

THE MEANING OF KO IN NEW ZEALAND MAORI

by D. Cleve Barlow

In very general terms *ko* can be described as a multi-functional particle in the Maori language of New Zealand. This rather vague definition naturally implies that *ko* is to be discovered in a variety of environments; and as a further consequence of its multi-functional role, it has been attributed several semantic interpretations. These conclusions are validated through studies of Maori made by eminent scholars over the past 150 years.

The first formal study of the Maori language was made around 1815 by a European missionary linguist, Thomas Kendall. Since then, several more grammatical analyses have appeared ranging from prescriptive traditional grammars to modern American descriptive and structuralist approaches including immediate constituent analysis and transformational generative grammar. While on the one hand it cannot be denied that much fruitful understanding can be gleaned from the above studies, there still remain a number of areas requiring more thorough research using approaches from different theoretical viewpoints. This present study, however modest it may be, is an attempt to add a further dimension to the study and understanding of Maori. One can approach the study of language from two broad structural bases: (1) the paradigmatic or substitutional axis where *meaning* resides; and (2) the syntagmatic or combinational axis where *order* is determined. Ideally, the paradigm should be studied first (or at least simultaneously with the syntagm) since the paradigm predicts (to a large degree) the syntagm. Although this semantic analysis will be restricted to a single particle, *ko* in Maori, the author is confident that the theoretical model adopted and the procedural techniques have significant implication for valuable application in other areas of language study.

To date, the most authoritative reference available on word definitions of New Zealand Maori is William's *Dictionary of the Maori Language* (1971) which assigns the following meanings (p. 121) to *ko*:

(A) Particle: used in conjunction with proper names, pronouns and common nouns preceded by a definitive:

1. For emphasis, and as a predication indicator:

Ko *taku potiki, te tangata nei.* 'This person is my last born.'

2. A subject marker to which our attention is to be directed:

Ko *Maketu pa, e tu kau ana.* 'Maketu fortress is still standing.'

3. To specify a previous generalization:

Tera ano tetahi pa nui onamata, ko Maunga-whau. 'That was one of the great fortresses in bygone days, i.e. Maunga-whau.'

4. To show plurality of individuals:

Ko *Rau-ka-tauri, ratou ko Raukatamea, ko Itiiti, Ko Rekareka.* 'They, Raukatauri, Raukatamea, Itiiti and Rekareka.'

- (B) Preposition: of place with reference to future time:

1. To. *Whiti atu ko te motu i Makoia.* 'Cross over to the island of Mokoia.'
2. At. **Ko** *reira au tu ai, kia tae ake ano koe.* 'I will be at that spot when you arrive.'

In addition to the above situations, K. T. Harawira in *Teach Yourself Maori* (1974:40), lists these further uses of *ko*:

1. With interrogatives *wai* or *hea*:

Ko *wai tenei tangata?* 'Who is this man?'

Ko *hea tena wahi?* 'What is (the name of) this place?'

2. Local noun: *ko*--yonder place:

(a) *Haere ki ko!* 'Go to yonder place!'

(b) *Kei ko nga tangata.* 'The people are over there.'

These contextual usages of *ko* are by no means considered to be a completely exhaustive representation of all the possible contexts in which *ko* might occur. I dare say that if anyone cared to make a thorough investigation of the language, other situations with *ko* could be proposed, and furthermore, other uses (contexts) could possibly be created in the future. Although not specifically stated in the literature I have studied on this subject, I have realized two other legitimate functions of *ko*--its direct use with particular time adverbials and adjectives like:

1. **Ko** *hea (when) te hui o nga apiha?* 'When is the meeting of the officers?'
2. **Ko** *apopo te hui o nga apiha.* 'The meeting of the officers will be tomorrow.'
3. *E pehea ana te whare?* 'How is (the condition) of the home?'
4. **Ko** *ma te whare.* 'The house is clean.'

Needless to say, some of the various uses of *ko* have not been presented without contradiction and some controversy in academic debate (verbally,

or in print). Most authors of Maori grammars have claimed that Maori lacks the equivalent of the verb “to be” as in English (Hararawira 1974:40, Maunsell 1894), but H. M. Stowell (1911:243, 244) definitely refutes especially Maunsell’s remarks touching “the want of a verb substantive” in the Maori language.

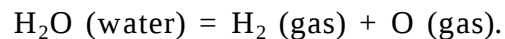
However, for the purposes of this investigation, the foregoing explication of *ko* is sufficient to make this general observation: that the traditional approach of semantic inquiry (into Maori) has been to look at the language from an atomistic perspective. That is to say that grammarians have “merely categorised and recategorised the various uses” (7:2, 3) of *ko*. With such an approach, the possibility for contextual variants is infinite; and, therefore, with each new context, a particular linguistic form, like *ko*, will add a further degree of specificity to each new contextual meaning. The value of this type of linguistic analysis is viewed critically by Linda Waugh (1976:54) where she states: “An atomistic methodology will always fall short of discerning the structure of language, since *atomism* is not one of the defining characteristics of language.” What then, is the alternative to this seemingly narrow consideration of language?

Two major motivating factors underlie the research on this thesis: (1) the apparent contradiction I have found (in some instances) as to the meaning of *ko*; and (2) the postulate made by Roman Jakobson that every linguistic form has a *general invariant meaning*. Accordingly, Jakobson (1966) maintains that a sign necessarily exists as a perceptible phenomenon, signans (form) in symbolic relationship to an interpretable counterpart, signatum (value)—one cannot exist without the other. A semantic value (signatum) can only exist in the mind, consequently, there can be no meaning or interpretation without the coexistence of a signans. Jakobson (5:52, 53) further states “any symbol is endowed with a general meaning, and the general meaning, of any symbol, or any verbal symbol, has a generic character. Any further segmentation and individuation of a symbol is determined by its context.” The general meaning is the common denominator to all its uses; more specific meaning is determined by context.

For those unfamiliar with this perspective of language analysis, perhaps a simply analogy will serve to enlighten the basic tenets of this theory. If we take ordinary water (H₂O) and expose it to a number of different environments, we can come up with these results:

1. Water in a tap, river or ocean (all above 0° C) = liquid (running water)
2. Boiling water (above 100° C) = steam
3. Water in a freezer (below 0° C) = ice

Now in each of these contexts, water has more specific “meaning;” for one thing, it exists in different states: liquid, vapor, and solid. But the common denominator (general meaning) in all situations is the matter constitution of water, two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen (H_2O). No matter what form water takes (dew, frost, snow, hail, steam, ice, etc.), it is basically H_2O ; otherwise, without this combination of hydrogen and oxygen, it could not possibly be water. In relation again to our previous discussion concerning *atomization* in language, Jakobson (5:53) claims that, “The disavowal of general meaning” results in the dissolution of “the relation between sign and meaning.” Taking our water analogy one step further, should there be a disruption of the molecular bond between the elements of hydrogen and oxygen in the water molecule two separate identities are created. It will be a difficult task indeed to recognize water as either hydrogen or oxygen in their isolated independent states:



At best, we can only visualize the possibility of water being created, and this is perceived only by those who understand the processes of chemical synthesis.

Here then lies the impetus for the main thrust of this paper: to test the hypothesis that the morpheme *ko* has a general invariant meaning that is ever present in all its legitimate uses.

In his treatise on the Russian case system, Roman Jakobson develops the following semantic conceptual features: a) marginality (restrictedness); b) directionality (extension); and c) quantification (objectiveness).¹ Any linguistic form described as having the feature *objectiveness* infers that the “referants are related to the narrated situation independently of any neighborhood,” also “objectiveness means that the perceptibility of the referent is potentially maximally distant from the act of perception” (1:4, 6). Now, without dogmatically imposing the objectiveness feature on this analysis, but rather to employ it here as a convenient guideline in deriving the meaning of *ko*, we discover that *ko* is endowed with the features of objectiveness. A more explicit distinction attributable to the meaning of *ko*, however, is encompassed within the following definition: the coexistence of *ko* with other parts of speech serves to create a relationship of complete autonomy (independent existence) even though at times the relationship is projected out of the immediate narration event

¹C. H. van Schooneveld (1977) when elaborating upon Jakobson’s conceptual semantic features uses parallel terms, viz. restrictedness = marginality; extension = directionality; and objectiveness = quantification.

(as with specified future time and location). Simply put, *ko* identifies a particular thing, person, place, time, attribute, or action which can then either exist in a narrated event alone, or be further 'modified by the narrated event according to the following formulation (examples included):

- I. (premodification) *ko* + *substantive* (postmodification), or
- II. (Pr-M) *ko* + *substantive* (Ps-M)
 - a. **Ko** *wai, tena?* (Ps-M) 'Who is that?'
 - b. **Ko** *Hemi.* (Alone) 'It is Hemi.'
 - c. *Kua mate te toa, ko Hemi.* (Pr-M) 'Hemi, the hero, has died.'
 - d. **Ko** *hea, koe?* (Ps-M) 'Where will you be?'
 - e. **Ko** *runga, ko te maunga* (Two independent units). 'On top of the mountain.'

Thus having defined *ko*, the remainder of this research will be devoted to the justification of the position that *ko* ascribes unrestricted autonomy to the substantive it modifies such that a phrase initiated by *ko* can either exist by itself or anywhere in a string of discourse. It forms the most basic and complete kernel sentence (utterance) in Maori.

The paramount direction of this semantic analysis will focus on paradigmatic oppositions exploiting *ko* and other particles in relation to their contextual functions. Much of the meaning and the operational parameters of the particles can best be exhibited and understood in contrast with other particles which can either substitute in a given paradigm, or have no grammatical function within the given paradigm. Therefore the use of minimal pairs will figure prominently in this investigation and analysis.

Five general categories of contextual variants of *ko* will be discussed, including: (1) *ko* as a particle of specification of subjects, objects, and in apposition, etc.; (2) *ko* as a preposition; (3) *ko* in conjunction with specific adverbs and *adjectives*; (4) *ko* itself, as a local noun; and finally, (5) *ko* in predication. This classification does not mean that I concur with all or any of the above interpretations, but rather it is merely a convenient grouping to facilitate the organization of the various aspects of the ensuing discussion to be covered.

1. *Ko* as a Particle of Specification

Perhaps the most understood meaning of *ko* is its use as a particle of identification and specification. *Ko* emphasizes the following substantive. Normal Maori sentence topology is represented: verb, subject, object (VSO), but *ko* can serve the function of prefocusing a subject to clause or sentence initial position.

1. *E haere ana*, (pred.) *a Pita* (subj.) 'Peter is going.'
- *2. **Ko** *a Pita*, *e haere ana*. 'Peter is going.'
3. **Ko** *Pita*, *e haere ana*. 'Peter is going.'
4. *E haere ana*, **ko** *Pita*. 'Peter is going.'
5. *Pita*, *e haere ana*. 'Peter is going.'

Sentence 1 exhibits the normal pattern of Maori sentence word order (unmarked); in sentence 2 and 3, *ko* is the initiator of the sentence followed by *Pita*. The use of the proper article *a* in 1 indicates that *Pita* is dependent upon the proper article *a* for its grammatical function as subject of the sentence without any special emphasis. When preceded by *ko*, a phrase, like **ko** *Pita*, becomes an autonomous independent unit and is free to exist anywhere in a string of discourse. When *ko* is used with a proper name, it becomes obligatory that the proper article *a* be excluded. This is why 2 is incorrect. With simple declarative statements as in 3, if the subject is to be emphasized, it invariably takes up sentence initial position preceded by *ko*. This becomes an index that forces us to direct our attention to the first part of the sentence; the marked presence of *ko* violates the norm (VSO) where the subject has been projected out of its usual environment. However, 4 becomes a highly likely situation when both the predicate and the subject are marked for equal emphasis. A grammatical form in Maori requires that when a proper noun, a pronoun, or common noun preceded by a definitive occupies sentence or clause initial position, it must necessarily be prefixed by *ko* (Biggs 1969:25); 5 is invalidated by this rule. Sometimes in rapid speech, ellipsis inadvertently takes place where the enunciation of *ko* is omitted. This phenomenon is apparently more prevalent when *ko* is followed by a definitised nominal as in:

6. (**ko**) *te kurii*, *e auau ana*. 'The dog is barking.'

The use of *ko* with common nouns is governed by the condition that the noun must be premodified by one of the definitive articles. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1976) defines the term definitive as: 1. Precisely defining or outlining; explicit, and 2. Determining finally; conclusive; decisive. Here the usage of definitive is equivalent to definite, that which restricts or particularizes a noun or noun phrase following it. Under no circumstances will *ko* occur with the indefinite article, *he* (= a, an, some).

7. *E mahi ana*, (pred.) *he tangata* (subj.). 'A man is working.'
- *8. **Ko** *he tangata*, *e mahi ana*. 'A man is working.'

But 9 and 10 are legitimate. It seems that *he* has the same type of mobility with regard to its use in the subject or object or predicate of a sentence in that it can occupy prepredicate, postpredicate, or intrapredicate position depending on what function of the sentence is being emphasized.

9. *E mahi ana*, (pred.) *he tangata*. (subj.) 'A man is working.'
10. *He tangata*, *e mahi ana*. 'A man is working.'
11. *E auau ana*, (pred.) *te kurii*. (subj.) 'The dog is barking.'
- *12. **Ko** *kurii*, *e auau ana*. 'The dog is barking.'
13. **Ko** *te kurii*, *e auau ana*. 'The dog is barking.'

In 12 there is no obligatory definitive between *ko* and *kurii* (dog = common noun). The requirement has been satisfied in 13 where the definitive article *te* (the) has been inserted. Any one of a number of possible definitive articles (singular or plural) can be substituted for *te*; the paradigm includes: *taku/aku* = my; *tau/au* = your; *tona/ona* = his/her; *tenei/enei* = this/these, etc.

A similar situation arises where *ko* is used with numerals; the numeral must be preceded by the definitive article *te* (= the, singular) being peculiar to its use with ordinal numbers:

14. **Ko** *tehea*, *te kurii pai*? 'Which is the good dog?'
15. **Ko** *te rua o nga kurii te mea pai*. 'The second one of the dogs is the good one.'

Where a common noun, for example, a tree, is identified by a given name, the definitive curb does not apply, and *ko* can be directly associated with the given name. Presently standing in the Waipoua forest of New Zealand is one of the largest living specimens of vegetation in the entire world; it has been appropriately named *Tane Mahuta* (Lord of the Forest). With respect to the above rule, no definitive is required and *Tane Mahuta* will be found in free association with *ko*:

16. *He Atua*, (pred.) *a Tane Mahuta*. (subj.) 'Tane Mahuta is a god.'
17. **Ko** *Tane Mahuta*, *he Atua*. 'Tane Mahuta is a god.'

Ko is always used with the interrogatives *wai* (who, what) and *hea* (where, what--signifying: what name?). Here *ko* functions to single out a particular person or thing from an undefined corpus of people, names, or places and gives recognition of specific individuality.

18. **Ko** *wai*, (pred.) *tenei kotiro*? 'Who is this girl?'
19. **Ko** *Hera*, *tenei kotiro*. 'This girl is Sarah.' (identified)

Out of all the possible names (identities) that are unknown to the questioner, the one that distinguishes this girl from the rest is Sarah. The same reasoning underlies this next example:

20. **Ko** *hea*, (pred.) *tenei wahi*? (subj.) ‘What is the name of this place?’
 21. **Ko** *Utaa*, *tenei wahi*. ‘This place is Utah.’

It has been proposed that *ko* can highlight any functional unit within a sentence. Besides the subject, predication (including the action and the direct object) can receive the focus of attention. Here is an incidence where the object is prefocused following a question--the answer (the nominal accusative) is given first.

22. *He aha koe*, *i mahara ai*? ‘What did you remember?’
 23. **Ko** *te ahi*, *i mahara ai ahau*. ‘I remembered the fire.’

An equivalence (appositional) relationship is often expressed with *ko*. When a sentence contains a composite subject of which the same thing is affirmed, *ko* will be prefixed to both.

24. **Ko** *te aroha*, *ko te whakapono*, *he taonga nui*. ‘Love and faith are great principles.’
 25. **Ko** *taku tamaiti*, **ko** *Wiremu*, *te toa*. ‘My son, William, is the champion.’
 26. **Ko** *Ihu te Karaiti*, **ko** *ia*, *te kaihoko o te Ao*. ‘Jesus the Christ, he (emphasized) is the Redeemer of the World.’

In connection with these usages, *ko* also specifies what has been previously alluded to in a more general way.

27. *Ka kata nga tangata*, **ko** *nga Wairangi*. ‘Then the people laughed,’ i.e. the foolish ones.
 28. **Ko** *toku whare*, **ko** *tera e tu mai ra*. ‘My house is that particular one standing over there.’

Thus far we have encountered situations where *ko* normally precedes the predicate, but this is not always the case as is borne out in examples 29 through 32. These three further contexts can account for the use of *ko*: a) in lively narrative 29; b) in personative locutions (30) and c) in interjectory speech (31-32).

29. *Katahi ka oma mai*, **ko** *te whurupeke*. ‘Suddenly the fullback burst through.’

No distinction is made between the action and the actor in the above sentence 29. Both action and actor attract attention, but because *ko* cannot coexist with the verb,² it is omitted. The fullback is identified first out of all the players as the one responsible for the spectacular action.

30. *E tu ana, a Wiremu raua ko Hemi.* 'Both William and James are standing.'

When enumerating two or more persons the dual 30 and plural pronouns are used with *ko*:

Ko Pita raua ko Mere. 'Both Peter and Mary.'

Ko tatou ko Pita, ko koe, ko au. 'All of us, Peter, you and I.'

Ko kaoutou ma. 'All of you (3 or more).'

E mahi ana, a Pita raua ko Hone. 'Peter and John are both working.'

Again with greetings and salutations, *ko* specifies more directly the person being addressed:

31. *Tena ra ko koe, e Pita.* 'Greetings to you, Peter.'

And in responding with acknowledgment and recognition:

32. *A, ko koe tena, e Haki.* 'Oh! Jack, it is you.'

All of the above contexts demonstrate that *ko* initiated phrases are self-governing domains empowered to stand independent of all other neighborhoods in a text of narration and thereby forming a grammatical unit. At the same time, it has dynamic options being able to exist anywhere in an extended piece of narration (refer to formula).

2. *Ko* as a Preposition

Prepositional uses of *ko* with reference to direction, place, and time (adverbial) are concerned with future time only. Direction is illustrated by *ko* (to) towards a goal that is not yet realized, or the motion towards said goal is not yet undertaken. Here the particular aspect that objectiveness signifies is that the referent is "potentially maximally distant from the act of perception." The referent (place, time, location) is perceived to be outside or beyond (future as well) the present narration event and normally involves a situation yet to be realized. *Ko* (to) seems to identify the place to which a person will be travelling, and *ko* (at) the realized destination (both really amounting to one and the same thing).

²This point will be fully amplified in section 5, *Ko* as a Predicating Particle.

33. **Ko** *hea koe, e haere ai?* 'Where are you going to (what place)?'

34. *E haere ana, ahau, ko Rotoiti.* 'I am going to Rotoiti.'

33 is asking what particular place a person will be going to; and 34 specifies that destination as being Rotoiti. Looking at the situation with respect to other prepositions, the function of *ko* as a preposition is more clearly perceived:

35. *E haere ana ahau, ko Rotoiti.* 'I am going to Rotoiti (specific place).'

36. *E haere ana, ahau ki Rotoiti.* 'I am going to Rotoiti.'

37. *E haere ana ahau, i Rotoiti.* 'I am going from Rotoiti.'

*38. *E haere ana ahau, hei Rotoiti.* 'I am going (travelling) to be at Rotoiti.'

Sentence 35 again determines the place of my going by using *ko* to single out Rotoiti. I feel that *ko* is not really a preposition as defined in English, but as with all our discussion thus far, *ko* gives the following substantive singleness of identity and independent existence, separating out from the unknown an independent autonomous unit.

In designating a future location, *ko* (at) is the proper prepositional particle according to traditional grammarians.

39. **Ko** *hea koe tatari ai?* 'Where will you wait at?'

40. **Ko** *reira au tatari ai.* 'I will wait there (at that place).'

Ko is used freely with locatives in denoting a specified future location: *runga*--on; *raro*--under; *muri*--behind; *mua*--in front of, etc., and with place names like Rotorna, America, and Honolulu.

41. **Ko** *Honolulu te hui apopo.* 'Tomorrow the meeting will be at Honolulu.'

42. **Ko** *runga, a Hone e waita ana.* 'John will sing on top.'

43. **Kei** *runga a Hone, e waiata ana.* 'John is singing on top.'

44. **I** *runga a Hone, e waiata ana.* 'John was singing on top.'

45. **Hei** *runga a Hone, e waiata ana.* 'John is to be singing at the top.'

The relative time elements (tense) in Maori sentences is not determined by *ko* (will be, is, was, were, etc.) as some have suggested. Instead, other time indices determine past, present, and future tense (*apopo*--tomorrow, *inanahi*--yesterday, *aianei*--now). If there is no contextual evidence as to the time of the action indicated in a sentence, it is presumed to be in the present (*ko Pita, he tangata*--Peter is a man).

3. *Ko* with Time Adverbials and Adjectives

After much searching, I have only been able to come up with one time adverbial (*apopo*--tomorrow) that can directly coexist with *ko* and which specifically indicates time in the future when some action or event is to take place. The accepted translation for the use of *ko* here is “will be.”

48. ***Ko*** *apopo te hui o nga apiha.* ‘Tomorrow will be the meeting of the officers.’

Such a unique usage of *ko* serves to further substantiate my claim that *ko* in its true sense means objectiveness in that it coexists with time adverbials which specify future time. All other time adverbials must be used with a definitive to be associated with *ko*.

49. ***Ko*** *nga ra kei te heke mai nei, he wa pakeke.* ‘The days to come will be hard times.’

*50. *E hui ana tatou, ko ahiahi nei.* ‘We will be meeting this evening.’

51. *E hui ana tatou ko te ahiahi nei.* ‘We will be meeting this evening.’

Along with its direct use with adverbs, *ko* is used with adjectives as in:

52. ***Ko*** *ma te whare.* ‘The house is clean.’

53. ***Ko*** *pai nga mahi.* ‘The work is fine.’

54. ***Ko*** *tika te korero.* ‘The talk is right.’

The use of *ko* with adjectives serves to express a specific attribute or condition that has been achieved by a person, thing, or situation. Adjectives can also be used with verbal particles:

55. *Kua pai nga mahi.* ‘The work has been fine.’

56. *E pai ana nga mahi.* ‘The work is going fine.’

57. *Kei te pai nga mahi.* ‘The work is fine.’

58. *I te pai nga mahi.* ‘The work was fine.’

59. *Kia pai ai nga mahi.* ‘That the work will be fine.’

It may possibly be disputed that *ko* should be *kua* as in 55, but I have personally checked the use of *ko* with adjectives amongst speakers from my own area (Ngapuhi) and they agree that *ko* with adjectives identifies an existing quality or state of being equivalent almost to an abstract noun. Imagine for a moment that you are inquiring about the condition of a sick relative (grandmother) whose condition you have previously heard to be

somewhat critical. You have not heard any more for a couple of days, but then you meet a cousin (Hine) who has just been visiting with her. Anxiously you inquire:

59a. *E Pehea ana, to taua karani?* 'How is our granny?'

and Hine reports:

59b. *Ahua hemanawa ia inanahi, engari aiane **ko** pai ia.* 'She was pretty low yesterday, but today she is just fine.'

A definite state, quality, or condition must be attributable to someone or something (59b) demonstrates that the health of the grandmother has progressed from a serious condition to where now her condition is described as indisputably good (out of danger). There is no doubt she is indeed well. The indefinite article *he* can also be used with adjectives, but there is no specification as to what degree of goodness, bad, beauty, etc., is intended to be conveyed.

59c. *He pai, nga kai.* 'The food is fine (very general comment).'

59d. *He kino nga mahi.* 'The work is bad.'

59e. **Ko** *kino nga mahi.* 'The work is bad.'

In describing the nature of the work, 59d in very general terms says it's not too good, but 59e leaves no doubt in our minds that the work is indisputably of inferior quality. It is just as common to prefix an adjective with a definitive (nominalizing) and in conjunction with *ko* this becomes an autonomous entity.

59f. **Ko** *te pai o nga kai.* 'The goodness of the food.'

4. Ko--A Local Noun?

The particle *ko* itself can be used as a local noun meaning "yonder place." This use is designated as indicating that the referent (*ko* = yonder place) is isolated outside of the vicinity of the participants in a particular speech event.

46. *Haere koutou ki **ko**.* 'You (plural) go to yonder place.'

47. *Kei **ko** oku hoa e takaro ana.* 'My friends are playing at yonder place.'

If the use of *ko* is legitimate here, sentences 46 and 47 reveal that *ko* as a local noun is absent from the immediate context of a narration situation (in point of proximity) being separated from both the addresser and the addressee.

Another problem has arisen as to whether *ko* is homonymous with *koo* (geminate /o/). Even with older native speakers, I have found it very difficult to differentiate between *ko/koo* during regular speech. Sometimes *ko* is pronounced short, and at other times there is noticeable vowel (/o/) lengthening. Should it be maintained that the /o/ in *Ko* is really a geminate vowel, then I would need to account for the objectiveness feature in *koo* (Williams 1971: 120):

- (1) *Koo*--a digging instrument.
- (2) *Koo*--to plant with a digging stick.
- (3) *Koo*--to protrude the lips in contempt.
- (4) *Koo*--a form of address for male and female.
- (5) *Koo*--to sing, resound, chant, and shout.

The answer to this situation can best be resolved by the fact that *ko* and *koo* ought to be treated as two distinct morphemes. The unmarked form contains the short /o/ as in *ko* which has been discussed throughout this article in its primary role as a particle. In actual speaking it is common to detect vowel lengthening when *ko* is used in these primary contexts. This can be considered more an aspect of stylistics and dialect variation rather than the intentional substitution of *ko* for a new word *koo*. The underlying form of the morpheme in its use as a particle or preposition is still *ko* whether or not during actual speech production *ko/koo* is perceived.³

5. *Ko*--a Predicating Particle--(like the verb “to be” in English)

There has been no end of controversy over the issue of *ko* as a deixis of predication. As a matter of fact, this has been a source of some frustration

³Williams defines *koo* ‘yonder place’ showing the geminate /o/, but earlier in this discussion I pointed out that Harawira (1974:40) treats *ko* ‘yonder place’ as *ko* = preposition and particle with the short vowel /o/. I would like to propose a couple of plausible explanations. Harawira is renowned for his great scholarship of the Maori language, and I am not sure that his classification of *ko* ‘yonder place’ with *ko* (= prepositions, particle use) was intentional. His *Teach Yourself Maori* is a very elementary text for beginners, and perhaps he was making some very broad generalizations so as not to confuse the learner. On the other hand, it is possible that *ko* is the correct form and that this is the form used within the dialect boundary of Harawira’s tribe (Nga-Puhi). The *koo* ‘yonder place’ that Williams describes is marked for gemination and *ko* is the underlying unmarked form. I am more in favor of the fact that *koo* ‘yonder place’ is the correct form in this instance because as a native speaker the geminate /o/ in *koo* is subliminally more natural to me in speech when referring to yonder place. Looking at the definitions of *koo*, it is either defined as a noun or a verb and *ko/koo* ‘yonder place’ is a noun. To be consistent with this observation *ko/koo* ‘yonder place’ would more naturally follow the marked form *koo* with verbs and nouns, and the unmarked form *ko* occurs as a particle.

to me, especially when I find prominent scholars of Maori at diffidence as to whether or not *ko* is synonymous in function with the English verb “to be” (am, is, are, was, were). Hohepa claims that,

In the absence of other evidence, /*ko*/ specifies that the phrase it initiates is a noun phrase. When other noun phrases are also part of a sentence, /*ko*/ also specified that the nucleus of the one it initiates is not the subject of the sentence. (1967: 19)

The following examples show *ko* as a predication initiator in compliance with Hohepa’s supposition.

60a. ***Ko*** *Rapata*, (pred.) *taku tamaiti*. (subj.)

b. My son is Robert.

*c. Robert is my son.

61a. ***Ko*** *Pirongia*, (pred.) *te maunga tapu*. (subj.)

b. The sacred mountain is Pirongia.

*c. Pirongia is the sacred mountain.

Once again it could be argued that sentence 60b, c and 61b, c respectively amount to one and the same thing. This may be so, but the point that I wish to stress here is that sentences 60a and 61a have their interpretations according to Hohepa in 60b and 61b.

Apparently Bruce Biggs does not share the same viewpoint as Hohepa regarding this matter. Although he does not make any conclusive statement with regard to the use of *ko* in predication, or specifically as a subject marker, he nevertheless alternates between *ko* as a predicator/subject initiator in translating from Maori into English. Briefly, he points out (1969:25) that when two definitive nominal phrases are the total components of a sentence the first one must be preposed by *ko*.

62a. ***Ko*** *te tariana*, (subj.) *te hoiho tere*. (pred.)

b. The stallion is the fast horse.

c. The fast horse is the stallion.

The first NP is interpreted as the subject 62b, but following Hohepa’s reasoning 62c would be the correct interpretation. A further example shows Biggs reversing the situation where *ko* has become a predicating particle.

63a. ***Ko*** *te hooro*, (pred.) *tenei*. (subj.)

b. This is the hall.

c. The hall is this (? whatever).

In 63b this is relegated to the subject position and *ko* introduces the predication.

Without belaboring the issue indefinitely, I wish to propose that the function of *ko* is neither a predication marker, subject marker, object marker nor whatever else, but that it has an independent function of its own. This does not deny the interpretation of *ko* in these contexts as has been the case when translating from Maori to English, but rather to insist that the function of *ko* should be perceived within the boundaries of its natural linguistic environment without imposing meaning ad infinitum from “alien-codes.” Certainly, in translation, the nearest equivalent construction and meaning can be sought out in the target language, but under no circumstances can we declare exact correspondences between languages. The introduction to Williams’s dictionary (1971) supports this point, “As grammatical relations exist in Maori which have no exact counterpart in English grammar, terms have had to be adopted to express these relations.” Also Jakobson in his article, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation” (1971:261) remarks: “on the level of interlingual translation, there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages.”

Referring back to the definition of objectiveness, “independent existence” is the aspect that most adequately interprets the general meaning of *ko*. In reviewing the various contextual environments in which *ko* occurs, a salient criterion for its presence is determined by the dichotomy of “definiteness” vs. “indefiniteness.” It has been observed that *ko* will only occur in particular environments (see Table 1). Thus, even verbs need to be nominalized in order to stand with *ko*: *haere* (go), *te haerenga* (the journey), *ko te haerenga* (independent, autonomous). With this being an obligatory condition for *ko*’s presence even with noun-verbs, it would be difficult to explain *ko* as a marker of predication.

<u>Particle</u>	<u>Environments</u>
<i>Ko</i>	Proper noun
	Pronoun
	Locatives
	Adverbials (time)
	Adjectives
	Interrogatives
	Definitive and noun (common)
	Definitive and derived nouns

Table 1

Conclusion

The principal objective of this paper was formulated upon the premise that the morpheme *ko* is consistently imbued with a general invariant meaning that should be recognizable in whatever genuine context *ko* is featured. Much of the introductory material concentrated on attempting to define the theoretical basis for such an assertion, which, according to Jakobson, is fundamental in defining and perceiving an overall structure in language. By merely listing all of the individual meanings of *ko*, there will never be a possibility of recognizing a general meaning present in all its uses. As the number of contextual uses increase, so will the variety of specific meanings resulting in the dissolution of "the relation between sign and meaning."

Having set the foundation, the process of investigating the various uses of *ko* was then undertaken. It was discovered that although *ko* appeared to have several different meanings, a general observation could be formulated: that the use of *ko* in any particular context was governed by a unique condition which in turn provided revealing implications as to the common semantic interpretation peculiar to *ko* wherever it could be found.

The complete listing of all the environments of *ko* is outlined in Table 1 (refer to previous section) and a general condition can account for *ko*'s presence in every case.

First, proper names and pronouns including the interrogative pronouns *wai* (-who) and *hea* (-where, when and what) can be used directly with *ko*. Proper names identify specifically an individual or group of persons, things, or places. Pronouns, on the other hand, indicate that the person, thing, or place it substitutes for has had former specific reference in some other context. The interrogatives *wai* and *hea* are used directly with *ko* and function to identify definitively an individual or group of persons, places, or things: *Ko wai koe?*--Who are you?; *Ko Pita au.*--I am Peter; *Ko ia, ko Pita.*--He is Peter. Second, *ko* can be used freely with locatives, adjectives, and time adverbials. Locatives describe a particular location as: *ko mua*--the front; *ko muri*--the back; *ko raro*--under; *ko roto*--the inside. The forms *konei* (-this place), *kona* (-that place, near addressee), and *kora* (-that place, beyond both addresser and addressee) also specify particular location; and although each is a single word, they were probably formed from two distinct stems: *ko* + (*nei* + *na* + *ra*). *Ko mai* (-near side) and *ko atu* (-further side) identify position in front of, or behind a solid object like a house or stone, relative to the position of the speaker. For example: *Ka noho mai te wahine i ko mai o te kohatu, ko tana tane i*

ko *atu*. 'The woman sat on this side of the stone and her husband on the further side.'

Adjectival uses of *ko* suggest that a definite quality, state, or condition exists that is attributable likewise to an individual or group of persons, places, or things: *ko tawhiti te wahi* 'the place is far distant'; *ko pai nga kai* 'the food is fine.' In this role, the adjective should be considered as an abstract noun of quality, etc., but often during translation from Maori to English, it is recognized as an adjective.

Finally, our table shows that *ko* can be used with all common nouns that are preceded by a definitive. Likewise derived nouns (noun-verbs, noun-adjectives, and noun-adverbs) which must also be preceded by a definitive can occur with *ko*; *ko te rakau roa* 'the tall tree'; *ko te poturi o tona haere* 'the slowness of his movement'; *ko te kino o ona whakaaro* 'the evil of his thoughts.'

The purpose for this review has been to emphasize again that the particle *ko*, wherever it exists can only do so in the presence of a definitive substantive. When such a combination is created, it is empowered with complete autonomy (independent existence)--meaning that *ko* as a preposition and predication marker are interpretations that have been adopted as near equivalents from the English code. Unfortunately this has resulted in *ko* being ascribed the functions of everything else but its true role which is (in combination with a definitive substantive)--to evolve a viable, dynamic, autonomous, self-governing, totally independent linguistic form in Maori.

Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

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