

A PRELIMINARY LOOK AT EXCEPTIVES IN TAHITIAN*

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This paper examines the syntactic expression of exceptive constructions (e.g., *Sandy has worked on every Polynesian language except Tahitian*) in Tahitian (Polynesian). Cross-linguistically, exceptives can be phrasal or clausal. We show that exceptives in Tahitian are clausal, despite the apparently reduced appearance of the relevant construction. Furthermore, exceptives in Tahitian are not expressed by a dedicated construction but rather by a juxtaposition of two clauses in which the first makes a generalization and the second explicitly states an exception to that generalization via a negative clause. We compare this strategy of “conjoined exceptives” to that of conjoined comparatives; a comparison between the two may be helpful for future work on the structure of exceptives.

1. Introduction

This paper is an initial investigation into the syntactic expression of exceptives in the Polynesian language Tahitian. An exceptive is construction used to express exceptions to generalizations. A typical exceptive in English is (1).

- (1) Everyone left except/but Bob.

We will use the term EXCEPTIVE CONSTRUCTION to refer to the entire sentence that expresses an exception. The EXCEPTIVE PHRASE is that part of the construction that identifies the sentence as an exceptive; it need not literally be a phrase. *Except Bob* is the exceptive phrase in (1). EXCEPTION XP refers to the exception itself, *Bob* in (1).

Our goals are modest: to present a basic description of the Tahitian patterns and to make some preliminary analytical claims. Our main conclusion is that exceptive phrases in Tahitian are strictly clausal in nature despite their apparently reduced appearance. Section 2 presents the basics of Tahitian word order, its exception constructions, and negation. Section 3 argues that the exceptive phrase in Tahitian is actually a (reduced) clause. Section 4 concludes.

* This work owes a great deal to Sandy Chung, who pioneered the comparative study of the syntax of Polynesian languages, starting with her seminal comparative work, published as Chung 1978. It touches on topics that Sandy has worked on: negation, ellipsis, clause structure, and, of course, Polynesian languages. We are grateful to Sandy’s friendship, mentoring, encouragement, and high standards of scholarship over the years.

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2. Tahitian

Tahitian is a Nuclear Polynesian language spoken by approximately 60,000 people in French Polynesia (Lewis et al. 2016). Its basic word order is VSO, (2), and VOS is ungrammatical. Case marking is nominative-accusative; however, the accusative marker is often dropped.

- (2) 'Ua hōhoni te ma'o 'i te tāvana
 PFV bite DET shark ACC DET chief
 'The shark bit the chief.'

The verb is preceded by tense-aspect-mood (TAM) particles, which vary between matrix and embedded clauses. These are given in Table 1 for perfective and imperfective clauses (see Tryon 1970:32–37, Markey 1976, Académie Tahitienne 1986:201–56, Lazard and Peltzer 2000:124–42).

	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE
MATRIX CLAUSE	'ua	tē ... DEIC
DEPENDENT CLAUSE	i	e

Table 1. Tahitian aspectual particles

Non-verbal clauses are predicate-initial, subject-final, (3).

- (3) a. Mai te fare mai au
 PREP DET house DIR 1SG
 'I am coming from the house.' (Lazard and Peltzer 2000:42)
- b. 'E fa'ehau terā ta'ata
 PRED soldier DEM man
 'That man is a soldier.' (Lazard and Peltzer 2000:36)

2.1. Exeptions

Exeptions in Tahitian take a number of forms. The three dominant forms of the exeption phrase offered by our consultants are given in (4a, b, c).¹

- (4) 'Ua tae pauroa mai te mau tamari'i,
 PFV come all DIR DET PL child
 'All the children came ...'
- a. 'o Poe noa 'aita
 DET Poe just NEG
- b. 'aita rā 'o Poe
 NEG but DET Poe

¹ Other constructions were intermittently offered but space considerations prevent us from addressing them here.

- c. *tē toe ra 'o Poe*
 IPFV remain DEIC DET Poe
 ‘... except Poe.’

In (4a), the exception XP *Poe* is followed by the particle *noa*, which Walroos 2002 indicates occurs “after nominal sequences, expressing the idea of restriction alone, only, just”. This XP *noa* is then followed by ‘*aita* ‘NEG’, the marker of sentential negation (see section 2.2). In (4b), the exceptive phrase begins with the sentential negation marker ‘*aita* and the particle *rā*, which Walroos 2002 translates as ‘but, although’. This is followed by the exception XP. In (4c), the exception XP is preceded by the imperfective form of the verb *toe* ‘remain, be left over’. We will not consider the form in (4c) here.

We will argue in the following section that the first two constructions are not exceptive specific. They do not parallel the English translation ‘All the children came, except for Poe’. Rather, better translations for (4a, b) would be ‘All the children came, only Poe didn’t’ and ‘All the children came, but Poe didn’t’. That is, there is no genuine exceptive-specific exceptive phrase; the exception is expressed using a juxtaposed negative clause which has the pragmatic force of providing an exception to the general statement made in the first clause. The main clause and the exceptive phrase are conjoined paratactically. Before we present our evidence for this proposal, it is necessary to briefly describe negative clauses in Tahitian.

2.2. Negation

Negation in Tahitian is a predicate (Lemaître 1973:17, Académie Tahitienne 1986:328–34, Lazard and Peltzer 2000:49–59, Peltzer 1996, Tryon 1970:46–48; see also Hohepa 1969 and Chung 1970 on Māori where the situation is comparable). It takes a clausal complement whose subject obligatorily raises to a position immediately following the negative marker. The TAM marker preceding the embedded verb is from the dependent series in Table 1.

- (5) a. 'Ua tai'o 'oe 'i terā puta
 PFV read 2SG ACC DEM book
 ‘You read that book.’
 b. 'Aita 'oe i tai'o 'i terā puta
 NEG 2SG PFV.DEP read ACC DEM book
 ‘You didn’t read that book.’
 c. *'Aita i tai'o 'oe 'i terā puta
 NEG PFV.DEP read 2SG ACC DEM book

The sentential negation marker varies in form with tense, aspect, and mood. Three forms are given in Table 2 (to simplify exposition, we have omitted other forms).

PERFECTIVE	'aita
IMPERFECTIVE	'e'ita
PROHIBITIVE	'eiaha

Table 2. Tahitian negative particles

A distinct form, *'ore*, is used for constituent negation and non-finite clauses (Peltzer 1996). The former use is illustrated in (6). Note that *'ore* is not used in exceptives.

- (6) a. 'E rave tāua 'i te 'ohipa mai te fa'aea 'ore
 FUT do 1DU.INCL ACC DET work with DET rest NEG
 'We will do the work without stopping.' (Tryon 1970:47)
- b. pinepine 'ore c. nehenehe 'ore
 often NEG possible NEG
 'rarely' 'impossible' (Tryon 1970:48)

3. The Clausal Nature of Tahitian Exceptives

This section presents data supporting the position that the exceptive phrase in Tahitian is a (reduced) negative clause. The clausal status of these exceptive phrases is signaled by *'aita* in examples like (4), which we claim is the ordinary sentential negation marker and not a particle/preposition equivalent to English *except*. The phrases in (4) are negative clauses that have been reduced in some way, leaving an ordinary instance of sentential negation behind. More accurate translations for (4a, b) under our proposal are thus as in (7) and (8), respectively.

- (7) 'Ua tae pauroa mai te mau tamari'i, 'o Poe noa 'aita
 PFV come all DIR DET PL child DET Poe just NEG
 'All the children came, just/only Poe didn't.'
- (8) 'Ua tae pauroa mai te mau tamari'i, 'aita rā 'o Poe
 PFV come all DIR DET PL child NEG but DET Poe
 'All the children came, but Poe didn't.'

The following subsections offer evidence from various domains in support of our proposal.

3.1. Unreduced Exceptives

A straightforward piece of evidence for the clausal status of exceptive phrases is that they can be expressed in their unreduced form. Deletion of the embedded material seems to always be optional. (9) corresponds to (7) and (10) corresponds to (8).

- (9) 'Ua tae pauroa mai te mau tamari'i,
 PFV come all DIR DET PL child
 'o Poe noa 'aita (i tae mai)
 DET Poe just NEG PFV.DEP come DIR
 'All the children came, just Poe didn't (come).'

- (10) 'Ua tae pauroa mai te mau tamari'i,
 PFV come all DIR DET PL child
 'aita rā 'o Poe (i tae mai)
 NEG but DET Poe PFV.DEP come DIR
 'All the children came, but Poe didn't (come).'

3.2. Cross-Polynesian Comparison

A similar observation in support of our proposal comes from related Polynesian languages. In at least some of these languages, only the fully expressed versions of the negative clause, as in section 3.1, are possible. The reduction operations available in Tahitian seem to be unavailable. The examples in (11) are from Niuean,² and the example in (12) is from Tongan.

- (11)a. Kai oti e Mele e tau ika *Niuean*
 eat all ERG Mary ABS PL fish
 kae nākai/ai kai (e ia) e lahakula
 but not/not eat ERG 3SG ABS tuna
 lit. "Mary eats all fish but (she) does not eat tuna."
 'Mary eats all fish except tuna.'
- b. Ne hau (a) au he tau aho oti kaenākai/ai (a au) he tau ahu tapu
 PRS work ABS 1SG OBL PL day all but not/not ABS 1SG OBL PL Sunday
 lit. "I work all days but I do not work on Sundays."
 'I work every day except Sunday.'
- (12) 'Oku 'iloa 'e ia 'a e kakai katoa ka *Tongan*
 PRS see ERG 3SG ABS DET people all but
 'ikai ke 'iloa ('e ia) 'a Mele
 NEG SBJ see ERG 3SG ABS Mary
 'He saw everybody except Mary.'

This micro-variation will no doubt ultimately provide an important window on the ellipsis operations taking place in Tahitian, as they seem to be unavailable in some related languages.

3.3. Form of the Negative Marker

If the negative marker in exceptives is the clausal negator found in sentential negation contexts, we expect that it should show the morphosyntactic variation in Table 2, which indicates that negation varies in form with different TAM. This is indeed the case. (13) illustrates an exceptive using the imperfective negative particle 'e'ita in the context of a future event and (14) shows the prohibitive marker 'eiaha in a directive speech act.

² We would like to thank our Niuean consultants for help with these and other data: Grace Latoa, Mele Nemaia, Pat and Granby Siakimotu, and Kara Tukuitoga.

(13) 'E tauturu ra te tāvana 'i te ta'ato'ara'a 'e'ita rā 'oe
 FUT help DEIC DET chief ACC DET everyone NEG.IPFV but 2SG
 'The chief will help everyone but you.'

(14) 'E tāma vau te fare i te mau mahana ato'a
 FUT clean 1SG DET house PREP DET PL day all
 'eiaha rā te tapati
 NEG.PROH but DET Sunday
 'You must clean the house every day, except Sunday.'

3.4. Lack of Connected Exceptives

The literature on exceptives makes a distinction between connected exceptives and free exceptives (e.g. Hoeksema 1987, Pérez-Jiménez and Moreno-Quibén 2012). Connected exceptives are DP modifiers in which the exceptive phrase applies to the domain of quantification of the DP. Free exceptives are CP modifiers that are exceptions to propositions expressing a generalization. We tentatively assume that connected exceptives are phrasal modifiers of DPs and free exceptives are clauses (Pérez-Jiménez and Moreno-Quibén 2012). If the Tahitian exceptive phrase is a clause, it will not show behavior unique to connected exceptives, since the latter are phrasal. One characteristic of connected exceptives is that they can appear adjacent to the quantificational nominal that they modify. This is not possible in Tahitian, in contrast to the English translations:

- (15)a. 'Ua haere pauroa te ta'ata (*'aita rā 'o Marama)
 PFV go all DET people NEG but DET Marama
 i te tāmā'ara'a ('aita rā 'o Marama)
 PREP DET festival NEG but DET Marama
- b. 'Ua haere pauroa te ta'ata (*'o Marama noa 'aita)
 PFV go all DET people DET Marama just NEG
 i te tāmā'ara'a ('o Marama noa 'aita)
 PREP DET feast DET Marama just NEG
 'Everyone (except Marama) went to the feast (except Marama).'

3.5. Stripping

Our proposal is that exceptive phrases are simply (reduced) negative clauses. They do not semantically encode an exceptive meaning as in the English *except*. As a result, we do not expect such clauses to be restricted to exceptives. We expect to see such (reduced) negative clauses used elsewhere for a different purpose. This is what we find. These reduced negative clauses are also used in Stripping, (16b) shows that the same element is used to express stripped negative phrases.

- (16)a. 'Ua haere ātu vau i te 'oro'a,
 PFV go DIR 1SG PREP DET festival
 'aita rā 'o Marie 'i haere mai
 NEG but DET Mary PFV.DEP go DIR
 'I went to the festival but Mary didn't go.'
- b. 'Ua haere ātu vau i te 'oro'a, 'aita rā 'o Marie
 PFV go DIR 1SG PREP DET festival NEG but DET Mary
 'I went to the festival but not Mary.'

Whatever the processes are that create Tahitian exceptive phrases, they are used to generate negative stripping as well.

3.6. Lack of Cross-Clausal Binding

Finally, claiming that Tahitian exceptive phrases are independent clauses means that there will be no c-command relations between the generalization in the first clause and the exceptive phrase because the two are only paratactically related—i.e. they are coordinated. For example, a quantifier in the first clause cannot bind a pronominal variable in the exceptive. In (17), the pronoun *tōna* 'his' in the second clause cannot be coindexed with the quantified DP 'each child' in the first clause. Such a relationship might be possible if the exceptive were a VP modifier attached low in the first clause.

- (17) 'Ua rave maita'i te mau tamari'i tāta'itahi i te 'ohipa,
 PFV do well DET PL child each ACC DET work
 a. 'i tōna mahana fānaura'a noa 'aita
 PREP his day birth only NEG
 b. 'aita rā 'i tōna mahana fānaura'a
 NEG but PREP his day birth
 'Each child_i worked hard, except on his_{*i} birthday.'

3.7. By Way of Summary

We conclude that the exceptive in Tahitian is not a dedicated construction but a juxtaposition of two clauses in which the first makes a generalization and the second explicitly states an exception (or exceptions) to that generalization via a negative clause.

If this conclusion is on the right track, Tahitian instantiates “conjoined exceptives”. This strategy can be compared to that of conjoined comparatives (Stassen 1985, Beck et al. 2010), where a gradable property is predicated of the subject of one conjunct, and asserted not to hold of the subject of the other conjunct. This is illustrated by (18) from Itelmen (Bobaljik 2012:19), where comparison is expressed indirectly via the juxtaposition of two contrasting clauses. As in the exceptive situation, languages that use conjoined comparatives do not have a dedicated comparative construction but, rather, express the intended meaning by employing clause juxtaposition, often with a negative clause in the second conjunct.

- (18) Tinuʔn ʎeŋu-ʔn-č č'eβuz-ʎaχ-aʔn, a xaŋnaʔn qaʔm *Itelmen*
 these berries-PL-DIM sweet-ADJ-PL but those not
 lit. "These berries are sweet but those are not."
 'These berries are sweeter than those.'

We do not have data on exceptives in Itelmen. In the related language, Chukchi, comparatives are formed in a typical way by marking the standard of comparison with locative case, (19). Meanwhile, Chukchi exceptives are formed as in Tahitian, using a negative clause as the exceptive phrase, (20).³

- (19) Iŋəʃ ɕaɕa-ŋ wa-ʃʔə-n ʃəyuuŋʔ-ək *Chukchi*
 bluberry.ABS tasty-ADV AUX-NMLZ-3SG lingonberry-LOC
 'Blueberries taste better than crowberries.'

- (20) Əməʃʔo jet-γ'e-t, Ivan ʃuŋ-jetə-ʃʔə-n *Chukchi*
 all.ABS come-PFV-3PL Ivan.ABS NEG-come-NMLZ-3SG
 lit. "Everybody came, Ivan did not come."
 'Everybody came except Ivan.'

Systematic data on a possible correlation between conjoined exceptives and conjoined comparatives is lacking but there does not appear to be one. Preliminarily we observe languages that have conjoined comparatives but not conjoined exceptives such as Fijian (Pearson 2010) and possibly Itelmen, and languages which have conjoined exceptives but not conjoined comparatives, such as Tahitian and Chukchi. English, Russian, and Malagasy are examples of languages that use neither. We are not yet aware of any languages that use conjoined structures for both comparatives and exceptives, and we do not think that a correlation between two structures will be found.

4. Conclusion and Future Work

This paper has provided an initial investigation into the analysis of exceptive constructions in Tahitian, arguing that they are expressed using reduced negative clauses. The obvious next question is how a full negative clause is reduced to yield the exceptive phrases we see in the examples repeated below.

- (21) 'Ua tae pauroa mai te mau tamari'i, 'o Poe noa 'aita
 PFV come all DIR DET PL child DET Poe just NEG
 'All the children came, just/only Poe didn't.'

- (22) 'Ua tae pauroa mai te mau tamari'i, 'aita rā 'o Poe
 PFV come all DIR DET PL child NEG but DET Poe
 'All the children came, but Poe didn't.'

³ We are grateful to Marusya Pupynina for her help with the data.

We leave a full answer to this question for future work; any such work should probably be preceded by a more solid empirical exploration of different possibilities across languages.

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