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1-1-2002

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Citation of this paper:
Paul, Ileana, "The Syntactic Encoding of Topic and Focus" (2002). *French Studies Publications.* Paper 83.
http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/frenchpub/83

The syntactic encoding of topic and focus*

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I examine what appears to be a minor quirk of Malagasy grammar. I show, however, that this special construction sheds light on the projection of topic and focus cross-linguistically. Although languages such as Italian, as argued by Rizzi (1997), may have TopicP and FocusP, Malagasy lacks these projections altogether. In other words, I put forth data from Malagasy to argue against the universality of topic and focus functional projections in the CP layer.

Keenan (1976) describes what he calls the "bodyguard" construction. Descriptively, when a non-subject is fronted in a cleft, the subject may optionally be carried along ("guarding" the non-subject). As shown in (1), the adjunct appears clause-initially, followed by the subject (the bodyguard) and the particle *no*. (Throughout this paper the bodyguard is marked with bold font.)

(1) Omaly **Rabe** no nanasa ny lovia maloto.
yesterday Rabe NO PST.AT.wash DET dish dirty
'It was yesterday that Rabe washed the dirty dishes.'

The bodyguard on the surface appears to be a multiple cleft. The following examples illustrate simple clefts in Malagasy. The clefted element is apparently fronted and immediately precedes the particle *no* (to be discussed in section 4).

(2) a. Rabe no nanasa ny lovia maloto omaly.
Rabe NO PST.AT.wash DET dish dirty yesterday
'It was Rabe who washed the dirty dishes yesterday.'

* I would like to thank Saholy Hanitriniaina for her help with the Malagasy data. I have also greatly benefitted from discussions with Lisa Travis, Norvin Richards and Diane Massam. Any remaining errors are my own.

b. Omaly no nanasa ny lovia maloto Rabe.
yesterday NO PST.AT.wash DET dish dirty Rabe
'It was yesterday that Rabe washed the dirty dishes.'

As noted by Keenan, only subjects (2a) and certain adjuncts (2b) can be clefted directly.[1] Internal arguments must be promoted to subject with different verbal voices, similar to passive (3a,b).

(3) a. * Ny lovia no nanasa i Soa.
DET dish NO PST.AT.wash Soa
'It was dishes that Soa washed.'

b. Ny lovia no nosasan'i Soa.
DET dish NO PST.TT.wash.GEN.Soa
'It was dishes that were washed by Soa.'

(4) illustrates the bodyguard construction with a non-active verb.

(4) Tamin'ny taona lasa **ity radara ity** no nataon-dRasoa.
PST.P.GEN.DET year gone this radar this NO PST.TT.do.GEN.Rasoa
'It was last year that this radar was built by Rasoa.'

Although Keenan states that some speakers prefer agent subjects as bodyguards, my consultants readily accept examples such as (4), which have a derived subject as the bodyguard.

In what follows, I explain the structure and pragmatic interpretation of the bodyguard construction. I show that only once the simple cleft is properly understood, can the position of the bodyguard be analysed. In particular, I argue that the bodyguard is not a multiple cleft.

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[1] Adjuncts may also be promoted to subject with Circumstantial Topic and then undergo clefting from this position.
(i) Omaly no nanasan-dRabe ny lovia maloto.
yesterday NO PST.CT.wash.GEN.Rabe DET dish dirty
'It was yesterday that Rabe washed the dirty dishes.'

2. Malagasy

Malagasy is a western Austronesian language spoken in Madagascar. The word order is strictly VOS. Important for this paper is the restriction on A-bar movement. As mentioned above, only subjects and certain adjuncts may undergo A-bar movement. (5) and (6) provide examples of *wh*-movement, which is a kind of cleft.

(5) a. Iza no nanasa ny lovia maloto? [✓subject]
who NO PST.AT.wash DET dish dirty
'Who washed the dirty dishes?'

b. Oviana no nanasa ny lovia maloto i Soa? [✓adjunct]
when NO PST.AT.wash DET dish dirty Soa
'When did Soa wash the dirty dishes?'

(6) a. * Inona no nanasa i Soa? [✗object]
what NO PST.AT.wash Soa
'What did Soa wash?'

b. Inona no nosasan'i Soa. [✓subject]
what NO PST.TT.wash.GEN.Soa
'What did Soa wash?'

This restriction will play an important role in the bodyguard construction.

3. The bodyguard

In this section, I give an overview of the basic properties of the bodyguard construction. Despite appearances, the bodyguard is not a multiple cleft. The first observation is that the ordering seen in (1) is strict: the first element must be an adjunct, the second is the subject. Reversing the two leads to the ungrammatical example in (7).

(7) * Rabe omaly no nanasa ny lovia maloto.
Rabe yesterday NO PST.AT.wash DET dish dirty
'It was Rabe who yesterday washed the dirty dishes.'

Second, the first element is typically new information while the second is old information. For example, the first element may be indefinite, but the second may not (but see (17b) for a counterexample).

(8) a. Zazavavy no nilalao baolina tany an-tokotany.
girl NO PST.AT.play ball PST.there ACC-yard
'It was girls who were playing ball in the yard.'

b. Tany an-tokotany *(**ny**) **zazavavy** no nilalao baolina.
PST.there ACC-yard (DET) girl NO PST.AT.play ball
'It was in the yard that the girls were playing ball.'

Moreover, the first element may be the answer to a question, but the second may not. (9c) is an appropriate answer to (9a), while (9b) is not.

(9) a. Q: Iza no nanapaka bozaka oviana?
who NO PST.AT.cut grass when
'Who cut grass when?'

b. # A1: Omaly **Rasoa** no nanapaka bozaka.
yesterday Rasoa NO PST.AT.cut grass
'It was yesterday that Rasoa cut grass.'

c. A2: Rasoa no nanapaka bozaka omaly.
Rasoa NO PST.AT.cut grass yesterday
'It was Rasoa who cut grass yesterday.'

In fact, the second element is often a pronoun, coreferent with an NP introduced earlier in the discourse.

(10) a. Q: Taiza no nandeha fiara i Soa?
PST.where NO PST.AT.go car Soa
'Where did Soa go by car?'

b. A: Tany Antananarivo **izy** no nandeha fiara.
PST.there Antananarivo 3(NOM) NO PST.AT.go car
'It was to Tanananarive that she went by car.'

Summing up, in a bodyguard construction the first element patterns with focus (as in simple clefts), while the second has non-focus properties. To better understand the nature of focus in Malagasy, I turn to the syntax of clefts.

4. Clefts

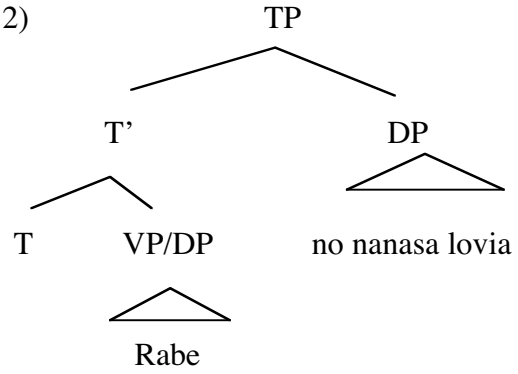
Clefts in Malagasy, as we have already seen, are formed by fronting an element, which is followed by the particle *no*.

(11) a. Rabe no nanasa lovia.
Rabe NO AT.wash dish
'It is Rabe who is washing dishes.'

b. (Ny) ariana no antonona azy.
(DET) TT.throw-away NO suitable 3(ACC)
'It is to be thrown away that it is suitable.' [Dahl 1986: (31)]

In Paul (2001), I draw on work by Dahl (1986) and argue that the clefted element is in fact the main predicate and the remainder of the clause (*no* + predicate) is a headless relative in subject position. A more accurate translation of (11a) would therefore be 'The one who is washing dishes is Rabe'. The tree below gives the basic structure for (11a).

(12)



According to my analysis, *no* is in fact a determiner, not a focus marker. I refer the reader to that paper for discussion.

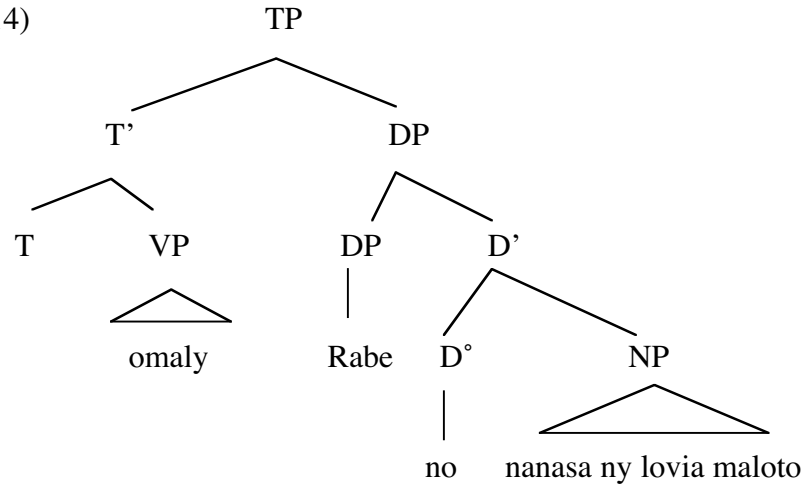
If the structure in (12) is correct, however, this raises a problem for the bodyguard. I repeat a typical example below.

(13) Omaly **Rabe** no nanasa ny lovia maloto.
yesterday Rabe NO PST.AT.wash DET dish dirty
'It was yesterday that Rabe washed the dirty dishes.'

If *omaly* 'yesterday' is the predicate and *no nanasa…* is the subject, where is *Rabe*? In what follows, I argue that *Rabe* is in the specifier of the subject. In other words, the bodyguard is a possessor of the headless relative. The structure of (13) is given in (14).[2]

[2] I leave for future research the precise structure of the headless relative.

(14)



5. Alternate analyses

In this section, I consider some possible alternate analyses of the bodyguard construction. An initial plausible hypothesis might state that the bodyguard is in fact a focused element, either amalgamated with the adjunct or in a different specifier of a multiple specifier head (e.g. FocusP). There are several reasons, however, to believe that the bodyguard forms a constituent not with the adjunct, but with the remainder of the clause. First, recall that the bodyguard does not have focus interpretation, unlike the adjunct. Second, it is possible to interrupt the adjacency between the adjunct and the bodyguard. (15a) illustrates a parenthetical inserted between the adjunct and the bodyguard, showing they do not form an amalgamated unit. (15b) shows that it is possible to coordinate the bodyguard with the remainder of the clause, to the exclusion of the adjunct. In (15b), the adjunct scopes over both conjuncts.

(15) a. Omaly <u>hono</u> **Rasoa** no nanapaka bozaka.
yesterday so-they-say Rasoa NO PST.AT.cut grass
'It was yesterday, so they say, that Rasoa cut grass.'

b. Omaly **Rasoa** no nivarotra hena ary **Rakoto** no nividy vary.
yesterday Rasoa NO PST.AT.sell meat and Rakoto NO PST.AT.buy rice
'It was yesterday that Rasoa sold meat and Rakoto bought rice.'

(15b) is an example of DP coordination under the present analysis.

A second hypothesis is that the bodyguard is simply a pre-verbal subject (ignoring for the moment the status of *no*). Since the bodyguard always corresponds to the surface subject, perhaps it is the subject. It can be shown, however, that the bodyguard is more restricted than clause-final subjects. For example, although event nominals can be subjects (the XP marked with a dotted underline in (16a)), they can't be bodyguards (16b).

(16) a. Natombon-dRabe ny nitondra fiara omaly.
PST.TT.start.GEN.Rabe DET PST.AT.drive car yesterday
'Rabe started to drive a car yesterday.'
(lit.) 'The driving of the car was begun by Rabe yesterday.'

b. * Omaly **ny nitondra fiara** no natombon-dRabe.
yesterday DET PST.AT.drive car NO PST.TT.start.gen.Rabe
(lit.)'It was yesterday that the driving of the car was begun by Rabe.'

Moreover, under certain (poorly understood) circumstances the bodyguard may be indefinite (17b). This contrasts with regular subjects (17a).

(17) a. * Nandeha tany an-tsena zanako roa.
PST.AT.go PST.there ACC-market child.1SG(GEN) two
'Two of my children went to the market.'

b. Omaly **zanako roa** no nandeha tany an-tsena.
yesterday child.1SG(GEN) two NO PST.AT.go PST.there ACC-market
'It was yesterday that two of my children went to market.'

The bodyguard is therefore not simply a pre-verbal subject.

6. Possessors

Taking into account the structure of the cleft, in particular the position of the bodyguard immediately preceding *no* (a determiner), I suggested above that the bodyguard is a possessor in

[Spec, DP]. As a possessor, the bodyguard obeys restrictions other than those imposed on subjects. For example, possessors cannot be event nominals, as shown in (18).

(18) a. * ny fotoan'ny mamono ny filoha
DET time.GEN.DET AT.kill DET director
'the time of the killing of the director'

b. * ny toeran'ny mamono ny filoha
DET place.GEN.DET AT.kill DET director
'the place of the killing of the director'

The ungrammaticality of (18) parallels that of (16b).

Positing a possessor in [Spec, DP], however, runs into difficulty in face of the normal position of possessors in Malagasy. In general, possessors remain "low", perhaps in [Spec, NP], never preceding the determiner *ny*.

(18) a. ny bokin-d**Rabe**
DET book.GEN.Rabe
'Rabe's book'

b. ny kiraro fotsy kely telo**ko**
DET shoe white small three.1SG(GEN)
'my three small white shoes'

In order to account for the special possessor position, I propose that the D° *no* exceptionally licenses a specifier, while *ny* (the regular determiner) does not. A second problem for the present analysis is case: possessors in Malagasy are typically marked with genitive case, which surfaces as "n-bonding" with the proper name in (18a) and as a special series of pronouns, as illustrated in (18b). It has been noted, however, that sometimes possessors appear with nominative rather than genitive (Paul 1996). When a third person pronoun is "augmented" in some way, it surfaces as nominative. With the head noun *trano* 'house', we find the following forms:

(19) a. tranony
house.3(GEN)
'his/her house'

c. tranon'izy ireo
house.GEN.3(NOM) PL
'their house'

d. tranon'izy mivady
house.GEN.3(NOM) spouse
'their (the spouses) house'

Similar facts obtain with coordinate possessors.

Summing up, although the bodyguard is not formally marked as a possessor, syntactic and pragmatic data suggest that it occupies [Spec, DP] of the headless relative in the subject position of a cleft.

7. Other languages

At this point, the bodyguard may appear to be an obscure quirk of Malagasy. A similar construction occurs in some related languages, however. Seiter (1979) describes what he calls the RC possessive construction (RC for "relative clause") in Niuean, a Polynesian language (see also Hawkins 2000 for similar data from Hawaiian). In relative clauses formed on non-subjects, the subject of the highest verb in the relative clause optionally becomes a possessive modifier of the head noun. (20a) illustrates a relative clause, with *mena* 'thing' as the head. In (20b), the embedded subject *koe* 'you' appears as a possessor *haau* 'your'.

(20) a. e mena ne tunu ai e koe e moa
ABS thing NFT cook in=it ERG you ABS chicken
'the thing you cooked the chicken in'

b. e mena **haau** ne tunu ai e moa
ABS thing your NFT cook in=it ABS chicken
'the thing you cooked the chicken in' [Seiter 1979: 97]

Seiter points out that the RC possessive surfaces in clefts (21) as well as *wh*-questions (22).[3]

(21) Ko e ika nī ha **mautolu** ne fā kai he aho Falaile.
PRED ABS fish only of us, PL.EX NFT HAB eat on day Friday
'Fish is what we used to eat on Friday.' [Seiter 1979: 105]

(22) a. Ko hai ne lagomatai e koe?
PRED who NFT help ERG you
'Who did you help?'

b. Ko hai **haau** ne lagomatai?
PRED who your NFT help
'Who did you help?' [Seiter 1979: 114]

As in Malagasy, *wh*-questions in Niuean involve a cleft construction. Moreover, the cleft, as argued by Seiter, has the same structure as the Malagasy cleft: a nominal predicate (marked by *ko*) and a headless relative subject. In other words, clefts share certain properties of relative clauses. Note, finally that the possessor in (21) and (22b) is modifying the empty head of the relative clause, not the clefted element. It is therefore expected to find RC possessive in clefts and exactly in this position: between the clefted element and the relative.

The Niuean RC possessive construction is only possible in relative clauses formed on non-subjects. In general, it is impossible to relativize non-subjects in Malagasy. The only exception is in headless relatives (e.g. clefts). Therefore if one were looking for the RC possessive in Malagasy, one would only expect it to obtain in non-subject clefts, not in headed relatives. And this is precisely the environment where the bodyguard surfaces. The fact that the RC possessive

[3] In fact, Seiter claims that RC possessive in clefts is not possible, in spite of (21). Diane Massam (p.c.) informs me that her consultants freely accept RC possessive in clefts.

is overtly marked as possessive in Niuean lends support to the analysis of the bodyguard in Malagasy as a special type of possessor.[4]

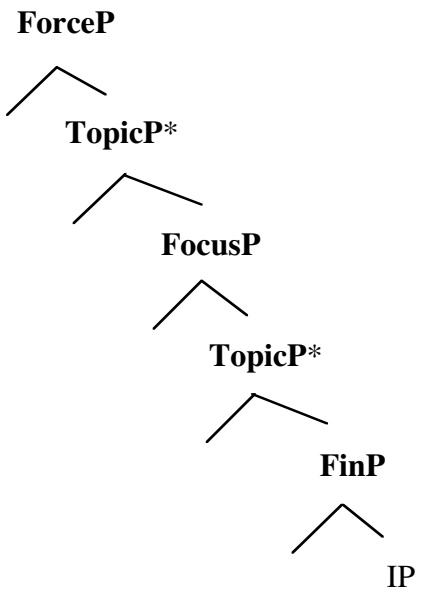
8. The CP layer

The reader may now ask whether a simpler analysis of the data considered in this paper could be proposed using functional projections. Rizzi (1997) argues for an expanded CP structure, with a focus position sandwiched between two topic positions. He considers data from Romance, such as the following example from Italian.

(23) A Gianni QUESTO domani gli dovrete dire.
'To Gianni, THIS, tomorrow, you should tell him.'

The structure that Rizzi proposes is illustrated in the tree in (24), where * indicates a reiterating XP.

(24)



Interestingly, Malagasy allows for precisely the same order of topic>focus>topic. This ordering can be seen in (25).

[4] Whether or not the RC possessive and the Malagasy bodyguard can be related to genitive subjects in relative clauses cross-linguistically (e.g. Japanese, Turkish) is the subject of future research. See Krause (2001) for a recent survey of this phenomenon.

(25) [Ny lovia maloto]$_{topic}$ dia [isan'andro]$_{focus}$ [Rabe]$_{topic}$ no manasa azy ireo.
DET dish dirty TOP each'day Rabe NO AT.wash 3(ACC) PL
'As for the dirty dishes, it's every day that Rabe washes them.'

Note, however, that Rizzi's structure leaves unexplained certain restrictions on the string in (25). First, the lower topic position is only available when there is a focused element. Second, the lower topic is always the subject. Thus although Rizzi's structure accounts for the basic word order, it does little more.

Once the focus construction is understood as a cleft with the focused XP as the predicate, the properties of (25) fall into place. *Rabe* has topic-like properties due to the fact that it has moved from the subject position. It has long been recognized that Malagasy subjects pattern with topics (see Keenan 1976 and more recently Pearson 2001). This "topic" position is only available when a focus is present simply because of the special properties of the cleft construction. Moreover, the special possessor position is only available in adjunct clefts, hence its restriction to subjects. In other words, once the syntactic properties of clefts are properly understood, the ordering in (25) follows quite simply.

There remains, however, the initial topic in (25), *ny lovia maloto* 'the dirty dishes'. At this point, I do not intend to provide an in-depth study of topicalization, but it suffices to note that it does indeed appear to be a peripheral topic position. Moreover, the topic is probably not generated via movement as almost any element may appear in the topic position and islands are not respected. (26) provides some illustrative examples: long-distance object topicalization (26a); topicalization out of a complex NP (26b); topicalization out of a *wh*-island (26c). The resumptive pronoun in base position is in boldface.[5]

[5] All the examples in (26) have a cleft as well as topicalization. It is possible, however, to have a resumptive pronoun even in simple topicalization, although it is less acceptable.

(i) ? Ny reniny dia manaja azy i Koto.
DET mother.3(GEN) TOP AT.respect 3(ACC) Koto.
'As for his mother, Koto respects her.'

Resumptive pronouns are never associated with subjects, however.

(26) a. Ny radara dia Rabe no nilaza fa ny Rosiana no nanao **azy**.
DET radar TOP Rabe NO PST.AT.say C DET Russian FOC PST.AT.do 3(ACC)
'As for the radar, it was Rabe who said that the Russians built it.'

b. Ny radara dia Rabe no namangy ny olona izay nanao **azy**.
det radar TOP Rabe NO PST.AT.meet DET person REL PST.AT.do 3(ACC)
'As for the radar, it was Rabe who met the person who built it.'

c. Ny radara dia Rabe no mahafantatra izay nanaovana **azy**.
DET radar TOP Rabe NO AT.know REL PST.CT.do 3(ACC)
As for the radar, it's Rabe who knows why it was built/its use.

This unboundedness clearly violates the Malagasy restrictions on extraction mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Moreover, resumptive pronouns are not found in other A-bar dependencies. Thus the outermost topic in Malagasy appears to be base generated in the clausal domain – perhaps simply adjoined to CP.

In sum, Malagasy syntax does not appear to instantiate the type of layered CP structure proposed by Rizzi (1997). It remains to be shown whether or not this structure is indeed universal (and hence the null hypothesis for the child) or a special feature of Italian (and perhaps other languages) which must be learned based on positive evidence. Interestingly, Massam (2002) presents data from Niuean which indicate that the CP field lacks TopicP and FocusP (among other projections). Whether or not this is a property of verb-initial languages remains to be determined. Finally, Lopez (this volume) also argues against an expanded CP, drawing on data from Catalan. This line of research suggests that functional projections associated with semantic/pragmatic features need to be carefully motivated on a language-by-language basis.

9. Conclusion

Beginning with an unusual construction in Malagasy, this paper has addressed the question of the position of topic and focus in the clause. It is often argued that some languages (e.g. Italian and Hungarian) resort to functional categories which host topicalized and focused elements. It is also clear that other languages (e.g. English) can map particular prosodic structures onto topic and

focus. What I have shown is that for the most part, topic and focus in Malagasy can be read directly off the basic syntactic structure. The structure of clefts gives rise to the focus reading (see Paul 2001 for detailed discussion); the bodyguard has topic-like properties due to its base position (grammatical subject). A little puzzle about Malagasy grammar lends new insight into cross-linguistic variation in the syntactic realization of topic and focus.

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