Existential and locative predication in some eastern Oceanic languages

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Abstract

In many Oceanic languages a category of plain verbs expressing existence, and their negative counterparts, is found. Some only refer to pure existence ('be', 'exist'), others aim at localizing the existence ('be at'), either in a neutral way or, as shown by Lichtenberk (2002), by specifying the posture ('be standing, sitting, lying'). Moreover, existential verbs are well known for expressing possession (Lyons 1967). This article aims to discuss the expressions of (non-)existence and localization in some New Caledonian and Polynesian languages, investigating how the languages express these notions and how they are interrelated: in specific compatibilities with tense-aspect and negative markers and in their choice of subjects (impersonal vs. personal, specific vs. nonspecific, animate vs inanimate). I will show that existential predicates and constructions manifest considerable diversity in Oceanic languages: in their lexical inventory, in their contrasts between affirmation and negation, in their semantic differentiations between 'existence' and 'localization' as well as in their constructional properties.

Oceanic languages have more existential verbs than non-existential ones (Pawley 2000). The forms used for the various negative types (denial, negative verb, negative verbal marker, negative imperative), are identical or similar in some cases, but they can also be very different (Moyse-Faurie and Ozanne-Rivierre 1999).

Keywords

New Caledonian languages; Polynesian languages; (non-)existence; presence; possession

1 Introduction[1]

This article discusses the expressions of existence and localisation in some Oceanic languages, investigating how languages express these notions, and the way they are interrelated.

In many Oceanic languages a category of plain verbs expressing existence, and their negative counterparts, is found. Any linguist working on an Oceanic language has encountered parallel ways of expressing existence, either as such, or through localisation or posture. To give Pawley (2000) a wink, I would say that many be(e)'s are flying around in Oceanic languages. Some only refer to pure existence ('be', 'exist'), others localizing the existence ('be at'), either

in a neutral way, or by specifying the posture of an entity ('be standing', 'sitting', 'lying'), as described by Lichtenberk (2002).

Each of these 'be's' or 'not be's' has its own personality, that is, specific compatibilities with tense-aspect and negative markers, type of argument (subject vs. object, impersonal vs. personal, specific vs. nonspecific, animate vs. inanimate). Besides, each of these currently observable verbs has its own history, and some of them have undergone a relexification process.

I will mainly examine data collected in the languages I have done fieldwork on, that is, Kanak languages: Xârâcùù, Xârâgurè, Haméa spoken on the Mainland of New Caledonia, Drehu and Fagauvea in the Loyalty Islands. All except Fagauvea belong to the New Caledonian subgroup, a subgroup of Oceanic. Fagauvea (also known as West Uvean) is a Polynesian Outlier, a member of the Nuclear Polynesian subgroup to which most Polynesian languages belong, including East Futunan and East Uvean, which I have also done fieldwork on. I have also taken into consideration grammars or articles from other Oceanic languages such as Toqabaqita and Kokota (Solomon Is), Mwotlap, Anejom̃ and South Efate (Vanuatu), Iaai, Nêlêmwa, Nengone and Numèè (New Caledonia), Standard Fijian and Wayan (Fiji), Samoan and Tahitian (Polynesia), showing their own specificities or similarities with my own data. No generalizations, genealogical or typological, can be made for Oceanic existential constructions. An aim of this article is to describe the different constructions encountered in eastern Oceanic languages.

'Existing' basically means being somewhere. Existential verbs are also well known for expressing possession (Lyons 1967), and are linked to quantification ('none, few, many', etc.) as mentioned in §8. I will take into account recent typological approaches, such as the ones adopted by Creissels (2014), Koch (2012) and Veselinova (2013, 2016), since a goal of this article is to show how the Oceanic languages fit or do not fit into systems of cross-linguistic generalization based on typological and theoretical studies. I will show that distinctions in these languages are relevant to the different cross-linguistic studies presented below, consequently affording some valuable additional data. Creissels' typology excepted, very few Oceanic languages are taken into account in the typological studies which I will briefly present.

Creissels' classification (last available version, May 2014) includes seven types of existential predication, along with language names:

1. Locational-existentials: *English, Mwotlap, Samoan*;
2. Transitive possessive-existentials: *Indonesian, Tok Pisin*;
3. Possessive locational-existentials: *French*;
4. Incorporating possessive-existentials: *Tagalog*;
5. Comitative-existentials: *Swahili*;
6. Identificational-existentials: *Tahitian*;
7. Dedicated existential predicator: *Chamorro, Rapanui*.

In the Oceanic languages I will discuss, three of these seven types are well attested: Locational-existential predicates, dedicated existential predicators and identificational-existentials; each of these types can also express possession. Creissels, in fact, mentions at least one eastern Oceanic language (Mwotlap, Samoan, Tahitian and Rapanui) after each of these three types, and none for the others.

Koch (2012) proposed a constructional typological redefinition of the semantic space 'Location, Existence and Possession'. His study is mostly based on Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic and Niger-Congo languages. Its aim is to define cross-linguistic patterns of inheritance and to clearly distinguish categories within semantic space, analyzed with respect to the three

supposed conceptual invariants of possession, location and existence. Koch's approach is mainly onomasiological. He concludes that the concept of location is not universal in the strict sense, since it only concerns languages which lexicalize generic location, separately from existence. At least some Oceanic languages display such a lexical separation between generic location and existence, since existential verbs do not by themselves express locations. I was also interested by Koch's distinction between thematic location, *The book is on the table*, and rhematic location, *There is a book on the table*. As we will see, in Oceanic languages considered in this article, rhematic locations are expressed by specific locative verbs, and thematic locations by locative phrase predicates.

Croft's (1991) typology concerns the diachronic cycle for existential negative verbs, also discussed in Veselinova's (2013) approach to negative existentials, which is examined in §3. We will first show which Oceanic languages express location, existence and possession with the same verb, in contrast to languages that express location differently from existence and possession, and to those that express location and possession differently from existence.

2 Locative and existential predicates

One exists in some place, at a specific time, by oneself or together with other animate or inanimate entities. In Oceania, some languages use posture verbs to express existence; in others, localisation and existence are kept separate, each having its own verbal or non-verbal expression. This was pointed out by Lichtenberk (2002, p. 271): "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".

Different types of verbal predications expressing existence, possession and location, either with the same verb, or with different verbs, will now be presented, investigating the way they are interrelated. All possible combinations are attested.

2.1. One verb only expresses existence

In Numèè (New Caledonia, Southern Mainland), the verbal presentative *awe* is only used to express the existence of something:

(1) *Nââ   mwâ   ve   to   nâ   **awe**   jo.*
     3DU   PFV   take   stay   and   exist   water
     'They settled down, there was water.' (Fabrice Wacalie p.c.)

This verb does not accept any tense-aspect marker. Location is expressed independently, with prepositional phrases or deixis:

(2) ***Awe**   muru-jii   rea.*
     exist   piece-loincloth   DEIC
     'There is a piece of loincloth here.' (id.)

2.2 The same verb expresses both existence and location, and another verb is used for possession

In Toqabaqita (Malaita, Solomon Is), the verb *nii* (intr.) 'be located', 'exist' is the usual locative/existential verb (sometimes glossed *ni=i*, be.located=LOC or exist=LOC) (Lichtenberk 2008, p. 914-917).

(3) *Kere*   *thau-ngani-a*   *teqe*   *doo*   *na,*
     3PL.NFUT   build-TR-3.O   one   thing   REL

     na   *nga*   *iqa*   *e*   ***ni=i***   *laal-a.*
     REL   HESIT   fish   3SG.FUT   exist=LOC   inside-3SG.PERS
     'They had built a thing inside of which [repetition and hesitation], there are fish.'
     (Speaking about an underground aquarium) (id.:916)

(4) *Naifa*   *nau*   *ba=e*   ***nii***   *fei?*
     knife   1SG   that=3SG.NFUT   be.located   where
     'Where is my knife?' (id.:916)

According to Lichtenberk (2002) the two lexical uses of verbs expressing both existence and location are linked to the degree of definiteness of the relevant subject:
   definite subject > locative meaning, indefinite subject > existential meaning
   As far as existential verbs are concerned, I have not found a contrast of exactly this kind, but this may be due to the fact that locative and posture verbs only marginally express existence in the languages I have worked on. In fact, Lichtenberk (2002, p. 305) also mentions "verbs used to encode the location and existence of an entity, without any necessary implication of posture or spatial orientation". We will see, however, that the contrast (*definite subject > locative meaning, indefinite subject > existential meaning*) is valid for negative existential verbs.
   The Toqabaqita existential verb *nii* is not used to express possession[2]. There is a possessive verb *alu* 'have, possess', but the locative verb *too* 'be at a place, be present' can also be used to express possession (p.932 (26-63)), but not existence[3].
   This situation (a single verb for both existence and location) is also found in several Micronesian languages such as Mokilese with the intransitive verb *mine* 'to exist, there is/are, to be (at a place), to live, to reside' (Harrison & Albert, 1977, p. 55).
   According to Rehg & Sohl (1979, p. 58), Ponapean has two verbs, evidently cognate: *mi* 'to exist, a locative verb' vs *mie* 'to exist, an existential verb'. This is also the case in Woleian and Yapese.

2.3 The same verb expresses existence and possession, and another verb is used for location

This situation is quite frequent in languages I have worked on, both Kanak and Western Polynesian languages, such as East Futunan or East Uvean,
   These languages have 'pure' existential verbs (expressing existence as such), different from their locative and posture verbs (existence *in situ*). Locative or posture verbs express the location of a figure against some ground ('be at some place'), and that, of course, presupposes existence, but does not assert it.

The dichotomy between existential and locative verbs is well attested in Xârâcùù and in Haméa, two Kanak languages of the Mainland of New Caledonia, which I have chosen as examples of languages that distinguish between these two semantic verbal categories.

In Xârâcùù (South Mainland, New Caledonia), the main locative verb is *nöö* 'stay, be at a place'; it always occurs with a referential subject and a locative adjunct. The subject may be animate or inanimate, and no specific posture is specified.

(5) *Chaa   mârâdii   **nöö**   nèmèi*
     one   snake   stay   bush
     'There is a snake in the bush.'

Xârâcùù posture verbs such as *cuè* "sit", *tââ* "stand", *mètù* "lie" convey no additional existential meaning. Existence and possession are expressed with an existential verb, *xwi*, cognate with the verb 'do, make', a quite common situation in Kanak languages, as we will see later on. Referential subjects are possible when possession is expressed (8). They are also possible when existence is expressed (6), even if more often than not, there is an impersonal subject (7).

- existence
(6) *Pa   xûûchî   bwèrèdaa   kùtù   **xwi**   tö   xû   bwaa-ri.*
     COLL   child   sometimes   louse   exist   at   top   head-3PL
     'Children sometimes have lice on their heads.'
     (Lit. children, sometimes there are louse on their head)

(7) *(tö)   nèpwéé   nürüchaa   mwéa,   è   **xwi**   ngê   bwèrè-mêgi*
     at   inside   six   month   3SG exist   SM   portion-hot
     'Every six months, there are some warm periods.'

- possession
(8) *Xè   mîî   êrêcaa   bwa   purè-ri   **xwi**.*
     color PL   sea.products   DEIC   shell-3PL.POSS   exist
     'Color the creatures which have a shell.' (Lit. color the creatures their shell exists)

Similarly in Haméa (South Mainland, New Caledonia), there is a specific existential verb, *fi* (9-10), also expressing possession (11), but different from location (*truu* 'stay') and posture verbs.

- existence
(9) *Nrâ   **fi**   nrâ   chaa   chôbwi   rru   newe   loto.*
     3SG   exist   SM   one   mat   in   inside car
     'There is a mat in the car.'

Even with animate/human subjects, the meaning is purely existential, and specific locative information has to be expressed separately:

(10) *Nrâ   **fi**   nörrö   nrâ   auwö   anâ   mwââ-nrei   a.*
      3SG   exist   only   SM   cagou   here   content-island DEIC
      'Cagous only exist here on this island.'

The subject marker *nrâ* is required before this argument. We will see that this is the main difference from negative existential verbs, which have no subject argument.

   - possession

(11)   *Nrâ   nori   pe,   nrâ   **fi**   nrâ   véré-nrî.*
        3SG   give   flyingfox   3SG   exist   SM   sacred.stone-POSS.3SG
        'He gave the flyingfox, she had a sacred stone.' (Lit. …her sacred stone existed)

Example (12) expresses not only the existence of sugar, but also its availability, a convergent meaning already noted by Lichtenberk (2002):

(12)   *Nrâ   **fi**   nrâ   suka.*
        3SG   exist   SM   sugar
        'There is sugar.'

To express a location, another verb, *truu* 'be at a place, stay, dwell' is used; it requires a locative adjunct argument.

(13)   *Nrâ   ni   **truu**   nû   nrâ   mwâ   loto   anâ.*
        3SG   FUT   stay   for.ever   SM   DEM   car   there
        'This car will stay there forever.'

The three main posture verbs, *yoo* 'sit', *mérrö* 'lie' and *trurrö* 'stand up', which may occur with inanimate as well as animate subjects, presuppose but do not assert existence.

(14)   *Vé   mê   mwâ   ö   nrâ   **yoo**   rrö   nrîtoo*
        take   DIR   DEM   cooking.pot   3SG   sit   at   ground
        'Bring the cooking pot which is on the ground.'

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

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

East Futunan has an existential verb, *iai* 'exist' whose argument can refer to animate entities, non-specific (17) or specific (18):

(17)   *Ko   leia   lona   fia   ilo   pe   **iai**   se*
        PRED   DEM   his   will   know   if   exist   NSPC

        ta'ine   e   toe   tupulaga   ake   ia   Sina.
        young.girl   NPST   still   beautiful   DIR   OBL   Sina

     'He wants to know if there is a girl who is more beautiful than Sina.'

(18) *…kae   e   **iai**   lona   tupuna   e*
      …but   NPST exist   her   grandmother   NPST

      nofo   i   le   tasi   gā   motu.
      stay   OBL   SPC   one   CLS   island
      '[Sina is drifting] but there is her grandmother who is living on another small island.'

East Futunan has a purely locative verb, *na'a* 'be at', which may also occur with animate or inanimate entities and which conveys no indication about their postures:

(19) *E   **na'a**   le   matu'a   i   loku   kogafale.*
      NPST be.at   SPC   old.man   OBL   his   room
      'The old man is (staying) in his room.'

In example (20), the first clause includes the verb *iai* which asserts the existence of the library, while in the second clause, the locative verb *na'a* introduces its location:

(20) *E   **iai**   le   faletosi   i   Vasavasa   e*
      NPST exist   SPC   library   in   Vasavasa   NPST

      *se   **na'a**   ai   se   tosi   mo   Futuna.*
      NEG   be.at   ANAPH   NSPC   book   for   Futuna
      'In the library of Vasavasa, there are no books on Futuna.' (Lit. the library in Vasavasa exists, there are no books there on Futuna)

The posture verbs are *tu'u* 'stand, be at a place', *nofo* 'stay, live, be at a place' and marginally 'sit'.

(21) *Ko   leinei   le   koloa   e   **nofo**   mo*
      PRED DEM   SPC   wealth   NPST   stay   with

      au   la   ke   avatu   mo   'ou.
      1SG   EMPH   that   take.away   with   2SG
      'Here is the wealth that I have and that I give to you.' (Lit. here is the wealth it stays with me to take with you)

"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, 2014)

In languages of the Loyalty Islands, we find the same dichotomy as we have found with East Futunan verb *iai* 'exist', that is, between an existential verb also expressing possession, but not location.

In Iaai (Ouvéa, Loyalty islands), the existential verb *hu* is impersonal, only compatible with the 3rd person pronoun, and is followed by an indefinite noun phrase:

(22) *E   hu   ke   li   xop.*
      3SG   exist   INDEF   DU   men
      'There are two men.' (Ozanne-Rivierre, 1976, p. 206)

In these languages, location is mostly expressed with non-verbal constructions, as we have seen earlier.

The situation is the same in South Efate (Vanuatu), with the verb *piatlak* or *pitlak* 'have' encoding general existence (Thieberger, 2006, p. 272), whereas a copular verb, i.e. *pi*, only encodes existence and is used in equative clauses.

2.4 The same verb can express existence, location and possession

In Kokota (Santa Isabel, Solomon Is) the same verb *au* expresses existence, location and possession, with a negative counterpart, *teo* (Palmer 2009:214-217):

  - existence of an animate or inanimate entity
(23) *n-e-ge   au   dokta, n-e-ge   au   ira   mereseni...*
      RL-3SG-PRS   exist   doctor RL-3SG-PRS   exist   thePL   medicine
      'Now there are doctors, now there are the medicines…' (id.:215)

  - location
(24) *n-e   mai   au   buala   e=u*
      RL-3SG   come   exist   Buala   3SG=be.thus
      'It came and was at Buala. '

  - possession
(25) *ara   n-a   au=nau   kaike   zuta-pamu*
      1SG   RL-1EXCLS   exist=1SG.O   one   lamp-pump
      'I have one tilly lamp. ' (id. 2009:189)

In Wayan (A. Pawley, p.c.), a dialect of the Western Fijian language (spoken on Waya and Viwa Is., in the Yasawa group, Fiji), there are no locative predicates. Two verbs of existence are used, both as pure existentials and as locative existentials:

nō (1) 'stay, dwell, reside' , (2) 'be, exist' which requires an animate subject.

tau (1) 'be located, situated, be in a place', (2) 'be, exist', chiefly used with an inanimate subject.

  - pure existential uses:
(26) *Ei   nō   ei   lia   na   kalou?*
      3SG.NPST be   3SG.NPST one   ART   god
      'Is there a god?'

(27) *Ei   si   tau   nō   na   ke-da   aga.*
      3SG.NPST still   be   PROG   ART   POSS-1INC.PL usefulness
      'We are still useful.' (lit. 'It still exists our usefulness'.)

- locative existentials

(28) *Ei   **nō** na   alo   i   Waya?*
      3SG.NPST be   ART spirit LOC Waya
      'Are there spirits (permanently) on Waya?'

Tau can be used with an animate subject to imply temporary presence[4]:

(29) *Ei   **tau** na   alo   i   Waya?*
      3SG.NPST   be   ART spirit   LOC   Waya
      'Are there (sometimes) spirits on Waya (do they visit)?'

In Wayan (A. Pawley p.c.), an existential construction with *tau* is used to indicate possession, with the possessor introduced by a locative/dative preposition.

-possession

(30) *Ei   **tau** nō   iva   au   ei   lia   na   qō.*
      3SG.NPST be   PROG LOC 1SG 3SG.NPST one   ART pig
      'I have a pig (at the present time).' (Lit. There is a pig at me.)

The main posture verbs are *nō* 'sit, stay, dwell, be (of animates) ', *tū* 'stand', *doki* 'lie', *tok*o 'squat, crouch, perch'. The first two have grammaticalized uses as progressive aspect markers (as in Dutch): *nō* 'continuing (stable)', *tū* 'continuing (1) temporarily, for a time, (2) of standing things', but none of them are used to express existence.

In Mwotlap (Vanuatu), the existential verb *aē* (and its negative counterpart *tateh*) is used to assert existence, location, and possession:

(31) *Inti-k   **aē**.*
      son-1SG   exist
      'My son is there'. 'I have a son'. 'I have children.' (François, 2003, p. 14)

(32) *N-aksok   **aē**.*
      ART-fight   exist
      'A fight happened.' (id., p. 314)

3 Non-existence, absence and non-possession

The use of negative predicates to negate existence (and, consequently, possession) is widespread in Oceanic languages. It is interesting to note that the combinations of positive existence, location, and possession expressed by particular verbs are different in one and the same language from the combinations of non-existence, absence and non-possession. As indicated by one of the reviewers, this is a nice case of colexification differing in positive vs. negative existential verbs. Xârâcùù (New Caledonia), for example, has two different verbs for location and existence, but only one verb expressing both non-existence and non-location (cf. §3.1).

The forms used for the various negative types (denial, negative verb, negative verbal marker, negative imperative), may be identical or similar, but they can also be very different. Faced

with such a variety of negative forms, it is difficult to identify a diachronic cycle such as the one described by Croft (1991) for existential negative verbs. Croft proposed cyclic evolution of standard negation markers from existential negators, based on cross-linguistic data giving rise to six language types. Three of these types are invariant, while the three other types (A, B and C) exhibit variation in their negation strategies. In type A, the standard verbal negation is also used to negate existential predications. In type B, existential predications are negated by a specific strategy. In type C, it is the existential negator which is used to negate verbs. Following 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". As far as evolution is concerned, we can only identify the change from a specific existential negative verb to a preverbal negative marker in East Uvean and in Kanak languages such as Haméa or Xârâcùù. Mosel (1999, p. 6-7) distinguishes three types of negative verbs: general negative verbs, negative imperative verbs, and specific negative existential verbs, the latter being our main concern in this section, taking into account Veselinova's (2016) study on the typology of negative existentials.

We will now examine (i) formal identity between the verbal negator and the negative existential verb, (ii) the number of positive existential vs. negative existential verbs, (iii) the compatibility of the verbal negator with the positive existential verb, (iv) the type of arguments and their determiners, (v) and whether or not they also express non-location and non-possession.

Oceanic languages are often said to have more positive existential verbs than negative existential ones. For example, Wayan Fijian has three existential verbs, and only two negative ones (Pawley, 2000).

In the Polynesian Outlier Fagauvea, by contrast, there are two negative verbs, one negative locative meaning 'be absent' (*siai*), the other negative existential 'not exist, be none, not have' (*siage*), and also two positive verbs, one existential verb (*isi*), and one locative verb (*noo*).

3.1 A single dedicated negative existential verb

In Kanak languages, such as Xârâcùù or Ajië, there is only one negative verb for the two values 'be absent' and 'not exist, be none, not have'.

This is also the case in Toqabaqita, with only one negative existential verb, *aqi* 'not be so', 'not exist', 'not be available' which is used only with third person singular subject markers. "The subject noun phrase is non-referential. It encodes the type of entity whose non-existence or non-availability is being expressed. The subject noun phrase contains an indefinite quantifier…" (Lichtenberk, 2008, p. 919):

(33) *Qe   aqi   ta   firu-a.*
       3SG.NFUT   not.exist   some   fight-NMLZ
       'There was no war (going on at that time).' (id.)

(34) *Qe   aqi   ta   wane   fasi   kwa   ngata   bii-a.*
       3SG.NFUT   not.exist   some   person PURP   1SG.SEQ speak   COM-3SG.OBJ
       'There was no one (there) for me to talk to.' (id.:1149)

Aqi can also express non-possession:

(35) *Wela*   *qe*   ***aqi***   *qa-n=ta*   *maka.*
       child   3SG.NFUT   not.exist   POSS-3SG.PERS=some   father
       'The child has no father. ' (Lit. The child, of his there is not a father) (id., p. 930)

In Xârâcùù, the negative existential verb *siè* 'not exist, not be at a place' occurs in an impersonal construction allowing no kind of subject. If its object is inanimate (36-37), it is the existence that is denied, but if its object refers to an animate entity (38), it is its presence that is denied.

(36) *Wâ*   ***siè***   *laasi.*
       PFV   not.exist   rice
       'There is no more rice.'

(37) *Wâ*   ***siè***   *êrê-fârâ*   *rè*   *döu.*
       PFV   not.exist   NMLZ-count   POSS   thing
       'One cannot count anymore.' (*Lit*. counting doesn't exist anymore)

(38) *Va*   ***siè***   *ra*   *pa*   *xûûchî.*
       ASS   not.exist   still   COLL   child
       'The children are not here yet.'

It is noticeable that the only argument of the negative existential verb corresponds to an object.[5] In (39), the argument of the verb *siè* is *rö*, the object form of the 2sg pronoun:

(39) ***Siè***   *rö!*
       not.exist   2SG.OBJ
       'You are not here!'

In Haméa, by contrast, the existential verb *hwé* is preceded by a 'dummy' pronoun[6] that is an obligatorily non-referential pronominal 3sg subject, as in the case of its positive counterpart *fi*.

(40) *Nrâ*   ***hwé***   *suka.*
       3SG   not.exist   sugar
       'There is no sugar.'

The postposed argument is an object: no subject marker is allowed before *suka* in (40) or *tréan* in (42) and it is the object form of the pronoun that occurs after the verb in (41). Besides, if the object refers to a human being, the negative existential verb may convey a locative meaning, contrasting with the positive counterpart with the existential verb *fi*, which only conveys existence (as seen in examples 9-10 above).

(41) *Nrâ*   ***hwé***   *nrî.*   (42) *Nrâ*   ***hwé***   *tréan*   *anâ*   *érré.*
       3SG   not.exist   3SG.OBJ   3SG   not.exist   man   here   home
       '(S)he is not present.'   'Nobody is at home.'

It is remarkable that the negative existential verb may provide information on the location (that is the absence in a specific place) of human entities, while the positive existential verb only asserts the existence of animate or inanimate entities.

In conclusion, we can thus assert the non-existence of inanimate or non-human entities we have never seen, but only assert the non-presence of human entities, whose existence we must be aware of.

3.2 Two different negative verbs

In Iaai (Ozanne-Rivierre, 1976) there are two negative verbs: *bë* 'non-exist' (43) vs. *hiaa/hiöö* 'not be at a place' (+ object) (44):

(43)   *E*   *bë*   *falawa.*
       3SG   not.exist   bread
       'There is no bread.'

(44)   *E*   *hiöö*   *u.*
       3SG   not.present   2SG.O
       'You are not here.'

We find the same situation in Nengone, with one existential verb *numu* expressing both existence and possession, but two negative verbs *deko* for non-existence and non-possession vs *tako* for absence.

Fagauvea has one existential verb (*isi*), one locative verb (*noo*), and two corresponding negative verbs: non-existence (*siage*), and absence (*siai*).

In (45), the existential verb *isi* and the locative verb *noo* occur in the same sentence, the latter situating the existing young boy/man:

(45)   *Odi*   *la*   *e*   *isi*   *he*   *tama,*   *goa*   *tangata*   *i*   *dena*   *uta,*
       then   EMPH   NPST   exist   NSPC   boy   PFV   man   OBL   DEIC   upwards

       e   *noo*   *uta*   *i*   *motu*   *ma*   *de*   *fafine*   *matua.*
       NPST   be.at   upwards   OBL   island   with   SPC   woman   old

       'Once upon a time there was a young boy, he became a man and was living in the upper part of the island with an old woman.'

To express non-existence, only the negative existential verb *siage* may be used. The non-past tense-aspect marker in (46) implies a permanent non-existence meaning, while the perfective aspect in (47) implies a 'no longer' existence meaning:

(46)   *E*   *siage*   *he*   *drube*   *i*   *Uvea.*
       NPST   not.exist   NSPC   deer   OBL   Ouvéa
       'There are no deer in Ouvéa.'

(47) *Goa **siage** he kuli i de mahale o dogu enge.*
      PFV not.exist NSPC dog OBL SPC house POSS my aunt
      'There are no more dogs in my aunt's house.'

In (48), it is the absence of an expected individual or entity from a specific place that is expressed with the other negative verb, *siai* 'not be present':

(48) *Anaafi na **siai** he nea na seke o kitea iaau.*
      yesterday PAST not.be.at NSPEC human PAST arrive COMP see 1SG
      'Yesterday, nobody came to see me.' (Someone was expected).

3.3 Combination of existential verbs and standard negation

Verbs of non-existence coexist with existential ones, even if in some languages, the latter may combine with the negative marker.

The existential verb negated with the standard negative marker expresses non-presence, thus allowing definite subjects. In Haméa, for example, the example (49) with the non-existential verb *hwé* and a following indefinite object, contrasts with (50), showing the compatibility of the positive existential verb *fi* with the standard negative marker *ché*. In this case, the postposed argument is the subject, and it includes the definite plural article *mêrê*.

Haméa (South of the Mainland, New Caledonia)

(49) *Nrâ **hwé** mââmürre a-fi.*
      3SG not.exist children NMLZ-go
      'No children are leaving.' (None were expected to leave)

(50) *Nrâ **ché** **fi** nrâ mêrê mââmürre a-fi*
      3SG NEG exist SM DEF.PL children NMLZ-go
      'None of the children will be leaving.' (Some were expected to leave)

The examples in (51) express quite similar meanings, the difference lying in the personal belief in evils. In (51a), the non-existence of evil spirits is asserted, while in (51b), it is the (temporary) absence of evils which is mentioned:

(51a) *Nrâ **hwé** hau.* (b) *Nrâ **ché** **fi** nrâ hau.*
       3SG not.exist evil   3SG NEG exist SM evil
       'Evils don't exist.'   'There are no evils there.'

In New Caledonian languages, the possibility of combining the existential verb with standard negation seems to be quite rare. Besides Haméa, I have found it in the neighbouring language Ajië (La Fontinelle, 1976, p. 266)[7], and in one of the Loyalty Islands languages, Drehu.

In Toqabaqita (Lichtenberk, 2008, p. 918), negative locational sentences are formed with the verb *nii* 'be located, exist' and *aqi*, the usual negative marker, identical to the negative existential verb (NEGV):

(52) *Naifa   na   ku   lae   uri-a   qe*
      knife   REL   go   1SG.FUT   PURP-3SG.OBJ   3SG.NFUT

      aqi   si   ni=i   *kula   lakoo.*
      NEGV   3SG.NEG   be.located=LOC   place   that
      'The knife I went for (The knife I went to get) was not there (Lit. at that place). '

This is also the case in Wayan: non-existence can be expressed with the locative verb preceded by the verbal negator:

(53) *Ei   tam   **tau** i   Waya   na   makadre.*
      3SG.NPST   NEG   be   LOC   Waya   ART   kauri.resin
      'There is no kauri resin on Waya.' (A. Pawley p.c.)

This is also true of some Polynesian languages such as East Futunan, in which the negative verb *le'e* conveys a purely abstract non-existence meaning (54), while the combination of the existential verb *iai* with the negative marker *se* insists on the absence of something in a specific place (55):

(54) *Na   **le'e**   ni   puaka   i   Futuna   i   le   temi   mu'a.*
      PST   not.exist   NSPC.PL   pig   in   Futuna   OBL   SPC   time   before
      'In the past, there were no [existing] pigs in Futuna.'

(55) *Na   **se**   **iai**   ni   puaka   i   Futuna[8].*
      PST   NEG   exist   NSPC.PL   pig   OBL   Futuna
      'There were no pigs [living] in Futuna'.

Both constructions imply the use of non-specific articles.

In East Uvean the negative marker *mole* may occur either as a verb 'disappear' > 'not exist' (56) and (58), or as a negative marker, able to modify the positive existential verb *iai* (57) and (59). This situation corresponds to Croft's 2001 type C classification, that is with the existential negator also used to negate verbs.

(56) *'E   **mole**   he   'aliki.*
      NPST   not.exist   NSPC   chief
      'There is no [such person as a] chief.'

(57) *'E   **mole iai**   he   'aliki.*
      NPST   NEG   exist   NSPC   chief
      'There is [presently] no chief.'

(58) *'E   **mole**   he   ma'uga   i   'Uvea.*
      NPST   not.exist   NSPC   mountain   OBL   Wallis
      'There is no mountain in Wallis.'

(59) *'E   mole iai   ni   'ao   i   te   lagi.*
      NPST NEG exist NSPC.PL cloud OBL SPC sky
      'There are no clouds in the sky (today).'

We can summarize the semantic differences between the negative existential verb, on the one hand, and the combination of the verbal negative marker + positive existential verb, on the other:

- **Negative existential verb**
indefinite argument > generic non-existence
definite argument > locative meaning (non-presence)

- **Verbal negative marker + positive existential verb**
definite or indefinite argument > locative meaning (non-presence)

In Anejom̃ (South Vanuatu), as in most Kanak languages, non-existential situations can only be expressed with the non-existential verbs: *tii* 'not to be (sg)' and *sjek* 'not to be (pl)', but never (as in Samoan) with the combination of the existential verb (*yek*) and the standard negator (*itiyi*):

(60) *Et   tii   a   intaketha   a-nlii-i   niom̃.*
      3SG.AR not.be   S   woman   LOC-inside-CS   house
      'The woman is not in the house.' (**itiyi yek*) (Lynch, 2000, p. 74)

4 Possession and Non-possession

I have already mentioned what Lyons (1967, p. 390) wrote about existential and possessive constructions deriving from locatives (both synchronically and diachronically). In the languages I know best, the expression of existence is primarily related to the notions of action ('do'), rather than locatives. As for possession, it is expressed with the existential verbs, and not with the locative ones. In his constructional typology of 'possession', Koch (2012, p. 561-564), looking at "inheritance links between constructions, as a typological feature concerning the interrelations between the domains Location, Existence, and Possession", distinguishes several ways of expressing 'alienable possession': Type I *have*-possessive (*Maltese*); Type II adjectival possessive[9]; 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*).
    We have seen earlier examples of the link between existence and possession. The situation whereby verbs stating non-existence may express non-possession is also very common, as for example in Kokota (Santa Isabel, Solomon Is):

(61) *Ara n-a   au=nau   kaike zuta-pamu.* (=example 33)
      I   RL-1EXCLS   exist=1SG.O one   lamp-pump
      'I have one tilly lamp.' (Palmer, 2009, p. 189)

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(62) *Manei n-e   **teo**   nehu   dou.*
     he   RL-3SG   not.exist   nose   be.big
     'He doesn't have a big nose.' (id., p. 188)

Below are a few examples in the different languages I have investigated, with existential verbs of different origins expressing possession as long as a possessor is expressed in the subject phrase.

In Xârâcùù, the existential verb *xwi* (< 'do, make') and its negative counterpart *siè* are used to express possession or non-possession in combination with a possessive noun phrase. The constituent order may differ, whether the construction is positive or negative:

(63) *Kéé-rè   **xwi**.*
     basket-3SG.POSS   exist
     '(S)he has one/several basket(s).' (Lit. his/her basket exists)

(64) ***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…)

In Haméa, we can note again that the positive existential verb has a subject, introduced by the subject marker *nrâ*, while the negative existential verb has an unmarked/object argument:

(65) *Nrâ **fi**   nrâ u-nô.*   *Nrâ **hwé**   u-nô.*
     3SG   exist   SM   yam-POSS.1SG   3SG   not.exist   yam-POSS.1SG
     'I have yams.'   'I do not have yams.'

Similarly in Polynesian languages such as East Futunan, Tongan, East Uvean and Samoan, possession and non-possession are expressed with the (non-)existential verbs (but not with verbs of absence).

Negative existential verbs have non-specific arguments and this is a wide-spread, if not universal, feature, as attested in Samoan (Mosel and Hovdhaugen, 1992, p. 334):

(66) *E **iai**   sau   telefoni? E **leai**   sau   telefoni?*
     NPST   exist   POSS.2SG.NSPC   telephone   NPST   not.exist   POSS.2SG.NSPC   telephone
     'Do you have a telephone?'   'Don't you have a telephone?'

or in East Uvean:

(67) *'E **mole**   he   tamasi'i a   Soane.*
     NPST   not.exist   NSPC   child   POSS   Soane
     'Soane has no children.'

The combination of the standard negation with the existential verb can also express non-possession, in East Uvean (68) as in East Futunan (69):

(68) *'E   iai   haku   tohi ?*   *'E   **mole** iai   haku   tohi.*
      NPST   exist   my.NSPC   book   NPST   NEG   exist   my.NSPC   book
      'Do I have a book ?'   'I don't have any book.'

(69) *Ku   se   iai   so'oku   gā   kie.*
      PFV   NEG   exist   POSS.1SG.NSPC   CLS   loin.cloth
      'I have no loincloth anymore.'

In East Futunan, however, the non-possessor has to be expressed as a beneficiary (Koch's Type III?) in combination with the negative existential verb, and not as a possessive adjunct, as it is the case in Samoan and in East Uvean (70-71) (and also in Tongan, according to Churchward, 1953).

(70) *E   le'e   se   fā   sikaleti   **ma**   Petelo.*
      NPST   not.exist   NSPC   CLS.   cigarette   BEN   Petelo
      'Petelo has no cigarettes.' (*Lit*. there is no cigarettes for Petelo)

(71) *E   le'e   ni   toe   **mo**   Malia.*
      NPST   not.exist   NSPC.PL   child   BEN   Malia
      'Malia has no children.'

5 Constructional compatibility

The compatibilities of existential and locative verbs with negative and tense-aspect markers, as well as the status and the constraints on their arguments (degree of animacy, indispensability, encoding strategies) are often described as being different from other verbs.

For example, in East Uvean (72-74), the existential verb *iai* clearly requires a non-specific argument in interrogative clauses (also in Samoan, as seen in example (66) above):

(72) *'E   iai   nā   te   fo'i   maka   laulahi   'e   tuku   ki   lalo.*
      NPST   exist   there   SPC   CLS   stone   tall   NPST   put   OBL   under
      'There is (there) a huge rock lying on the side.'

(73) *E   iai   he   motokā   i   fale?   Io,   'e   iai   te   motokā.*
      NPAST exist   NSPEC   car   in   house   yes   NPAST exist   SPEC   car
      'Is there a car at home? Yes, there is one.'

(74) *'E   iai   ni'ihi   i   fale?*
      NPAST exist   others   OBL   house
      'Are there people in the house?'

In Fagauvea, the subject of both the positive (*isi* in (75)) and the negative (*siage* in examples (46-47) above) existential verb has to be non-specific, while the subject of the negative locative verb (*siai*) shows no restriction, even in connection with an inanimate subject, as in (76):

(75) *E*   ***isi***   *e*   *kete*   *i*   *dogu*   *tafa.*
      NPST   exist   NSPC   bag   OBL   my   side
      'There is a bag next to me.' (**E isi de kete i dogu tafa.*)

(76) *De*   *vaka*   *goa*   ***siai***   *balua*   *i*   *taikona.*
      SPC   boat   PFV   not.be.at   for.ever   OBL   sea
      'The boat has disappeared for ever in the sea.'

(77) *E*   ***siai***   *dagu*   *tama*   *i*   *mahale.*
      NPAST   not.be.at   my   son   OBL   house
      'My son is not at home.' (He was expected to be at home)

The situation in Fagauvea differs from what we saw in the other languages in two respects: First, only non-specific subjects are allowed with the positive existential verb. Secondly, Fagauvea has two different negative verbs, one for non-existence, the other one for non-presence, i.e. absence. Only the latter may have specific subjects as in (76) and (77).

Similarly, Nyelâyu, another Kanak language, spoken in the northern part of the Mainland of New Caledonia (Ozanne-Rivierre, 1998), also has two negative verbs, and only a single positive one (78a). The negative existential verb may only occur with a non-specific argument (78b), whereas the negative locative verb may be definite (79a and 79b).

(78a) ***Thuya***   *no.*   (78b) ***Haria***   *no.*
       exist   fish   not.exist   fish
       'There are fish.'   'There are not any fish.'

(79a) *Hon*   ***cia***   *er.*   (79b) *Hon*   ***cian***   *tina*   *hele.*
       PFV   not.be.there   3SG   PFV   not.be.there   DEIC   knife
       'She/he is not there.'   'The knife is lost.'

6 Historical aspects: grammaticalization

Most of the Kanak languages on the Mainland have 'do/make' as origin for their existential verbs, whereas some Polynesian languages, and according to Lynch (2000) also Anejom̃, have lexicalised existential verbs derived from the combination of the static preposition and the anaphoric demonstrative.

6.1 The verb 'do, make', and its development to an existential verb

The fact that 'do/make' also means 'occur, happen' is a well-known case of lability (polysemy). For instance, it is found in Mande languages (Creissels, pers.comm.) and in French. The development from 'occur, happen' to 'exist' is then a plausible one.

Both meanings are generally maintained, but there are differences in their use.

In Xârâcùù, the verb *xwi* may take any (pro)nominal subject as an active verb and there is agreement between the preposed pronominal subject and the lexical subject, which may be postposed to a position after the predicate and introduced by the subject marker *ngê* as in

(80),whereas in its use as an existential verb, the 3rd person singular pronominal subject is
typically used. Moreover, the subject marker *ngê* is no longer required (some speakers allow it,
others don't), and there is no agreement with the lexical argument (81).

(80) *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)

(81) *È nää **xwi** (ngê) mîî pè-ngâârû rè ri.*
       3SG PAST.PROG   exist (SM) PL stone-seed POSS 3PL
       'There used to be stones for seed-plants.' (Lit. it used to exist, their stones for seed-plants)

In Xârâcùù, the existential predicate *xwi* is also used to express the notion of 'to amount to',
in reference to time.

(82) *È **xwi** bachéé daa mè péépé wâ paii.*
       3SG amount.to   three   day   that   baby   PFV   sick
       'The baby has been sick for three days.' (Lit. it amounts to three days that the baby got
       sick)

In this context, French also uses the verb *faire* 'do/make', and the French translation would
be *Cela **fait** trois jours que Bébé est tombé malade*.

Among the Kanak languages spoken on the Mainland which have existential verbs formally
identical to verbs meaning 'do/make', I have found Nemi: *pmwa* 'exist' < *pmwa-i* 'do, make
(tr.)', Nyelâyu *thu* 'exist' < *thu* 'do, make' (+ incorporated object), Tîrî *fwi*, Numèè *awe*, Ajië
wii, Cèmuhî *pwö*, Xârâcùù *xwi*, etc. (cf. Moyse-Faurie and Ozanne-Rivierre, 1999)
Cèmuhî (Centre of the Mainland, New Caledonia) is an example of such a colexification:

(83) *Go **pwö** dè?*   *Ko **pwö** apuliè.*
       2SG   do   what   PROG   exist   people
       'What are you doing?'   'There are (lots of) people.' (Rivierre, 1980, p. 217)

Other languages, however, have two different verbs, one meaning 'do, make' (tr.), and one
meaning 'exist' (intr.). This is the case in Xârâgurè, though geographically and genetically
close to Xârâcùù, with *xu* 'exist' (84) nowadays formally different from *xwé* 'do, make' (85),
even if we can suppose that it is derivationally related.

(84) *Kwé **xu** nöö napwé mwââkwé.*
       water exist LOC inside house.water
       'There is water in the waterhole.'

(85) *Nyî **xwé** mûgé wakè êrê sii **xwé** xöru na.*
       3SG   do   again   work   3SG.IMPERS   NEG   do   well   PST
       'He does again the work which has not been done correctly.'

The Xârâgurè existential verb *xu* generally has a referential subject, and is also used to
express possession:

(86) *Nyô   ùtéé   kèrèmwâ   mè   xörö-rè   **xu**.*
     3SG.PFV   see   how   that   strength-POSS.3SG   exist
     'He notices how strong he was.' (Lit. he sees how his strength exist)

In Xârâgurè, the corresponding negative existential verb *söwi* 'not exist, disappear' behaves like all the other intransitive verbs[10]:

(87) *A   bù   a   wâ   söwi.*
     DEIC   flying fox   DEIC   PFV   not.exist
     'This (kind of) flying fox doesn't exist anymore.'

It is well-known that cross-linguistically the origin of a dedicated negative existential verb may be a lexical one, such as 'be lost, disappear' or be formally related to standard negation, or result from the fusion of this negative marker and the existential verb.

Curiously, in Haméa, also a geographically close language, the existential verb *fi* has a second meaning: 'go, leave', whereas 'do, make' and 'amount for' are expressed by a different verb, *gôrô*. For Haméa speakers I questioned about this colexification between moving and existing concepts, the link looks totally natural!

6.2 Existential verbs developing from the relexicalisation of the stative preposition i + anaphoric ai > iai

The origin of the East Futunan, East Uvean, Tongan and Samoan existential verb *i ai* is clearly deictic (cf. Moyse-Faurie, 2010), but it has undergone a demotivation process and is no longer perceived as a prepositional phrase (preposition *i* + anaphoric *ai*), even if such a succession still exists in a purely anaphoric use.

Both the existential verb *iai* and the locative anaphoric prepositional phrase *i ai* may co-occur in a sentence, as shown in the following East Futunan example:

(88) *O   kaku   atu   loa   ki   Mamalu'a   e*
     and   reach   DIR   SUCC   OBL   Mamalu'a   NPST

     iai   *le   nofolaga   **i**   **ai**....*
     exist   SPC   camp   OBL   ANAPH
     'And arriving in Mamalu'a, there is a camp there…'

As a verb, however, *iai* has lost its original deictic meaning, now conveying a purely lexical existential meaning. Similarly in Samoan, Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992, p. 526) make a clear distinction between the existential verb *iai* and the anaphoric prepositional phrase *i+ai*.

A similar relexicalisation process has been described by Lynch (2000, p. 74) for Anejom̃, a South Vanuatu language: "The existential verb bears a strong formal resemblance to the anaphoric demonstrative pronouns:

Existential verb		Anaphoric demonstrative	
yek	singular	yiiki	singular
rak	dual	raaki	dual
sjek	plural	jiiki, jeken	plural

It may be that the existential verb is a verbalisation of the demonstratives, which might explain its irregularity."

7 Non-verbal predicates

Lastly, I will briefly present two non-verbal locational and identificational predicate types, both presupposing existence.

7.1 Locative predication

Locational sentences consist of a predicate – a locative morpheme or a prepositional locative phrase – and an argument. They describe where an entity (animate or inanimate) is or where an event takes place. Example (89) in Drehu (Lifu, Loyalty Islands) has a prepositional predicate consisting of the locative preposition *e* and the proximal demonstrative *celë* 'near the speaker':

(89) *Eni   me   Drilë   e   celë.*
     1SG   and   Drilë   LOC   DEIC
     'I am here with Drilë.'

In Polynesian languages, such locative constructions are also common, but have to be combined with tense-aspect markers, as in the following East Uvean examples:

(90) *'E   i   fale   ia   te   'ofafine   o   te   pule   o   Lausīkulá.*
     NPST   OBL   house   ABS   SPC   daughter   POSS   SPC   chief   POSS   Lausikula

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

Such a construction can be negated, by adding the negative marker in front of the locative predicate:

(91) *'E   mole   i   fale   ia   te   'ofafine   o   te   pule   o   Lausīkulá.*
     NPST   NEG   OBL   house   ABS   SPC   daughter   POSS   SPC   chief   POSS   Lausikula
     'The daughter of the chief from Lausikula is not at home.'

The negation of locative sentences does not change the determination of the subject, in contrast to the negation of existential sentences, whose argument is obligatorily non-specific, as we will see below. These locative predicates always refer to static events, only occurring with the static locative preposition. Following P. Koch's terminology (2012), these constructions express Thematic Locations (Type T), in contrast to Rhematic Locations, mainly expressed by existential verbs, as we will see.

7.2 Identificational predication

Another type of non-verbal predication is found in Eastern Polynesian languages, such as Tahitian or Hawaiian, which expresses existence or possession. The identificational particle

(ID) (*e* in Tahitian examples below) is used as a predicative marker. Location is added through a prepositional phrase.

- existence
(92) *E   naonao   tei   terā   motu.*
      ID   mosquito   LOC   DEIC   island
      'There are mosquitoes on this island.' (J. Vernaudon, p.c.)

- possession
(93) *E   tamari'i   tā   rāua.*
      ID   child   POSS   3DU
      'They have children.' (id.)

8 Existence and quantification

I have discussed 'existence' in relation to 'location': we exist in a specific environment, and location presupposes existence. Quantification also presupposes existence, and may be expressed by means of plain predicates, without any copulas or existential verbs. In some Oceanic languages quantifiers do indeed share the existential verb paradigm, contrasting with languages such as French or English, in which quantifiers do not commute but combine with existential verbs.

In Haméa, both the existential verb *fi* and the verbal quantifier *bwêê* share the same paradigm, followed by a subject obligatorily introduced by the subject marker *nrâ*:

(94) *Nrâ **fi**   nrâ suka.*   *Nrâ **bwêê**   nrâ sugar.*
      3SG   exist   SM   sugar   3SG   numerous   SM   sugar
      'There is sugar.'   'There is a lot of sugar.'

Whereas the negative existential verb *hwé*, as in *nrâ **hwé** suka* 'there is no sugar', occurs with an unmarked indefinite object (cf. §3.1.)

Similarly in Drehu (Lifu, Loyalty islands), numerals commute with the existential verb *hetre*, below in constructions expressing possession.

(95) ***Hetre*** *uma*   *i*   *Wamo*   *hë.*
      exist   house   POSS   Wamo   PFV
      'Wamo now has a house.' (Lit. exist a house of Wamo)

(96) ***Lue*** *uma*   *i*   *Wamo*   *hë.*
      two   house   POSS   Wamo   PFV
      'Wamo now has two houses.' (Lit. two the houses of Wamo)

Quantification does not need to be expressed through an existential formula. It simply presupposes it, whereas possession is expressed through the combination of an existential verb and a possessive noun phrase.

9 Conclusion

Examining mainly Kanak and Polynesian data, we have seen that these languages have specific verbs expressing plain location ('be at'), usually different from the verbs of existence, even though the locative verbs may also imply existence in a specific place ('be at'), without specifying a posture. In these languages, existential verbs do not by themselves express locations. As we have seen, rhematic locations are expressed by specific locative verbs, and thematic locations by locative phrase predicates.

In contrast to what is claimed in Lyons (1967, p. 390), that "… in many, and perhaps in all, languages existential and possessive constructions derive (both synchronically and diachronically) from locatives", the data I have presented show that the expression of existence may be primarily related to the notions of action ('do'), and not always to location.

In Kanak languages, we find the following evolution:

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

Curiously enough, in some languages, non-location may be expressed either by the combination of the negative marker with the existential verb, or by a specific negative verb, different from the one expressing non-existence.

These negative existential verbs are found in most Oceanic languages, along with specific prohibitive forms.

Overall, existential predicates and constructions manifest considerable diversity in Oceanic languages, in their lexical inventory, in their contrasts between affirmation and negation, in their semantic differentiations between 'existence' and 'localization' as well as in their constructional properties. This variability can be summarized as follows:

(a) The number of positive and negative existential constructions differs from one language to another, just like formal relations between these semantic oppositions.
(b) What also varies is their range of possible interpretations ('pure existence' and /or location and posture)
(c) Positive and negative existential constructions differ in their constructional properties across Oceanic languages.

In a few Kanak languages, negative existential verbs express non-presence when their argument – obligatorily an object – refers to an animate being, whereas positive existential verbs occur with subjects. In all other Oceanic languages I have looked at, negative existential verbs only occur with a non-specific nominal subject argument, whereas negative locative verbs may take specific or non-specific arguments.

Abbreviations

ABS absolutive, ANAP anaphoric, ASS assertive, CLAS classifier, COLL collective, COMP complementizer, CS construct suffix, DEF definite, DEIC deictic, DEM demonstrative, DIR directional, DU dual, EMPH emphatic, FUT future, LOC locative preposition, NEG negation, NMLZ nominalizer, NPST non past, NSPEC non specific article, OBJ object, OBL oblique preposition, PERS personal article, PL plural, POSS possessive, PROG progressive, PRS present, PST past, PRED predicative, PFV perfective, RL realis, SG singular, SM subject marker, SPC specific article.

Notes

1. I presented a paper on this topic at the conference organized by Bernard Comrie for the closure of the Linguistics section of the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig (May 1-3, 2015). The day before my talk, Andy Pawley sent me a message about Frank's death. I had been in daily contact with Frank for years. And of course, we had been discussing the expression of (non-)existence in detail. It took me 3 years to be able to reacquaint myself with this topic, and I am happy to submit an article for the special issue of Te Reo edited in his honor. I miss Frank every day. We were just friends, but such great friends.

2. Toqabaqita differs from the general situation since, as noted by Frank: "In many Oceanic languages possessive sentences are in essence existential sentences" (Lichtenberk, 2002, p. 272).

3. Other interesting examples concerning the expression of possession can be found p. 932 (26-42) with the possessive marker, (26-44) and (26-45) without the possessive marker; with the verb *alu* p. 931-932 (26-64).

4. Similarly in Fijian, according to Schütz (1985, p. 100-102), there are two different verbs, each expressing both existence and location (or posture), with a distinction between a temporary vs permanent existence/location: *tiko* 'exist (temporary)', 'stay, reside' vs *tū* 'exist permanently', 'to be upright'.

5. I. Bril (1999, p. 82) notes a similar structure in Nêlêmwa, with the negative verb *kia* obligatorily followed by an object pronoun.

6. In Kanak languages, only a few verbs require a 3rd singular dummy pronoun when the subject is non-human: negative existential verbs, or verbs expressing potential modality such as 'be possible', 'be enough', 'depend' (cf. Moyse-Faurie, 2011).

7. In Ajië, the existential verb *wii* may be negated with the standard negation *daa*, even though there is a negative existential verb *yèrri*.

8. According to Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992, p. 114), a similar construction as (55) is not possible in Samoan.

9. There is no attestation of Type II in Koch's sample, but references are given such as Stassen (2009, p. 145), with examples from Altaic-Turkic languages.

10. The verb *söwi* also exists in Xârâcùù, meaning 'exhausted (food, provisions)', but is not used as a negative existential verb.

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