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Specification and inversion: Evidence from Malagasy

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Abstract

This paper analyzes specificational sentences in Malagasy and shows that such sentences involve obligatory inversion, marked by the topic particle *dia*. I argue that the topicalized element is a small clause predicate that inverts with its subject. Two competing analyses of this inversion are compared and contrasted. I conclude with a brief comparison of Malagasy and Tagalog.

1   Introduction

The goal of this paper is to investigate the syntax of specificational sentences in Malagasy. In particular, I am interested in examples such as those given in (1).[1]

(1) a. *Ny   mahafinaritra dia   izany vaovao   izany.*

DET   AT.happy   TOP   that   news   that

'What is pleasing is the news.'

b. *Ny   nahatongavany   dia   omaly.*

DET   PST.CT.arrive.3(GEN)   TOP   yesterday

'When he arrived was yesterday.' [Rajaona 1972: 68]

In these examples, the predicate (e.g. *ny mahafinaritra* 'what is pleasing' in (1a)) is a headless relative marked with the definite determiner *ny* and appears in the topic position. I show that in Malagasy, specificational sentences always involve inversion, as indicated by the topic particle *dia*. Moreover, I compare two analyses of this inversion. According to the first (Paul 2008), inversion results from the definiteness of the predicate. According to the second, based on den Dikken (2006), inversion is triggered by a null predicate within the headless relative.

2   Basic facts about Malagasy

Malagasy is a VOS language that lacks an overt copula – thus any lexical category can be the matrix predicate. Moreover, as is well known since Keenan (1976), subjects must be (formally) definite. Finally, Malagasy is famous for its complex grammatical voice system. The voice system is important for this paper, so I give a brief introduction here. Simplifying somewhat, there are three voices, as marked by morphology on the verb: Actor Topic, Theme Topic and Circumstantial Topic (examples from Keenan 1976: 256-257).

(2) a.   Actor Topic: Agent is subject

Manasa   lamba Rasoa.

AT.wash   cloth   Rasoa

'Rasoa is washing clothes.'

   b.   Theme Topic: Theme is subject

Sasan-dRasoa ny   lamba.

TT.wash-Rasoa DET cloth

'The clothes are washed by Rasoa.'

c. Circumstantial Topic: Oblique is subject

Anasan-dRasoa lamba ity savony ity.

CT.wash-Rasoa cloth   this soap this

'This soap is being washed clothes with by Rasoa.'

For a more detailed discussion and analysis of this system, see Pearson (2005).

The core examples in this paper are of nominal predication, so I turn to that topic in the next section,

2.1 Nominal predicates

Malagasy has what appears to be a Definiteness Restriction on the predicate position, such that nominal predicates are usually indefinite, even when semantically definite.

(3) a. [predicate *Mpanjaka*] [subject *Rakoto*].

        king   Rakoto

'Rakoto is/was (the) king.'

b. *Vadiko*   *izy.*

     spouse.1SG(GEN)   3(NOM)

     'S/he is my spouse.'

The example in (3b) is all the more striking because in a non-predicate position *vadiko* 'my spouse' must occur with a determiner (*ny vadiko* 'the my spouse').

     As a result of the Definiteness Restriction, the sentences in (4) are ungrammatical: the predicate in (4a) is headed by a determiner and in (4b) the predicate is a proper name, *Rakoto*.

    (4) a. *Ny   *vadiko*   *Rakoto*

         DET   spouse.1SG(GEN)   Rakoto

         'Rakoto is my spouse.'

      b. *Rakoto Rabe

         'Rabe is Rakoto.'

This restriction raises the question: how are identity statements and specificational sentences expressed in Malagasy?

2.2 Definite nominal predicates

There appear to be two main strategies to obviate the Definiteness Restriction on predicates. First, if the subject is headed by the anaphoric determiner *ilay* or is a demonstrative pronoun, the predicate can be definite (compare (4a) and (5b)).

(5) a. *Izaho   ity*.

    1SG   this

    'This/it is me.'

    (e.g. pointing to a picture or when at the door)

  b. *Ny   vadiko   ilay olona   teto   omaly*.

    DET   spouse.1SG(GEN) DEF person   PST.here   yesterday

    'The person who was here yesterday is my spouse.'

    [Rajaona 1972: 68]

The reason for this exception is unclear and I set it aside here, but Rajaona notes that these are not true identity statements, but presentatives.

    The second, and more productive, strategy is to use the topic marker *dia*.

(6) *Rakoto dia Rabe*.

　　 Rakoto TOP Rabe

　　 'Rabe is Rakoto.'

In the remainder of this paper, I focus on examples such as (6), and I propose that a nominal predicate (here *Rakoto*) has been topicalized.

3　The *dia* construction

Keenan (1976) notes that the particle *dia* normally marks topicalized elements.

(7) *Rakoto dia　　manasa　　lamba*.

　　 Rakoto TOP　 AT.wash　 cloth

　　 'Rakoto, he is washing clothes.'

As we have already seen, *dia* also occurs in many examples of nominal predication, where the predicate appears in the topic position. These

examples can be divided into two groups. In the first, the predicate is a common noun (8a) or a proper name (8b).

(8) a. *Ny   filoha   dia   Ravalomanana.*

      DET   president   TOP   Ravalomanana

      'Ravalomanana is the president.'

   b. *Spiderman dia i Tobey Maguire ao   amin'ilay*

      Spiderman TOP Tobey Maguire there P'DEF

      sary   mihetsika.

      picture move

      'Spiderman is (played by) Tobey Maguire in this film.'

In the second group, the predicate is a headless relative (a predicate headed by the determiner *ny*). Note that in these examples, the post-*dia* element can be of any category.[2]

(9) a. *Ny   tonga dia* [*ny   ankizy*]$_{DP}$.

      DET   arrive TOP DET child

      'The ones who arrived are children.'

b. *Ny   nahatongavany   dia* [*tamin'ny Talata*]_{PP}.

DET   PST.CT.arrive.3(GEN)   TOP   PST.P'DET Tuesday

'When he arrived was on Tuesday.'

c. *Ny   ataon-dRabe   dia* [*manasa   lamba*]_{VP}.

DET   TT.do.GEN-Rabe TOP AT.wash cloth

'What Rabe is doing is washing clothes.'

d. *Ny   nariny   dia* [*lafo*]_{AP}.

DET   PST.TT.lost.3(GEN)   TOP expensive

'What he lost was expensive.'

e. *Ny   tsy   fantatro   dia*

DET   NEG   know.1SG(GEN) TOP

[*hoe   iza no   tonga*]_{CP}.

COMP who FOC arrive

'What I don't know is who arrived.'

Rajaona (1972: 67-84) discusses examples such as these and argues that the first element is the predicate and the second is the subject; he doesn't say anything about *dia*. In other words, his discussion seems to indicate that these examples have the standard predicate>subject word order of Malagasy. It can be shown, however, that in these examples, the normal

new>old order has been reversed. The particle *dia* therefore plays an important role and also appears to still be a marker of topicalization.

(10)a. *Tonga ny   ankizy*.

arrive   DET child

'The children <u>arrived</u>.'   (and not left)

b. *Ny   tonga dia   ny   ankizy*.

DET   arrive TOP DET   child

'<u>The children</u> arrived.' (and not the adults)

For example, *ny ankizy* 'the children' in (10b) is focused, while the predicate *tonga* 'arrive' is focused in (10a). (10b) can therefore be the answer to the question 'Who arrived?', but (10a) cannot. Drawing on similar observations, Dez (1980: Tome I, 304-306) criticizes Rajaona's analysis and claims that whatever is to the right of *dia* is the predicate. In what follows, I will combine aspects of both Rajaona's and Dez' analyses.

4 Specification vs. predication

Before presenting my analysis, I discuss some parallels between the *dia* construction and pseudoclefts (Higgins 1979). As has long been noted, English pseudoclefts allow predicational and specificational readings.

(11)   What Pervez is is interesting. (ambiguous)

     i.   The job that Pervez has is interesting. (predicational)

     ii. Pervez is interesting. (specificational)

The Malagasy *dia* construction also permits both readings (but I have not found any truly ambiguous examples parallel to English).

(12)a. *Ny nomeko   azy   dia   ity peratra ity*.

     DET PST.give.1SG(GEN) 3(ACC)   TOP   this ring   this

     'What I gave him was this ring.' (specificational)

   b. *Ny nomeko   azy   dia   lafo*.

     DET PST.give.1SG(GEN)   3(ACC)   TOP   expensive

     'What I gave him was expensive.'   (predicational)

These two readings are described below (see Paul 2008 for more detailed discussion).

4.1   Specification

In the specificational reading the pre-*dia* XP sets up a variable and the post-*dia* XP supplies the value for this variable.

   (13)a. *Ny   ilaiko   dia   fiara sy   trano.*

           DET   need.1SG(GEN)   TOP   car   and   house

           'What I need is a car and a house.'

     b. $\{x: I\ need(x)\}\ =\ \{car, house\}$

Specifying the value for the variable is like enumerating items on a list: 'The list of things I need contains two items: a car and a house.' In English, the free relative sets up a variable, the value is supplied by post-copular XP. In other words, the variable is created by *wh*-movement.

   (14)a. What Sandy is is important to herself.

     b. Sandy is x, x = important to herself

In the Malagasy examples under consideration, there is no overt *wh*-word. Instead, the variable set up by voice morphology, and the value supplied by post-*dia* XP. For example, if the voice morphology is Actor Topic, as in (15a), the variable is an agent. Other examples of this "voice connectivity" are provided in (15b,c).

(15)a. ActorTopic (≈active): the agent

       Ny   manasa   lamba dia   Rabe.

       DET   AT.wash cloth TOP   Rabe

       'Who is washing clothes is Rabe.'

   b. ThemeTopic (≈passive): the theme

       Ny sasan-dRabe   dia   ny   lambany.

       DET TT.wash.GEN.Rabe TOP   DET   cloth.3(GEN)

       'What Rabe is washing are his clothes.'

   c. CircumstantialTopic (≈special passive): a circumstance

       Ny anasan-dRabe   lamba dia   ny   savony.

       DET CT.wash.GEN.Rabe   cloth TOP   DET soap

       'What Rabe is washing clothes with is the soap.'

Given that voice morphology plays the role of *wh*-movement, we have indirect evidence in favour of the A-bar analysis of voice ("wh-agreement"), as recently argued for by Pearson (2005).

The important role played by voice can also be seen in the following examples, discussed by Rajaona (1972: 75).

(16)a. *Ny   tsy   tiako   dia ny   tsy*

  DET NEG like.1SG(GEN)   TOP DET NEG

  nahafahany   fanadinana.

  PST.CT.pass.3(GEN) exam

  'What I don't like is his not passing the exam.'

 b. **Ny tsy   nahafahany   fanadinana   dia   ny*

  DET NEG PST.CT.pass.3(GEN) exam   TOP   DET

  tsy   tiako.

  NEG   like.1SG(GEN)

To explain the contrast above, Rajaona claims that what he calls the predicate (the pre-*dia* XP) must have greater "extension". I believe that it is easier to understand the contrast as arising from the specificational character of this construction: the variable must be specified by an element of the

correct value. In (16a), for example, the variable is the theme of *tiana* 'loved', as marked by Theme Topic morphology; the value is the event of him not passing the exam. Since it is possible to not like an event, the sentence is grammatical. In (16b), on the other hand, the variable is some circumstance related to the event of him not passing the exam (due to the Circumstantial Topic morphology); my not liking can't fill this role and the sentence is ungrammatical (or perhaps uninterpretable). These examples illustrate an important difference between Malagasy and English: specificational sentences in Malagasy are not reversible (unlike English).[3] I return to this difference later.

4.2   Predication

I now turn to the predicational reading. Here, the pre-*dia* XP is simply an argument and the post-*dia* XP is predicated of this argument.

(17)a. *Ny nolazain-dRabe   dia   marina.*

      DET PST.TT.say.GEN-Rabe TOP   true

      'What Rabe said is true.'

   b. Rabe said(x) & true(x)

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On the predicational reading, we don't learn what Rabe said, we simply learn that whatever it was, it is true. In these examples, the pre-*dia* XP is a DP argument (not a predicate) and can appear in other argument positions; topicalization is therefore optional, as illustrated below.

(18) a. *Ny   nomeko   azy   dia   lafo*.

   DET   PST.TT.give.1SG(GEN) 3(ACC)   TOP   expensive

   'What I gave him was expensive.'

   b. *Lafo   ny nomeko   azy*.

   expensive DET PST.TT.give.1SG(GEN)   3(ACC)

   'What I gave him was expensive.'

Because my focus in this paper is on specification, I set predicational examples aside.

5   Structure

Before turning to the analyses, I mention some relevant facts about the
structure of the *dia* construction.[4] As a starting point, it is easy to see that
the pre-*dia* XP is topicalized – it appears immediately before the topic
particle. The position of the post-*dia* XP is less obvious. In this section, I
show that the post-*dia* XP is low in the structure, within the VP (i.e. it is not
the matrix subject).[5]

5.1 Post-dia XP ≠ subject

In order to test for the position of the post-*dia* XP, I first turn to data
illustrating modal and adverb placement. Malagasy has pre-VP elements
(e.g *tokony* 'should') and post-VP elements (e.g. *foana* 'always'). Their
respective positions can be seen in (19).

   (19)a. <u>*Tokony*</u> *hilalao*   *baolina*   *ny*   *ankizy*.

          should AT.play   ball   DET   child

          'The children should be playing ball.'

b. *Milalao   baolina   <u>foana</u>   ny   ankizy*.

AT.play   ball   always   DET   child

'The children are always playing ball.'

Crucially, these elements occur on either side of the post-*dia* XP (*ny ankizy* 'the children in (20)): *tokony* 'should' precedes and *foana* 'always' follows.

(20)a. *Ny   milalao   baolina   dia   <u>tokony</u> ny ankizy*.

DET   AT.play   ball   TOP   should DET child

'The ones who are playing ball should be the children.'

b. *Ny milalao   baolina   dia   ny   ankizy <u>foana</u>*.

DET AT.play ball   TOP   DET   child   always

'The ones who are playing ball are always the children.'

Moreover, *tokony* cannot follow *ny ankizy* and *foana* cannot precede *ny ankizy*.[6]

(21)a. **Ny   milalao   baolina   dia   ny ankizy<u>tokony</u>*.

DET   AT.play   ball   TOP   DET child should

'The ones who are playing ball should be the children.'

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b. *Ny   milalao   baolina   dia   <u>foana</u>   ny ankizy.

DET   AT.play   ball   TOP   always   DET child

'The ones who are playing ball are always the children.'

Similarly, the post-*dia* XP can be negated, unlike argument DPs, including subjects:

(22)a. *Ny   mihira   dia   tsy i Bakoly*.

DET   AT.sing   TOP   NEG Bakoly

'The one who is singing is not Bakoly.,

b. **Mihira   tsy i Bakoly*.

AT.sing   NEG Bakoly

(lit.) 'Not Bakoly is singing.'

If *i* Bakoly in (22a) is not an argument, then it cannot be a subject.

A third and final piece of evidence against treating the post-*dia* XP as a subject comes from pronouns. In Malagasy, the first person singular pronoun has two nominative forms: a 'default' form for subjects (*aho* in (23a)) and a 'strong' form for topic and focus (*izaho* in (23b)).[7]

(23)a. *Tsy   mahalala izany   aho*.

   NEG   AT.know that   1SG(NOM)

   'I don't know that.'

b. *Izaho   no   tsy   mahalala izany*.

   1SG   FOC   NEG   AT.know that

   'It's I who doesn't know that.'

c. **Aho   no   tsy   mahalala izany*.

   1SG(NOM)   FOC NEG   AT.know that

The strong form of the pronoun is also used in the predicate position:

(24)   *Izaho   ilay   notadiavina*.

   1SG   DET   PST.TT.look-for

   'The one being looked for was me.'   [Dez 1980: Tome II, 207]

Turning now to the *dia* construction, we see that the strong form is required, and the default form is not possible. Given that subjects can always appear in the weak form (e.g. (23a)), the ungrammaticality of (25b) shows that the post-*dia* XP is not a subject.[8]

(25)a. *Ny   mihira   dia   izaho*.

      DET   AT.sing   TOP   1SG

      'The one who is singing is me.'

   b. **Ny   mihira   dia   aho*.

      DET   AT.sing   TOP   1SG(NOM)

In sum, data from adverbs, negation and pronouns all show that the post-*dia* XP acts like a VP-internal element, not like a subject (see Dez 1980: Tome I, 304-306 for a similar conclusion).

5.2 Dia ≠ be

Before concluding this section, I discuss the status of *dia* and show that it is not a copular verb. At first glance, it is tempting to treat *dia* as the equivalent of 'be' in English. The *dia* construction would have the following structure, where the pre-*dia* XP is a subject, *dia* is the predicate and the post-*dia* XP is the complement to *dia*.

(26) [$_{TP}$ [$_{DP}$ *Ny*   *milalao baolina*]   [$_{VP}$ *dia* [$_{DP}$ *ny*   *ankizy*]]].

         DET   AT.play ball   BE   DET   child

‘The ones who are playing ball are children.’

As a first argument against this analysis, the proposed structure in (26) does not conform to the standard predicate-initial word order of Malagasy. One would have to stipulate that *dia* is a medial predicate.

Second, the position of adverbs show that *dia* does not pattern with other predicates. Recall that there are pre-VP adverbs (e.g. *tokony* ‘should’) and post-VP adverbs (e.g. *foana* ‘always’). We have already seen that these adverbs frame the post-*dia* XP, treating it like the predicate ((27a) and (27c)). Crucially, these adverbs do not frame *dia* ((27b) and (27d)).

(27)a. *Ny milalao   baolina   dia   <u>tokony</u> ny ankizy*.

       DET AT.play ball   TOP   should DET child

       ‘The ones who are playing ball should be the children.’

    b. **Ny milalao   baolina   <u>tokony</u> dia ny   ankizy*.

       DET AT.play ball   should TOP DET child

       ‘The ones who are playing ball should be the children.’

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c. *Ny milalao   baolina   dia   ny ankizy <u>foana</u>.*

   DET AT.play ball   TOP   DET child always

   'The ones who are playing ball are always the children.'

d. **Ny milalao   baolina   dia   <u>foana</u>   ny ankizy*.

   DET AT.play ball   TOP   always   DET child

   'The ones who are playing ball are always the children.'

I therefore reject treating *dia* as a copular predicate and assume that it is always a topic particle.

6   Analysis 1

In this section, I consider one analysis of the *dia*-construction, proposed by Paul (2008). According to this analysis, the pre-*dia* XP is a headless relative that originates as the predicate of a small clause and undergoes topicalization. The post-*dia* XP is the small clause subject and remains in its base position. Topicalization, under this approach, is stipulated to be the result of the Definiteness Restriction on predicates, discussed in section 2.1.
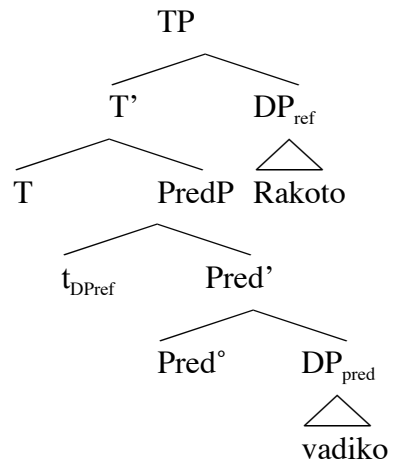
Because definite predicates are ungrammatical, the headless relative must escape the predicate position and is topicalized.

6.1   Basic nominal predicates

The core of this analysis is that nominal predication involves PredP: the predicate head relates two DPs: one is referential, the other is predicational (see Moro 1997, Adger and Ramchand 2003, Mikkelsen 2004). When the predicate is an indefinite nominal, the referential DP raises to Spec, TP.

(28)a. *Vadiko*   *Rakoto*.

spouse.1SG(GEN)   Rakoto

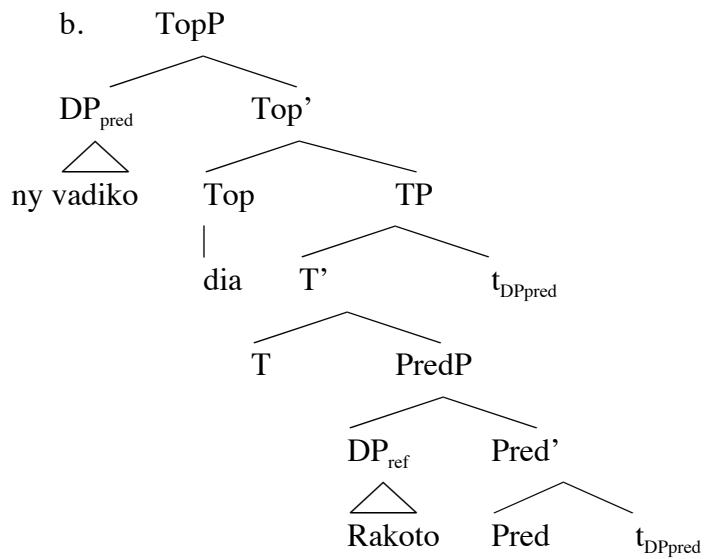'Rakoto is my spouse.'

b.

```
                              TP
                     _____|_____
                   T'                      DP_ref
           _____|_____                △
         T              PredP            Rakoto
                  _____|_____
               t_DPref            Pred'
                            _____|_____
                          Pred°            DP_pred
                                            △
                                          vadiko
```

If the predicate nominal is definite, however, it is topicalized.[9]

(29)a. *Ny   vadiko   dia   Rakoto.*

DET   spouse.1SG(GEN)   TOP   Rakoto
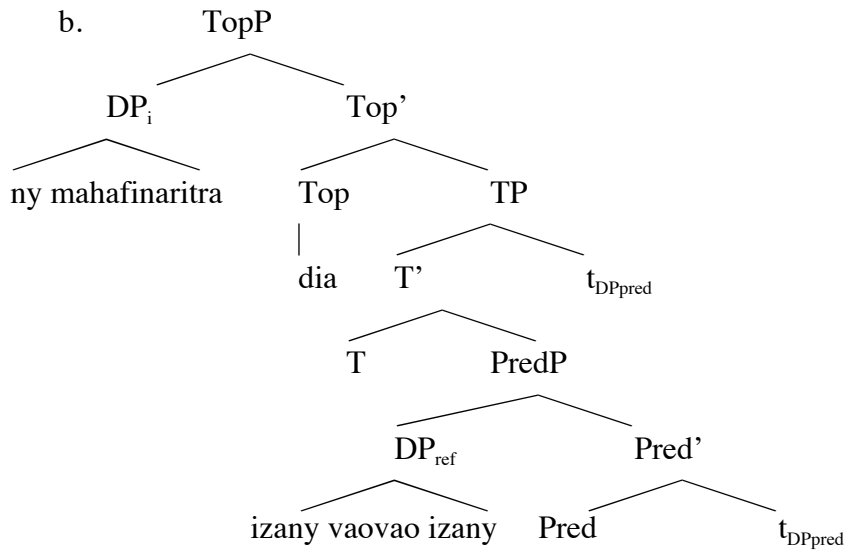
'My spouse is Rakoto.'

b.　TopP

```
            TopP
          /      \
     DP_pred      Top'
      /\         /    \
     /  \      Top      TP
  ny vadiko    |       /   \
             dia     T'     t_DPpred
                    /  \
                   T    PredP
                       /     \
                    DP_ref    Pred'
                     /\      /     \
                    /  \   Pred    t_DPpred
                 Rakoto
```

In the next section, I propose that the structure of *dia* examples is parallel to (29b).

6.2　*Specificational sentences*

We now can consider the *dia* construction in detail. As in the tree in (29b), the predicational DP is topicalized. The only difference is that in (30), the predicational DP is a headless relative.

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(30)a. *Ny   mahafinaritra dia   izany vaovao   izany.*

    DET   AT.happy   TOP   that   news   that
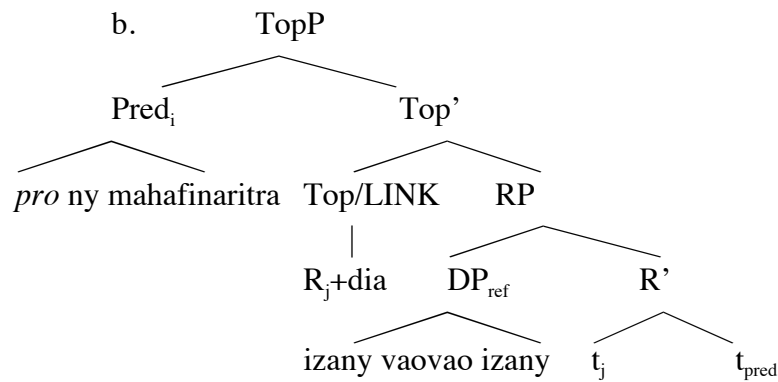
    'What is pleasing is the news.'

b.

```
                         TopP
                    _____
                 DP_i          Top'
              _____   _____
        ny mahafinaritra   Top        TP
                           |       _____
                          dia     T'      t_DPpred
                              _____
                             T        PredP
                                  _____
                              DP_ref          Pred'
                           _____      _____
                     izany vaovao izany  Pred     t_DPpred
```

As mentioned earlier, I claim that topicalization occurs in (29) and (30) because the predicate is definite.[10] I also assume that topicalization is a two-step process: the predicative DP passes first through the subject position (see footnote 9). I discuss topicalization in more detail in section 8.

7   Analysis 2

I would now like to consider a slightly different analysis of the Malagasy data, based on den Dikken (2006). Den Dikken argues that all identity statements involve inversion. That is, even in English sentences such as 'Cicero is Tully', the DP 'Cicero' has undergone inversion. According to den Dikken, the predicate DP in identity statements contains a headless relative and this headless relative inverts with the small clause subject. Inversion is driven by the need to properly license the null predicate (*pro*) adjoined to the headless relative.[11] Below I provide the structure for Malagasy specificational sentences inspired by den Dikken's account, where R stands for Relator and is the head of the small clause. Note that the main difference between analysis 1 and analysis 2 is the labeling of particular nodes.

(31)a. *Ny   mahafinaritra dia   izany vaovao   izany*.

      DET   AT.happy   TOP   that   news   that

      'What is pleasing is the news.'

b.

```
                    TopP
           ┌─────────┴─────────┐
         Pred_i              Top'
      ┌────┴────┐       ┌──────┴──────┐
 pro ny mahafinaritra Top/LINK        RP
                        │        ┌─────┴─────┐
                      R_j+dia  DP_ref        R'
                            ┌────┴────┐   ┌──┴──┐
                      izany vaovao izany t_j  t_pred
```

Following den Dikken, it is possible to treat *dia* is a "linker" – a functional head, typically spelled out as *be* in English, that provides a landing site for inversion.

8   Why topicalization?

I now turn to one unresolved issue in the analysis of the *dia*-construction. As has been clear, the predicate is always topicalized when definite. Which raises the question: why can't the predicate remain in the subject position? In other words, why isn't (32b) grammatical?[12]

(32)a. *Ny mahafinaritra*   *dia*   *izany* *vaovao*   *izany*.

      DET   AT.happy   TOP   that   news   that

      'What is pleasing is that news.'

   b. **Izany vaovao izany ny mahafinaritra*.

      that   news that   DET   AT.happy

      'What is pleasing is that news.'

Note that analysis 1, as it stands, predicts (32b) to be grammatical – the headless relative *ny mahafinaritra* 'what is pleasing' moves out of the predicate position and into the subject position, avoiding the Definiteness Restriction. To account for the ungrammaticality of analysis 1, an additional stipulation forcing topicalization is necessary. Paul (2008) suggests that the subject position is restricted to arguments and therefore a predicative element cannot appear there. As an example of this restriction, a measure phrase (a DP that does not get a theta-role and therefore is not an argument) cannot surface as the grammatical subject, as shown in (33).

(33) * *Lanjain'*   *ity voankazo ity ny*   *iray kilao*.

      TT.weigh.GEN'   this fruit   this DET   one kilo

      (lit.) 'One kilo is weighed by this fruit.'

If we assume that the headless relative in a specificational clause is a predicate and therefore does not receive a theta-role, then the ungrammaticality of (32b) falls out from an independent property of Malagasy grammar.

Analysis 2, on the other hand, can explain (32b) by invoking the notion of linker. Simplifying somewhat, den Dikken (2006) argues that linkers are functional heads that provide a landing site for predicate inversion. He notes that linkers can be spelled out via different categories (e.g. a copula or an aspectual head). Given the lack of an overt copula in Malagasy, "inversion" of the predicate to the subject position (32b), is not marked by any linker and is therefore ungrammatical. Topicalization, however, provides the topic particle that can overtly mark inversion.

Looking cross-linguistically, however, it does not seem to be true that in languages that lack copulas, specificational sentences and identity statements must be overtly marked with a linker or other element. In Tagalog, for example, both specificational and identity sentences are possible with no overt topicalization or other linker.[13]

(34)a. *Ang   karne ang nasunog*.

ANG   meat ANG MA.burn

'What got burned is the meat.'

[Schachter and Otanes 1972: 529]

b. *Si Tully si Cicero*.

'Cicero is Tully.'   [R. Mercado, p.c.]

Moreover, these sentences maintain the unmarked comment>topic word order of Tagalog: unlike in Malagasy, there is no visible inversion. In his discussion of nominal predication, Stassen (1997: 109) notes that identity statements are more likely to be marked with discourse-motivated elements such as topic and focus particles, and he suggests this marking arises due to the lack of grammatical relations (e.g. subject, predicate) in identity statements. But this is simply a cross-linguistic tendency, not a requirement. As we have just seen, Tagalog permits zero marking of identity statements.[14] The difference between Malagasy and Tagalog may be due to differences between the subject/topic position in these languages, but the Tagalog suggest that an overt linker is not always necessary, a fact that calls into question the universality of den Dikken's claim that a linker must be spelled out.[15] In other words, it appears that whether or not a linker is

pronounced is determined on a language-by-language basis and therefore the presence of *dia* in specificational sentences must simply be stipulated.

In sum, although den Dikken's analysis is initially appealing, it must resort to additional stipulations (the linker must be overt). Analysis 1, on the other hand, must stipulate that non-theta marked DPs cannot be subjects, but this is independently attested in the grammar. Therefore analysis 1 is more parsimonious of the two.

9   Conclusion

In this paper, I have claimed that specificational predication is inherently asymmetrical – one DP is the predicate and the other is the subject. In Malagasy, the predicate DP is topicalized, creating a structure that inverts the canonical comment>topic word order. Note that the resulting word order resembles inversion in English: the discourse familiar element appears first.

(35)   Sitting in the garden was an old man.   [Birner 1994: (4)]

The structure of English inversion is the subject of some debate; what is crucial for this paper is that word order and other tests indicate that in Malagasy the clause-initial constituent is a topic, not the subject. Whether or not specificational sentences in other languages involve inversion or require an overt linker remains open to further research. The Tagalog data tell us that if inversion does obtain, it is not always overtly marked.

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Appendix: examples from newspaper articles (Jedele and Randrianarivelo 1998)

(1) *Ny   lazain'   ny   vahoaka   dia izao*:

DET   TT.say.GEN'DET   citizen   TOP this:

'What people are saying is this:'

(2) *Ny mampalahelo   amin'izao   fotoana izao mantsy   dia mbola*

DET CAUSE.sad   P'this   time   this unfortunately TOP still

mahazo vahana   ny fijirihana   ny asan'   ny   mpanakanto.

get   size   DET theft   DET work.GEN'DET   musician

'What is sad these days is that the theft of artists' work is continuing to increase.'

(3) *Ny voalohany   dia ny   hasin'   ny   firenena na ny   voninahitry*

DET first   TOP DET dignity.GEN'   DET   nation   or DET honor.GEN

ny   firenena.

DET nation

'The first is the dignity or honor of the nation.'

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[1] Native speakers initially judge these examples to be slightly marked. I have found, however, several examples in written texts – a sample is provided in the appendix.

[2] There is some inter-speaker variation in the possibility of an indefinite DP in examples such as (9a). Although some speakers (including one of the anonymous reviewers) prefer a definite DP, other speakers accept an indefinite.

[3] Dez (1980: Tome I, 306) gives an example of a reversible specificational clause, but I haven't been able to replicate his judgements with other speakers.

> (i)   *ny   tiako   dia ny mitsangatsangana*.
>   DET like.1SG(GEN) TOP   DET AT.walk
>   'What I like is going for a walk.'
> (ii) % ny mitsangatsangana dia ny tiako.

True identity statements, however, are reversible:

> (iii)   a.   *Diego dia Antsiranana*.
>   'Diego is Antsiranana.'
>   b.   *Antsiranana dia Diego*.
>   'Antsiranana is Diego.'

[4] Most analyses of inversion provide data from extraction as evidence for a certain structure. For reasons internal to Malagasy syntax, I am unable to provide parallel data. First, extraction in Malagasy is highly restricted – only subjects and certain adjuncts can extract. Second, extraction involves focus, which always follows topics. As noted in footnote 10, it is impossible to get both topic and focus in the sentences under consideration in this paper.

[5] As a point of clarification, here and in the following sections, I refer to VP. The actual label of the constituent is not important, however; what is crucial is that there is strong evidence in Malagasy for a syntactic constituent that includes the verb and the object and excludes the subject. Keenan (1995) refers to this constituent as "PredP". What is important, therefore, is that the post-*dia* material behaves like it is within this constituent.

[6] Because the pre-*dia* material contains a VP (within the headless relative), it is always possible for *tokony* and *foana* to appear framing that VP. But these data are tangential to determining the nature of the post-*dia* material.

[7] Malagasy does have other case forms (*ahy* is accusative and affixal *ko* is genitive). The data presented in this section show that whatever position is involved, it is neither accusative nor genitive.

[8] Strictly speaking, these data show that the post-*dia* XP is not in the "normal" matrix subject position. It could be a subject that has moved, for example, to a clause-initial position below the topic. But we would then expect examples like (21a), where *tokony* 'should' precedes the XP, to be grammatical. Since this is not the case, I reject this possibility.

[9] For the purposes of this paper, I show topicalization as movement. It is possible, however, that the topic is base generated, coindexed with a null predicate. What is crucial for my analysis is that the subject position (Spec, TP) is not available – in these structures and in those in the next section, no other DP moves into the subject position. I also set aside here issues surrounding the motivation for movement.

[10] An anonymous reviewer points out that Malagasy permits topicalization and focalization in the same clause (as seen in (i)) and asks whether similar stacking occurs in the specificational sentences discussed in this paper.

(i) *Ity radara ity dia ny Rosiana no nanao azy.*
    this radar this TOP DET Russian FOC AT.make 3(ACC)
    'As for this radar, it was the Russians who built it.' [Keenan 1976: (69)]

In such cases, the focalized XP (e.g. *ny Rosiana* 'the Russians') must correspond to the grammatical subject. Given that in the structure proposed in this paper, it is the grammatical subject that has been topicalized, no other element is accessible for focalization. My analysis therefore (correctly) predicts the ungrammaticality of the following (though I suspect there are independent reasons why it is ungrammatical, in particular the stranding of the focus marker *no*):

(ii) **Ny mahafinaritra dia izany vaovao izany no*.
    DET AT. happy TOP that news that FOC

[11] Den Dikken posits the null predicate to account for the fact that a DP can fulfill a predicative function. The null predicate is overtly realized in certain languages, for example Scots and Irish Gaelic (Adger and Ramchand 2003).

[12] This example is in fact structurally ambiguous: *izany vaovao izany* could be the small clause subject or it could be the predicate. Under the latter parsing, (32b) would be ruled out by the Definiteness Restriction on the predicate position.

[13] Topicalization is of course possible, but, crucially, it is not required.

[14] Within Austronesian, some Polynesian languages such as Niuean (Massam, Lee and Rolle 2006), Maori (Bauer 1991) and Tuvaluan (Besnier 2000) pattern with Malagasy and require overt marking (*ko*) in identity statements. Fijian (Schütz 1985) is like Tagalog and permits simple juxtaposition (and no inversion).

[15] Den Dikken (2006: 145-148) discusses contexts where an overt linker is not required, in particular in resultative constructions (e.g. *If Bill has an alibi for 6 p.m., that makes the murderer John*). His analysis crucially rests on the presence of an aspectual head that serves as the linker. Such an analysis does not easily extend to the Tagalog data.