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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 Raso.

AT.wash cloth Raso

‘Raso is washing clothes.’

- b. Theme Topic: Theme is subject

Sasan-dRaso ny lamba.

TT.wash-Raso DET cloth

‘The clothes are washed by Raso.’

c. Circumstantial Topic: Oblique is subject

Anasan-dRaso *lamba ity savony ity.*

CT.wash-Raso cloth this soap this

‘This soap is being washed clothes with by Raso.’

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 [lafa]*_{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 arrived.’ (and not left)

b. *Ny tonga dia ny ankizy.*

DET arrive TOP DET child

‘The children 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. $\{x: I \text{ need}(x)\} = \{\text{car, house}\}$

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 (\approx active): the agent

Ny manasa lamba dia Rabe.

DET AT.wash cloth TOP Rabe

‘Who is washing clothes is Rabe.’

b. ThemeTopic (\approx 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 (\approx 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 nahafahany fanadinana.*
 DET NEG like.1SG(GEN) TOP DET NEG
 PST.CT.pass.3(GEN) exam
 ‘What I don’t like is his not passing the exam.’

b. **Ny tsy nahafahany fanadinana dia ny tsy tiako.*
 DET NEG PST.CT.pass.3(GEN) exam TOP DET
 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)

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. *Tokony hilalao baolina ny ankizy.*
should AT.play ball DET child
‘The children should be playing ball.’

b. *Milalao baolina foana 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 tokony 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 foana.*

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 tokony.*

DET AT.play ball TOP DET child should

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

- b. **Ny milalao baolina dia foana 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 tokony ny ankizy.*

DET AT.play ball TOP should DET child

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

b. **Ny milalao baolina tokony dia ny ankizy.*

DET AT.play ball should TOP DET child

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

- c. *Ny milalao baolina dia ny ankizy foana.*
 DET AT.play ball TOP DET child always
 ‘The ones who are playing ball are always the children.’
- d. **Ny milalao baolina dia foana 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.

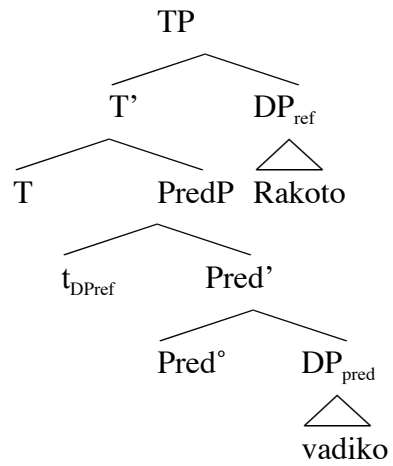
Because definite predicates are ungrammatical, the headless relative must escape the predicate position and is topicalized.

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.

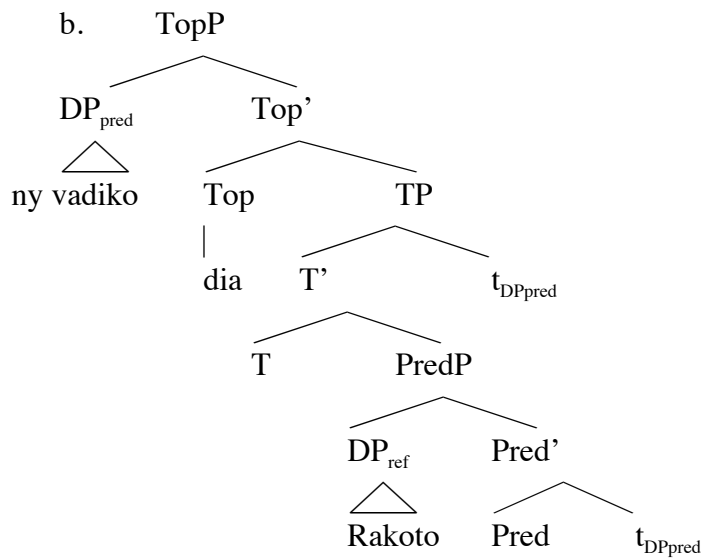


If the predicate nominal is definite, however, it is topicalized.⁹

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

DET spouse.1SG(GEN) TOP Rakoto

‘My spouse is Rakoto.’

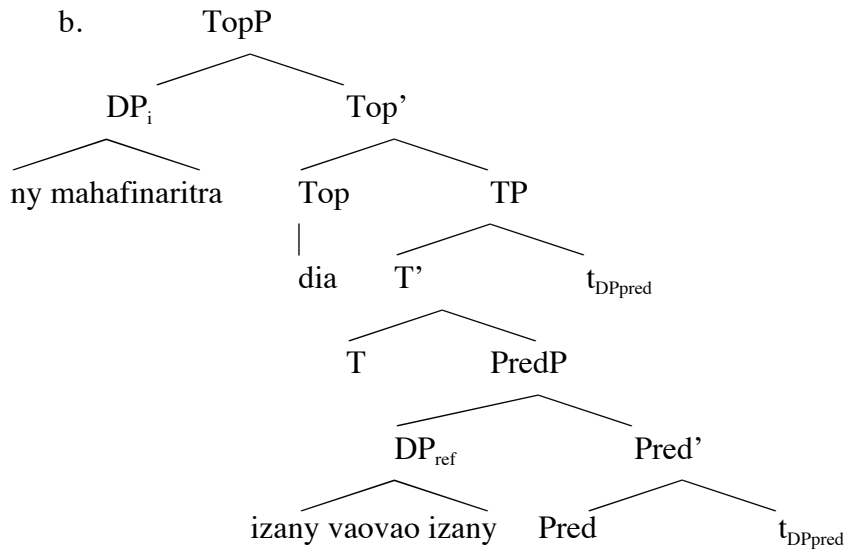


In the next section, I propose that the structure of *dia* examples is parallel to (29b).

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.

- (30)a. *Ny mahafinaritra dia izany vaovao izany.*
 DET AT.happy TOP that news that
 ‘What is pleasing is the news.’

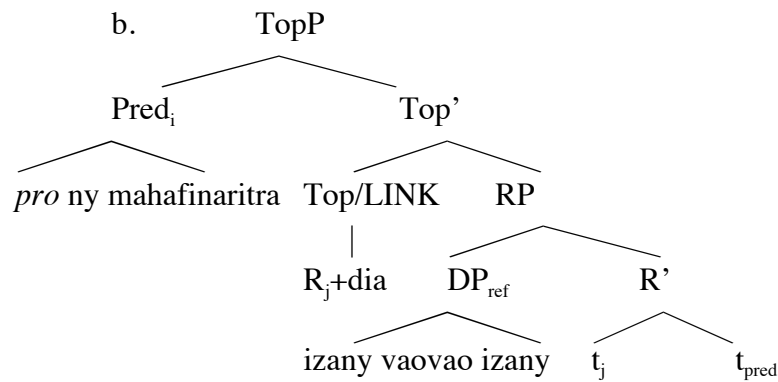


As mentioned earlier, I claim that topicalization occurs in (29) and (30) because the predicate is definite.¹⁰ I also assume that topicalization is a two-step process: the predicative DP passes first through the subject position (see footnote 9). I discuss topicalization in more detail in section 8.

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.’



Following den Dikken, it is possible to treat *dia* as 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 Otones 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.

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- (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.