

Maori *ko* again

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1 Preamble

This paper¹ can be seen in part as an attempt to follow up suggestions by Harlow in his 1982 paper to the NZ Linguistic Society Conference on the relationship between *ko* and notions such as 'topic' and 'focus'. However, the stimulus to reconsider the area came from a different source: from my observation that the suprasegmental features associated with *ko*-phrases provided by Maori-speaking consultants varied in different contexts. The paper outlines those data, and suggests on the basis of them that the sorts of conjectures made by Harlow in 1982 are supported by the distribution of suprasegmentals.

First, a note is perhaps called for about the terms 'topic' and 'focus'. I shall be using them here in a fashion consistent with that proposed in e.g. Comrie (1981:56-9). Focus is used for units with high information value, and may be either contrastive or non-contrastive. Wh-questions specify focal information in this sense. Topic, on the other hand, is used for units which frequently have low information value. More importantly, they are 'what we are talking about'. Many other distinctions have been proposed in the literature on information packaging. However, the discussion here will invoke only these two.

It is also necessary to add a word on stress in Maori. Stress in Maori cannot in general be moved from constituent to constituent to indicate change in focus as it can in English, for instance. Thus a question like

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(1) E 'aruaru ana a Hata i a Huia?

T/A chase T/A pers Hata DO pers Huia

'Is Hata chasing Huia?'

is neutral: the answer "Ae" ("Yes") confirms the truth of the proposition 'Hata is chasing Huia'. To check, for instance, whether the actor is indeed Hata, it is necessary in Maori to use a different word order. Stress cannot be shifted from the verb to *Hata* to effect this change in focus. (It must be noted, however, that there is an increasing tendency amongst semi-speakers to borrow the English stress-shifts for such purposes. However, the facts reported here are based on the Maori of older speakers, who do not use stress shift.) Main sentence stress in Maori normally falls on the predicate. Any predicate can alternatively receive emphatic stress (marked " here). Emphatic stress is realized by a complex of features including slow tempo, emphatic pronunciations of consonants, and sometimes loudness. Some of the constructions which call for the use of emphatic stress are noted below.

2 Equative *ko* vs. Topicalizing *ko*

Like Harlow (1982), I follow Reedy (1979) in distinguishing two uses of *ko*. The first occurs as the predicate marker in non-verbal sentences which are equative, e.g.

(2) Ko 'Huia ahau.

eq. Huia 1sg

'I am Huia.'

As with other predicates in Maori, this predicative phrase receives the main sentence stress - the lexical head of the predicative phrase is strongly stressed, and the locus of the major pitch movement of the sentence. This *ko* is not deletable.

Ko can also be used as the marker of fronted definite subject phrases in both verbal and non-verbal sentences, e.g.

(3) Ko Rewi e 'whāngai ana i te kūao kau.

top. Rewi T/A feed T/A DO the baby.animal cow

'Rewi is feeding the calf.'

(4) Ko Rewi kei ko'nei.

top. Rewi at(pres) here

'Rewi is here.'

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Topicalizing *ko*, as I shall call this *ko*, occurs in phrases which are not strongly stressed. The major sentence stress in such sentences falls on the predicate, verbal or non-verbal. (Note that which syllable of *konei* in (4) receives the stress varies from dialect to dialect.) *Ko* in such sentences can be deleted, and often is in informal speech. (Indefinite subjects are fronted in the same way, but without any prepositional marker, in topicalising contexts.)

However, sentences like (3) and (4) have an alternative prosodic pattern:

(5) *Ko* "Rewi e whāngai ana i te kūao kau.

foc. Rewi T/A feed T/A DO the baby.animal cow

'Rewi is feeding the calf.' 'It is Rewi who is feeding the calf.'

(6) *Ko* "Rewi kei konei.

foc. Rewi at(pres) here

'Rewi is here.' 'It is Rewi who is here.'

Thus it is possible for the *ko*-phrase to be the locus of the major sentence stress. *Ko* is not deletable from sentences with the stress pattern marked in (5) and (6). Notice that these characteristics are exactly parallel to the characteristics of equative *ko*. Such sentences occur in contexts which are emphatic, or focal, either contrastively or non-contrastively, eg.

(7) Kāhore. *Ko* "Hone e mahi ana ki te whare wānanga.

neg foc. John T/A work T/A to the house learning

'No. It's John who works at the University.'

(8) Ēhara! *Ko* "Rewi e horoi ana i te whare!

neg foc. Rewi T/A clean T/A DO the house

'Wow, it's Rewi who's cleaning the house.'

What I wish to suggest is that such structures are indeed equative, i.e. that (5) has a structure

(9) [*Ko* Rewi]_{Pred} [e whāngai ana i te kūao kau]_{Su}

parallel to the equative structure in (2). This is then a clefting process, where the subject is a headless relative clause. Those *kos* marked 'foc.' above should therefore be marked 'eq.'. In contrast, those *kos* which are topicalizing (not strong stressed) are part of a very different structure:

(10) [*Ko* Rewi]_{Su/Topic} [[e whāngai ana]_V [i te kūao kau]_{DO}]_{Pred}

Notice that under this analysis, sentence stress remains constant - it

cannot move from the head of the predicate; sentence stress may be normal or emphatic. This analysis thus allows an extremely simple statement of the rule for sentence stress. The alternative is to have a rule which says that sentence stress can be shifted to a fronted subject if that fronted subject is focal, but not if it is topical, although there would be no overt marking in the structure of the difference which would trigger that stress change.

3 Topicalizing *ko*

An investigation of the occurrences of topicalizing *ko* in narrative texts suggests that the primary function of topicalizing *ko* is to mark topic switch. This accounts for the commonness of strings of sentences with *ko*-fronted subjects in the scene-setting section which typically begins Maori narratives, e.g. (*Wairangi*, 197):

- (11) Ko tēnei tangata ko Wairangi nō Ngāti-Raukawa. Ko tōna
 top. this man top. Wairangi belong Ngāti-Raukawa top. his
 kāinga ko Rurunui i te takiwā o Whare-pūhunga. Ngā
 home eq. Rurunui at the district of Whare-pūhunga the(pl)
 wāhine a Wairangi tokorua, ko Pare-whete, ko Pūroku.
 women of Wairangi two eq. Pare-whete eq. Pūroku
 'This man, Wairangi, belonged to Ngāti-Raukawa. His home was at Ru-
 runui, in the district of Whare-pūhunga. Wairangi had two wives, Pare-
 whete and Pūroku.'

Each sentence introduces a new topic, fronted with *ko* in the first two, but with the *ko* deleted from the third. While such sequences of topicalisations are typical of story beginnings, they are by no means restricted to initial sections. Several more examples could be adduced from that story alone. Such topic-switch *kos* are not always fronted. The same text provides a number of examples of non-fronted *kos*. The following extracts occur with several lines of text between them (*Wairangi*, 199):

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(12) Kei runga ko Upoko-iti, ka whakahua i tāna haka... Ko
at above top. Upoko-iti T/A recite DO his haka top.

Pipito ka whakahua i tāna haka... Kātahi ka tū ko
Pipito T/A recite DO his haka then T/A stand top.

Wairangi ka whakahua...

Wairangi T/A recite

'Then Upoko-iti arose and recited his haka... Then Pipito arose and recited his haka... Then Wairangi stood and recited...'

The non-fronted examples appear to receive a stronger stress than the fronted examples, but the main stress still falls on *runga* and *kātahi*.

Not all topic-switches in Maori are marked with *ko*. Consider the following section from *Wairangi*, 197. The text describes the flight of Pare-whete from Rurunui to Te Aea. The text at the end of the description runs:

(13) Ka whiti i Waihou ka tae ki Te Aea. Ka moe i
T/A cross DO Waihou T/A reach to Te Aea T/A sleep DO

tāna tāne i a Tupeteka. Ka kimi te iwi nei a
her husband DO pers Tupeteka T/A search the tribe here pers

Ngāti-Raukawa i a Pare-whete.

Ngāti-Raukawa DO pers Pare-whete

'She crossed the river Waihou and reached Te Aea. There she married Tupeteka.

The Ngāti-Raukawa people searched for Pare-whete...'

The translator, Te Rangi Hiroa, felt that a new paragraph was warranted in the English before the last sentence. The topic-switch is not marked in the Maori by *ko*.

An examination of the question 'which topic switches are marked by *ko*?' indicates the following tendencies:

1. the more predictable the topic switch, the less likely it is to be marked;
2. the more rapid the topic switch, the more likely the changes are to be marked;
3. if an item is introduced in an oblique NP, and then becomes topic, topic-switch is usually marked, e.g. (*Tū-whakairi-ora*, 19)

- (14) ...tae noa ki te pā ki Te Rāhui. Ko tēnei pā nō
arrive indeed to the pā to Te Rāhui top. this pā belong
Uenuku-te-whana.

Uenuku-te-whana

'...till they reached the pā Te Rāhui. This was the pā of Uenuku-te-whana.'

As a check on the general validity of the use of *ko* as a topic-switch marker, I elicited translations of topic-switch discourses. *Ko* was unhesitatingly used by my consultant, e.g.

- (15) Mea unahi ngā ika, ka kainga. Engari ko ngā pero me
thing scale the(pl) fish T/A eat-pass. but top. the(pl) head with
ngā whiore, nā rātou i waiho noa ki runga i te one.
the(pl) tail by IIIpl T/A leave indeed to above at the beach
'They scaled the fish and ate them. As for the heads and tails, they just left them on the beach.'

It should also be pointed out that this topic-switch *ko* cannot be used to introduce entirely new elements into the story, but is used to mark as current topic elements which are already present either explicitly or implicitly. *Tērā* is used to introduce important new ingredients, e.g. (*Tūtāe-poroporo*, 89):

- (16) Ākuanei, tērā tētahi ope-taua nā Whanganui kei te haere
presently that a(spec.) group-war belong Whanganui T/A move
mai.
hither

'Presently, a war-party from Whanganui came along.'

It must be noted further that topicalizing *ko* is occasionally attested with constituents of subjects other than the head. Example (17), from *Te Aohuruhuru*, 7, is a possessive phrase; example (18), from *Tūtāe-poroporo*, 90, is from a prepositional phrase adnominal to a local noun:

- (17) Ko te koroheke nei kua pāwera noa atu te ngākau ki te
top. the old man here T/A warm indeed away the heart to the
purotutanga o tana wahine taitamariki.
handsomeness of his wife young person

'The old man's heart glowed at his wife's youthful beauty.'

- (18) Ko ngā wakai mua rā, mate katoa ngā tāngata o runga.
top. the(pl) canoe at front there dead all the(pl) people of above
'As for the canoes in front, all the people on them died.'

It is beyond the scope of this paper to undertake a full examination of the constraints on the syntactic positions from which topicalisation can occur.

4 Other Emphatic Structures

Emphatic equatives are not the only structures used for focus in Maori. Two other constructions, namely pseudo-clefts and the actor-emphatic also have this function.

Pseudo-cleft structures in Maori use *te mea* 'the thing' as (reduced) relative clause head, e.g.

(19) Ko "Hone te mea mōhio ki te whakautu.

eq. John the thing know to the answer

'John's the one who will know the answer.'

Since structures of this type contain two NPs, the analysis as a non-verbal equative is less controversial than for the structure discussed in 2. Notice that the stress falls on the predicative *ko*-phrase. It would clearly be possible to derive both cleft and pseudo-cleft emphatics from the same underlying structure, with a full relative clause on *mea*, e.g. from

(20) Ko "Rewi te mea e whāngai ana i te kūao kau.

eq. Rewi the thing T/A feed T/A DO the baby animal cow

'Rewi's the one who is feeding the calf.'

head deletion would give the cleft form (5), and relative clause reduction would give the pseudo-cleft:

(21) Ko "Rewi te mea whāngai i te kūao kau.

eq. Rewi the thing feed DO the baby animal cow

'Rewi's the one feeding the calf.'

Actor-emphatic structures are also focal. There is no general scholarly agreement on the detailed structure of actor-emphatic sentences. (For a recent survey, see Waite 1990.) Consider

(22) Nā "Rewi i whāngai te kūao kau.

by Rewi T/A feed the baby animal cow

'Rewi fed the calf.'

Whatever the appropriate structure for such sentences, it must be noted that the actor NP, which is marked with a possessive preposition (*nā Rewi* in (22)) receives emphatic stress, which is in other

contexts restricted to predicates only. Waite, however, argues in his paper (1990) that the actor NP of such structures is not predicative, in contrast to positions espoused by e.g. Chung (1978), Clark (1976) and Harlow (1986), who, although they do not agree on all aspects of the structure, analyse the actor NP as predicative. It would be too major a digression to endeavour to resolve this issue here. However, it must be pointed out that the stress placement rule for Maori is much more complex if the actor NP is not predicative, and if the rule that "the main sentence stress falls on the predicate in Maori" has to be abandoned, one of the strongest arguments for analysing focal *kos* as equative will no longer hold. Conversely, the stress placement on the actor-emphatic could constitute an argument for a predicative analysis of the actor NP.

There are many details of the distribution of these three types of emphatic which are not clear; in particular, I am unable to offer any suggestions as to factors which lead to the choice of a pseudo-cleft rather than the other two structures. The *ko*-cleft and the actor-emphatic appear to be in complementary distribution: *ko*-clefts are used for non-transitives, and for non-past, non-future transitives, i.e. for just those cases where there is no actor-emphatic.

5 More on equative *ko*

It was stated in 2 that equative *ko* is not deletable. That is true in structures of the type (2). Theoretically, the subjects of such sentences can be topicalised with topicalising *ko*:

(23) *Ko ahau ko Huia.*

top. Isg eq. Huia

'I am Huia.'

However, many sentences of this type, especially if they are short, are rejected by consultants. Thus

(24) *Ko tēnei ko te roia.*

top. this eq. the lawyer

'This is the lawyer.'

was corrected to:

(25a) *Ko tēnei te roia.*

top. this the lawyer

'This is the lawyer.'

rather than the expected untopicalized form:

(25b) Ko te 'roia tēnei.

eq. the lawyer this

'This is the lawyer.'

Note, however, the stress used in (25a). This suggests that perhaps the equative *ko* has been deleted, rather than that there has been an otherwise unmotivated change in the assignment of the subject-predicate roles. This is by no means the only instance of apparent change in the subject-predicate structure I have met. Thus my attempt

(26) *Ko te toa ia.

eq. the champion IIIsg

'She is the champion.'

was rejected (with this sense: it has at least one other possible reading for speakers of certain dialects) and a sentence which appears to reverse the assignment of the two NPs to the subject and predicate was proffered as the correction:

(27) Ko ia te toa.

? IIIsg the champion

'She is the champion.'

Unfortunately, since this was a written correction, I have no evidence of the suprasegmental structure which the corrector had in mind. However, it seems to me that judgements of this kind raise the issue of whether, when the subject of an equative sentence is topicalized, and the constituents are short, the equative *ko* is deleted. Both the corrections above (i.e. (25a) and (27)) had the effect of putting the deictic element in the *ko*-marked phrase. It is perhaps worth noting that this is by no means necessary in Maori: (28) is normal:

(28) Ko Huia au.

eq. Huia Isg

'I am Huia.'

I do not know whether the solution I have suggested is correct - it is difficult to see what evidence other than translation equivalence and suprasegmentals might be brought to bear on the problem. However, it seems worthwhile to draw attention to this problem, which in my experience confuses many learners with English as their first language in their endeavours to come to grips with the predicate-first structure of Maori.

6 Specifying *ko*

I believe that *ko* has a further distinct function in Maori which is seen most clearly in conjoined NPs of the form illustrated in (29):

- (29) Rewi rāua ko Mere
 Rewi IIIdu spec. Mere
 'Rewi and Mary'

I call this specifying *ko*. However, there may be some evidence that it derives from equative *ko*. *Ko* always appears with naming predicates in Maori. In many cases it is possible to analyse this as the embedding of equative *ko*, as in

- (30) Ka huaina e ia te ingoa ko Te Aomihia.
 T/A name-pass. by IIIsg the name spec. Te Aomihia
 '[She] was given the name Te Aomihia by her.'

where the embedding is presumably an equative relative clause on *ingoa*. In the example of the names of Wairangi's wives, (see (11) above), the *ko*-phrases are probably to be analysed as equative *ko* sentences with a subject such as *tētahi* (or *tētehi* in this particular text) deleted. However, there appears to be a cline from instances like these where it is not difficult to motivate equative *ko* to those like (29), where an interpretation as an embedded equative has little motivation. The following example (*Tū-whakairi-ora*, 18) lies somewhere between:

- (31) ...kiia iho te wāhi i tāpukea ai ko
 say-pass. down the place T/A bury-pass. part. ?
 Te-ewe-o-Tūwhakairiora.
 the-placenta-of-Tūwhakairiora
 '...the place where it was deposited was called Te-ewe-o-Tūwhakairiora.'

The point at which one changes the gloss from 'eq.' to 'spec.' is rather arbitrary.

7 Concluding Remarks

These three uses of *ko* do not exhaust its functions. For instance, there are dialects where *ko* functions as the future locative preposition. Presumably in those dialects one could say *Ko "Kō ko ko!* 'It is Kō who will be there!'. In at least some of those dialects, *ko te* is used as a

future progressive T/A marker, parallel to *kei te* and *i te* in Eastern dialects. However, the chief function of this paper is to draw attention to the fact that in different contexts, *ko* structures have different prosodic features, and to suggest that there are distinct discourse functions associated with the different prosodic patterns. This suggests a way out of the anomalous situation of regarding *ko* as both focal/emphatic and topical, information structures which appear to be diametrically opposed. If the suggestion here is correct, then a structure like

(32) Ko Rewi e whāngai ana i te kūao kau.

? Rewi T/A feed T/A DO the Baby animal cow

is ambiguous in its written form: *ko* could be either equative or topicalizing. However, it is not ambiguous in its spoken form: it is disambiguated by stress, and a significantly different structure has been suggested here for the two readings:

1. Topic Switch

(33) [Ko Rewi]_{su/Topic} [[e 'whāngai ana]_v [i te kūao kau]_{DO}]_{Pred}

2. Emphatic - Cleft - Equative

(34) [Ko"Rewi]_{Pred} [e whāngai ana i te kūao kau]_{su}

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Texts

Most of the texts used have appeared in several places. The versions I have used were reproduced by the (Anthropology &) Maori Dept. at Victoria University of Wellington for the use of students; my page references are to these reproductions. In all cases, the reproductions keep the page numbers of the originals. Where I am aware of other reproductions, I have included that information in the references below.

From the collection *Maori Literature: selections of oral and written prose*, Dept. of Anthropology, Victoria University of Wellington:

Te Aohuruhuru, pp. 6-8 (Reproduced from Grey, *Nga Mahi o Nga Tupuna*)

Tūtae-poroporo, pp. 89-98 (Reproduced from *JPS*, 13, 1904)

Wairangi, pp. 197-205 (Reproduced from *JPS*, 19, 1894; also in *Te Whare Kura*, 1961, 3-8) and in Biggs, B., P. Hohepa & S. Mead (eds) 1967. *Selected Readings in Maori*. Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed.

Maori Literature & History: Tūwhakairiora: Written oral history - Maori and English, Dept. of Anthropology & Maori, Victoria University of Wellington (Reproduced from *JPS*, 20, 1895).