3SG **lie** SM one mat AT top-table
'There is a mat (spread) on the table.'

Nrâ trurrö huyui tröö chaa e.
3SG **stand.up** hide behind one tree
'(S)he is hiding behind a tree.'

Existential vs locational clauses

“What distinguishes existential clauses from plain locational clauses is a different perspective on figure-ground relationships whose most obvious manifestation is that, contrary to plain locational clauses, existential clauses are not adequate answers to questions about the location of an entity, but can be used to identify an entity present at a certain location.”
(Creissels, to appear)

The verb 'do, make' as source of existential verbs in Kanak languages

Xârâcùù (New Caledonia)

- active verb:

Ri xwi farawa va nèkè-ri ngê pa pwângara.

3PL **make** bread ASS CLASS-3PL SM COLL European

'Europeans make bread as their starchy food.' (*Lit.* they make bread as their starchy food, the Europeans)

- existential verb:

È nää xwi (ngê) mîî pè-ngâârû rê ri.

3SG PAST.PROG **exist** (SM) PL stone-seed POSS 3PL

'Their stones for seed-plants used to exist.' (*Lit.* It used to exist, their stones for seed-plants)

The verb 'to go' as existential verb

Haméa (South of the Mainland of New Caledonia)

Nrâ fi nrâ suka.

3SG **exist** SM sugar

'There is sugar.'

Nrâ fi nrâ chaa chôbwi rru newe loto.

3SG **exist** SM one mat in inside car

'There is a mat in the car.'

Nrâ fi nörrö nrâ auwö anâ mwââ-nrei a.

3SG **exist** only SM cagou here content-island DEM

'Cagous only exist here in this island.'

Existential verbs as result of the relexicalisation of locatives:

static *i* + deictic anaphoric *ai* \Rightarrow existential verb *iai*

East Futunan

E iai le faletosi i Vasavasa e se na'a
NPAST **exist** SPEC library AT Vasavasa NPAST NEG **be.at**

ai se tosi mo Futuna.

ANAPH NSPEC book for Futuna

'In the library of Vasavasa, there are no books on Futuna.'

(*Lit.* the library of V. exists, there are no books for Futuna)

Cooccurrence of both forms

As a verb, *iai* has lost its original deictic meaning, now conveying a pure lexical existential meaning.

East Futunan

O kaku atu loa ki Mamalu'a e **iai** le
and reach DIR SUCC TO Mamalu'a NPAST exist SPEC
nofolaga **i** **ai**....
camp AT ANAPH

And arriving in Mamalu'a, there is a camp there...'
(Lit. ... it exists the camp at there)

Similarly, Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992:526) make a clear distinction in Samoan between the existential verb *iai* and the anaphoric prepositional phrase *i+ai*.

(Non-)existence versus presence/absence

- Looking at the way Kanak languages and others express (non-)existence and presence/absence in different ways, can we subsume the two notions under the same label?
- Existence comes first. Absence and presence presuppose existence, while non-existence stands in the way of both absence and presence.
- Constructions expressing these notions usually differ.

Non-existential verbs

- In Croft's typology of the relationship "between verbal negators and negative existential verbs", most Kanak languages would be of type B, that is, "having different forms for the negative existential predicate and the verbal negator".
- The origin of some of the dedicated non-existential verbs can be lexical: "be lost, disappear", or formally related to standard negation, or resulting from the fusion of this negative marker with the existential verb.
- Differences between existential verb and non-existential verb constructions are remarkable, as far as their constituent order, marking of arguments, degree of animacy, and referentiality are concerned.

Non-existential versus 'absence' verbs

- Only one negative verb for the two values 'be absent' and 'not exist', but differences in argument structure (Xârâcùù, Haméa, Ajië...).
- Two negative verbs, one for each value (Fagauvea, Nyelâyu...)

Same verb for both meanings

Xârâcùù (South of the Mainland, New Caledonia)

(i) unique argument = object

(ii) animate (\Rightarrow absence) \neq inanimate (\Rightarrow non-existence)

Va siè ra pa xûûchî.

ASS **not.exist** STILL COLL child

‘The children are not here yet.’

Wâ siè laasi.

PFV **not.exist** rice

‘There is no more rice.’

Siè rö!

not.exist 2SG.OBJ

‘You are not here!’

Two separate verbs

Fagauvea (Polynesian Outlier, Ouvéa, Loyalty IIs)

E siage he drube I Uvea.

NPAST **not.exist** NSPEC deer AT Ouvéa

‘There are no deer in Ouvéa.’

E siage he nea i loto o de fale.

NPAST **not.exist** NSPEC human AT inside POSS SPEC house

‘There is nobody in the house.’

De vaka goa siai balua i taikona.

SPEC boat PFV **not.be.at** for.ever AT sea

‘The boat has disappeared for ever in the sea.’

E siai dagu tama i mahale.

NPAST **not.be.at** my son AT house

‘My son is not at home.’(He was expected to be at home)

Standard Negation + Existential verbs (1)

Haméa

Nrâ hwé mââmürre a-fi

3SG **not.exist** children NMLZ-go

‘No children are leaving.’ (none were expected to leave)

Nrâ ché fi nrâ mêmê mââmürre a-fi.

3SG **NEG exist** SM DEF.PL children NMLZ-go

‘There will be no children leaving.’ (some were expected to leave)

Standard Negation + Existential verbs (2)

East Futunan

Na le'e ni puaka i Futuna i le temi mu'a.
PAST **not.exist** NSPEC.PL pig AT Futuna AT SPEC time before
'In the past, there were no [existing] pigs in Futuna.'

Na se iai ni puaka i Futuna.
PAST **NEG exist** NSPEC.PL pig AT Futuna
'There were no pigs [living] in Futuna'.

Standard Negation + Existential verbs (3)

East Uvean (Wallis Island)

'E *mole* *he* 'aliki.

NPAST **not.exist** NSPEC chief

'There is no [such person as a] chief.'

'E *mole iai* *he* 'aliki.

NPAST **NEG exist** NSPEC chief

'There is [presently] no chief.'

Non-Existence and Absence

1. Negative existential verb

indefinite argument > generic non-existence

definite argument > locative meaning (absence)

2. Standard negation + existential verb

definite or indefinite argument > locative meaning (absence)

(Non-)Existence and (Non-)Possession

“In many Oceanic languages possessive sentences are in essence existential sentences” (Lichtenberk 2002:272).

P. Koch (2012:561):

Type I have-possessive (*Maltese*)

Type II adjectival possessive

Type III comitative possessive (*Sango*)

Type IV oblique possessive with three subtypes:

a. genitive possessive

b. locational possessive

c. dative possessive (*Latin*)

Type V topic possessive (*Mandarin*).

Possession = Existence with a possessor

Different word order for positive and negative possession

Xârâcùù

Kéé-rè *xwí.*

basket-3SG.POSS **exist**

‘(S)he has one/several basket(s).’ (*Lit.* his/her basket exists)

Siè *xêê-da* *rè* *nâ,* *pââ-nâ* *paii.*

not.exist possibility-eat POSS 1SG.POSS tooth-1SG.POSS sick

‘I cannot eat, my teeth hurt.’ (*Lit.* my possibility to eat doesn’t exist...)

Different argument marking for positive and negative possession

Haméa

Nrâ fi nrâ u-nô.

3SG **exist** SM yam-POSS.1SG

‘I have yams.’

Nrâ hwé u-nô.

3SG **not.exist** yam-POSS.1SG

‘I do not have yams.’

Evolution

“... in many, and perhaps in all, languages existential and possessive constructions derive (both synchronically and diachronically) from locatives” (Lyons 1967:390)

In Kanak languages however, we have the following evolution:

ACTION ('DO, MAKE') ~ PROCESS ('OCCUR', 'HAPPEN')
⇒ EXISTENCE ('EXIST') ⇒ POSSESSION ('HAVE')

Relations between (non-)existence, (non-)presence and (non-)possession are language-specific.

Frank Lichtenberk

I conclude on a sad note. As you probably already know, the person who partly inspired my talk, Frank Lichtenberk, died three days ago in a train accident in Auckland. With him we lost a great linguist, and I lost a wonderful friend. Photo: with Ingrid Ross, at the ICAL12 in Bali.

