Where do the nouns sit? Condition C and the limits of Hale's argument

2026-11-11 audit pass 2. Page titles only: Navajo glottal stops in titles now print as ʼ (U+02BC), and titles that called a structure a “VPISH spine” now say vP/TP (VPISH is a hypothesis, never a node). No claim changed.

2026-11-11 audit pass 4. Copied examples: the essay builder dropped the first Navajo word of every example it copied from a working note (for example Witherspoon’s *Hastiin łíį́ʼ yiztał* showed as *łíį́ʼ yiztał*, so each gloss sat under the wrong word). The words are restored exactly as the working note prints them; no form was changed. See the pass 4 report.

Grant Golland (research by Grok Bot) · 2026-10-27 · status: HYPOTHESIS (D6: compatible, undecided; Hale's argument valid but conditional on A1–A10)

Abstract

Hale 1999 reports Navajo sentences in which a null subject cannot be the same person as a noun inside another phrase, and treats this as Condition C. If the reasoning holds, nouns sit within the subject's reach, against the claim that they are linked from outside. This essay audits that argument. It is valid, but it depends on ten assumptions, none of them established for Navajo, and Speas reports a sentence of the same shape with the opposite judgment. The essay also records a correction: on 2026-10-15 the site said the feature-bundle hypothesis was 'wrong', and that was too strong.

Restated on the unified structure (2026-11-15): nouns are arguments merged in their theta positions, the subject raised to Spec,TP by the working default; where nouns sit for Condition C is to be re-run on that spine, and the adjunction analyses below are labelled contrast. See https://navajo-decoded.grant-golland.workers.dev/unified-structure/#us-clause (https://navajo-decoded.grant-golland.workers.dev/unified-structure/#us-clause). The essay's data, judgments and citations are unchanged; it is kept as the record of what was argued then.

1. The question

The feature-bundle hypothesis (FB, Essay 1) includes a clause called FB-5. It says a null bundle can never trigger Condition C on a noun, because the noun is linked to its slot rather than merged under it.

> Hale 1999 reports two cases that seem to show the opposite SOURCED : SOURCED
>
> - In (10), the null subject of 'give' cannot be 'my father', who is named inside 'my father's very horse'.
> - In (11a, b), the null subject cannot be 'your younger brother', who is named inside a clause under 'about it'.
>
> In both cases the participants are people, so rank plays no part (pp. 172–173).
>
> Do these cases show that nouns sit within the subject's reach?

2. Related data

> Platero's coreference judgments are of the same kind. Coreference fails where a noun would follow and be c-commanded by its antecedent SOURCED :

(1)

[ashkii	*bizhé'é]*	*ashkii*	*yiyiiłtsą́*
boy	his:father	boy	see

Platero 1978:86, (3.18), (3.19); 87, (3.20) (page images checked; (3.20) at 400 dpi). Copied from What comes first decides: Platero 1978 on who "his" can mean, and a no-movement route to W&J (70b) (T59a), ex. (8).

(2)

[ashkii bíighahgi] ashkii tł'iish yiyiiłtsą́

boy beside boy snake see

Platero 1978:86, (3.18), (3.19); 87, (3.20) (page images checked; (3.20) at 400 dpi). Copied from What comes first decides: Platero 1978 on who "his" can mean, and a no-movement route to W&J (70b) (T59a), ex. (9).

(3)

Ashkii [ashkii bíighahgi] tł'iish yiyiiłtsą́.

boy boy 3-beside snake 3OBJ(yi).3SBJ.PFV.see

coreference "is impossible"

Platero 1978:86, (3.18), (3.19); 87, (3.20) (page images checked; (3.20) at 400 dpi). Copied from What comes first decides: Platero 1978 on who "his" can mean, and a no-movement route to W&J (70b) (T59a), ex. (10).

3. The argument

> Hale's argument is valid. The site's derivations D1–D5 confirm both halves HYPOTHESIS : HYPOTHESIS
>
> - Nouns within the subject's c-command give $i \neq j$.
> - Nouns adjoined above the subject, as in Hale's own tree (9), give free coreference.

So the argument rules out one placement: nouns hanging above the subject.

> It needs ten assumptions, A1–A10, and none is independently established for Navajo HYPOTHESIS : HYPOTHESIS
>
> - **A3** ("an adjunct is outside the subject's reach") meets counter-evidence in English.
> - **A5** (stable judgments) meets Speas's (4.119), a sentence of the same shape with the opposite judgment.
> - **A10** is needed for (11b) and fails on the site's own analysis of psych verbs.
> - **A6** is a stipulation.

> The better question is timing, not adjunct status: is the noun already in the tree when the hidden subject reaches its final position? Eleven combinations of attachment site and subject position were tested HYPOTHESIS : HYPOTHESIS

- six predict Hale's judgment for (11a);
- five predict Speas's;
- none predicts both.

Two surprises HYPOTHESIS : HYPOTHESIS

1. In Hale 2003's structure, the subject pronoun is merged in Spec,v and does not move. A noun attached to vP after that point is therefore outside the subject's reach.
2. Hale 2003 places overt nouns "adjoined to the full verb word (or verbal clause)" (p. 27). With his Spec,v subject, that predicts *free* coreference in his own 1999 sentences. This tension is derived by the site; Hale does not claim it.

4. Reconciliation and correction

At 12:46pm on 2026-10-15 the site wrote that FB-5 "is wrong" and that the D6 verdict was "withdrawn". At 1:07pm that wording was corrected as too strong. D6 is **compatible, undecided** HYPOTHESIS . HYPOTHESIS

> FB-1 to FB-4 are untouched. If the A-set holds, FB needs three conditional additions HYPOTHESIS : HYPOTHESIS

- **LINK-IN**: a linked noun sits inside the projection of its head;
- **FB-5′**: Condition C applies over unlinked coreference;
- **FB-6′**.

> A note on older notation: Jelinek 1984's Warlpiri tree is pre-VPISH flat-S notation (V, AUX, CPP with no VP). It gives no verdict on A3, and an earlier statement that it did was withdrawn HYPOTHESIS . HYPOTHESIS

5. Status

> A3 survives only in a restated form, A3′. Sentence (10) is the cleanest case and the next one to test with speakers. Where Navajo nouns attach (CP, TP/M, vP, PP or a left-peripheral specifier) remains open OPEN . OPEN

References

1. Hale, Ken 1999. Conflicting truths (pp. 171–173). OPENED
2. Speas 1986. Dissertation, Ch. 2 and Ch. 4, (4.15a), (4.119)–(4.121). OPENED
3. Hale, Ken 2003 (manuscript), pp. 27–30. OPENED
4. Jelinek, Eloise 1984. Warlpiri, tree (28), pp. 50–51, 73. OPENED
5. Baker. Agreement/dislocation paper, n. 16. OPENED
6. Baker 1996 (trees). NOT OPENED
7. Platero, Paul 1978. Dissertation, pp. 80–87. OPENED

Working notes behind this essay: Hale 1999, Conflicting Truths: Condition C in Navajo, and where the nouns sit (conditional on assumptions A1-A10), Does Hale's Condition C argument hold? Step-by-step derivations and an assumption audit, Where can the nouns attach? Hale's and Speas's Condition C sentences re-run site by site in a vP/TP/CP spine (T27i), Where do Jelinek and Baker attach the nouns? (T25c: A3 and Hale's target), Framework audit: which sources and which of our rules are pre-VPISH, transitional, or minimalist?, What comes first decides: Platero 1978 on who "his" can mean, and a no-movement route to W&J (70b) (T59a).

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