What’s No? Focus and Clause Linking in Malagasy

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Abstract

Contrastively focused constituents in Malagasy, a verb-initial language, occur at the left edge of the clause, separated from the remainder of the clause by the particle no (previous work has shown that no forms a constituent with what follows it, here called the no-PHRASe). The Malagasy focus construction is usually analyzed as a pseudo-cleft: the focus phrase constitutes the main predicate of the clause, while the no-phrase is a DP containing a headless relative clause denoting the individual(s) of which the focus phrase is predicated (no itself being a special determiner or relative clause marker). In this paper I argue that the no-phrase and focus phrase are instead full clauses, with no acting as a clause linker—viz., a subordinating conjunction or complementizer. The focus construction is not a pseudo-cleft, but something akin to a conditional construction: hence, the relation between the no-phrase and the focus phrase is not one of predication, but of implication. Rather than a headless relative (of category DP), the no-phrase is an embedded clause (of category CP) which presents a presupposed state of affairs, a condition or temporal context necessary for evaluating the truth of the matrix clause.

1. Introduction

In Malagasy, an Austronesian language spoken on Madagascar, unmarked sentences consist of a predicate phrase followed by a clause-final trigger, whose grammatical function is indicated by the voice form of the verb.1 ACTOR-TRIGGER (AT) voice morphology is used when the trigger is the external argument (‘actor’) of the clause, while THEME-TRIGGER (TT) morphology is used when the internal argument (‘undergoer’) is the trigger, and CIRCUMSTANTIAL-TRIGGER (CT) morphology is used when the trigger is an oblique participant (denoting instrument, manner, location, etc.). Examples of voice alternations are given in (1). As Keenan (1976), Dahl (1996), and others have discussed, the boundary between the predicate phrase and the trigger is marked by the placement of certain particles, such as the yes/no question marker ve, shown in parentheses.2

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1 The trigger is usually characterized as the structural subject of the clause, making Malagasy a VOS language. However, Pearson (2005) argues that the trigger is in fact an A’-element, denoting the argument of sentence-level predication, while the postverbal actor in non-AT clauses is the structural subject. Under this analysis, Malagasy is actually a VSO language with a clause-final topic position. I abstract away from the status of the trigger here. For more information on basic clause structure and voice marking in Malagasy, see Keenan (1976, 1995), Randriamisananana (1986), Pearson and Paul (1996), Paul (1998, 1999), Pearson (2001), Rasoloson and Rubino (2005), and the many references cited therein.

2 Examples sentences are taken from my field notes unless otherwise noted (since the internal structure of the Malagasy words is irrelevant to the points being made, I omit morpheme-by-morpheme segmentation). The following abbreviations are used in the glosses: 1s = first person singular, 2s = second person singular, 3 = third person singular/plural, Acc = accusative, AT = actor-trigger voice, CT = circumstantial-trigger voice, Det = determiner, Irr = irrealis/future, Lnk = linker, Neg = negative particle, Nom = nominative, Obl = oblique case marker, Pass = passive, Pf = perfective, Pst = past, Qu = question particle, Redup = reduplicated stem, Rel = relative clause marker, TDet = trigger determiner, TT = theme-trigger voice.

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(1) a. *Nanoratra* taratasy tamin’ ny penina (ve) ny mpianatra
  Pst.AT.write letter with Det pen Det student
  ‘The student wrote a letter with a pen’

b. *Nosoratan’ ny mpianatra tamin’ ny penina (ve) ilay taratasy*
  Pst.TT.write Det student with Det pen that letter
  ‘The student wrote that letter with a pen’

c. *Nanoratan’ ny mpianatra taratasy (ve) ilay penina*
  Pst.CT.write Det student letter that pen
  ‘The student wrote a letter with that pen’

As illustrated in (2) below, a contrastively focused noun phrase may undergo fronting, in which case it is separated from the rest of the clause by the particle *no* (pronounced /nu/, and glossed simply ‘NO’). For expository purposes I will refer to this as the FOCUS CONSTRUCTION. The fronted constituent will be referred to as the FOCUS or FOCUS PHRASE, and the remainder of the clause as the NO-PHRASE (see Paul 2001 for evidence that the no-phrase is a constituent).

(2) *Ny mpianatra no nanoratra taratasy tamin’ ny penina*
  Det student NO Pst.AT.write letter with Det pen
  ‘[The student]F wrote a letter with a pen’

A nominal focus phrase obligatorily controls the voice of the following verb. For example, the verb takes AT morphology when the external argument is focused, as shown in (3), while focusing the internal argument triggers TT morphology, as in (4):

(3) a. *Ny mpianatra no nanoratra taratasy tamin’ ny penina*
  Det student NO Pst.AT.write letter with Det pen
  ‘[The student]F wrote a letter with a pen’

b. *Ny mpianatra no nosoratan(a) tamin’ ny penina ny taratasy*
  Det student NO Pst.TT.write with Det pen Det letter
  ‘[The student]F wrote the letter with a pen’

(4) a. *Ny taratasy no nosoratan’ ny mpianatra tamin’ ny penina*
  Det letter NO Pst.TT.write Det student with Det pen
  ‘The student wrote [the letter]F with a pen’

b. *Ny taratasy no nanoratra tamin’ ny penina ny mpianatra*
  Det letter NO Pst.AT.write with Det pen Det student
  ‘The student wrote [the letter]F with a pen’

The pattern in (3) and (4) has been much discussed in the literature on Malagasy (see Keenan 1976 for the basic facts, and McLaughlin 1995, Nakamura 1996, Paul 2002, Sabel 2002, and Pearson 2005 for various analyses). This pattern is sometimes expressed as an accessibility constraint, such that only triggers can be focused, or that only triggers can undergo (A’-)extraction. However, the focus phrase position differs from the clause-final trigger position in terms of the range of constituents that can occur there. For instance, the focus may be an indefinite noun phrase, whereas the trigger must be formally definite, as shown in (5) (Keenan 1976). In addition, certain types of PP adjuncts and adverbials can be focused (6), whereas only noun phrases can act as the trigger (Paul 1999, 2001).
(5) a. *Mpianaatra no nanoratra ilay taratasy
   ‘[A student] wrote that letter’
   student NO Pst.AT.write that letter
b. Nanoratra ilay taratasy mpianatra
   ‘A student wrote that letter’
   Pst.AT.write that letter student

(6) Tamin’ ny penina no nanoratra taratasy ny mpianatra
   ‘The student wrote a letter [with a pen]’
   Pst.with Det pen NO Pst.AT.write letter Det student

This suggests that the focus phrase does not raise into its surface position by passing through the trigger position, as some authors have claimed (e.g., McLaughlin 1995). Instead of saying that only triggers can be focused/extracted, the correct generalization appears to be that [i] when the focus phrase is a nominal constituent, it must correspond to a gap within the no-phrase, and [ii] if the no-phrase contains a gap, that gap must function as a trigger (i.e., control the voice of the verb).

The focus construction is quite widespread in Malagasy. Note, for example, that wh-questions commonly take the form of a focus construction, with the wh-phrase occupying the focus position:

(7) a. Iza no nanoratra taratasy tamin’ ny penina?
   ‘Who wrote a letter with the pen?’
   who NO Pst.AT.write letter with Det pen
b. Inona no nosoratan’ ny mpianatra tamin’ ny penina?
   ‘What did the student write with the pen?’
   what NO Pst.TT.write Det student with Det pen

Dahl (1986), Pearson (2001, 2005), and especially Paul (1999, 2001) and Potsdam (2006a,b), treat the Malagasy focus construction as structurally comparable to the pseudo-cleft construction in English. Paul and Potsdam argue specifically that the focus constitutes the matrix predicate of the clause (or is perhaps contained within the matrix predicate, as the complement of a null copula), while the no-phrase is a nominal constituent, kind of headless relative clause or free relative, which acts as the matrix trigger. This analysis is schematized in (8a,b), which show the structure of (1a) and (2), respectively:3

(8) a. [PredP nanoratra taratasy tamin’ny penina] [Trigger ny mpianatra]
   ‘The student wrote a letter with a pen’
   [PredP ny mpianatra] [Trigger no nanoratra taratasy tamin’ny penina]
   ‘The one who wrote a letter with a pen (is) the student’

As I discuss below, the evidence for treating the focus as the matrix predicate is quite compelling. However, there are problems with treating the no-phrase as a headless relative clause—e.g., interpreting no nanoratra taratasy tamin’ny penina in (8b) as a definite description, meaning ‘the x such that x wrote a letter with a pen’. For one thing, in adjunct focus sentences like (6), the no-phrase does not look like a headless relative, insofar as it does not appear to contain a gap: the trigger position within the no-phrase is filled by an overt element.

3 Note that Sabel (2002, 2003) disputes this treatment of focus-fronting, arguing that focused constituents undergo movement to SpecCP, with no generated in C0 (McLaughlin 1995 takes a similar approach). See the authors cited above for arguments against this analysis.
In order to determine the correct analysis of the no-phrase, we need to consider the identity of the particle no itself. Paul and Potsdam treat no as a kind of determiner or relative clause marker; however, it never functions as such outside of the focus construction. On the other hand, no does occur outside the focus construction in sentences like (9). Here no seems to act as a subordinator, roughly comparable to English when, which links two full clauses to form a complex sentence, marking a relationship of temporal overlap. (To the best of my knowledge, sentences of this sort have heretofore been overlooked in the literature on the focus construction.)

(9) a. Nandoko ny trano aho no nandalo ny namako
     Pst.AT.paint Det house 1sNom NO Pst.AT.pass Det friend.1s
     ‘I was painting the house when my friend passed by’

     b. Efa nanomboka ny dinika no tonga Rangahy
       already Pst.AT.begin Det discussion NO arrived Monsieur
       ‘The meeting had already begun when the gentleman arrived’

In this paper, I give a syntactic and semantic overview of clause linking with no. I argue that no is a complementizer or subordinating conjunction, and provide evidence that the no-phrase in (9) is a kind of adverbial clause whose function is to introduce a backgrounded (presupposed) event, for which the event or state of affairs denoted by the matrix clause provides an aspectual frame. I then extend this analysis to include the focus construction. I propose that the focus construction is merely a special case of the construction in (9), distinctive only in that the matrix clause consists of a non-verbal predicate and an empty trigger.

I begin my discussion by reviewing the major arguments for and against the pseudo-cleft analysis of the focus construction, as proposed by Paul (1999, 2001) and Potsdam (2006a,b). In section 2 I consider evidence in favor of treating the focus phrase as (contained within) the matrix predicate, while in section 3 I argue against treating the no-phrase as a headless relative. In section 4 I provide additional examples and discussion of the construction in (9), where no functions as a clause linker. In sections 5 and 6 I consider the information structure of sentences with clause-linking no, showing how it parallels the information structure of the focus construction. Then in section 7 I consider some of the consequences of treating the focus construction as a special case of the clause-linking construction. Section 8 summarizes the paper.

2. Evidence for the pseudo-cleft analysis: Focused constituents as predicates

According to the pseudo-cleft analysis of the focus construction, the focus constitutes the main predicate of the clause, of which the no-phrase is predicated. As such, focused nominals—bracketed in (10a)—are expected to pattern syntactically with predicate nominals in copular sentences (10b), and with verbal predicate phrases in non-focus sentences (10c), but to behave differently from triggers and other non-focused arguments.

(10) a. [Mpianatra] no nanoratra ny tara\(\)asy
       student NO Pst.AT.write Det letter
       ‘The one who wrote the letter is a student’

     b. [Mpianatra] ny rahalahiko
       student Det brother.1s
       ‘My brother is a student’
c. [ Nanoratra ny taratasy ] ny rahalahiko
   Pst.AT.write Det letter Det brother.1s
   ‘My brother wrote the letter’

There is considerable evidence that this is correct. For instance, Paul (2001) shows that the yes/no question particle ve, which occurs at the right edge of the matrix predicate phrase in unmarked sentences (11a), immediately follows the focused constituent in focus constructions (11b). Moreover, ve may not occur within the no-phrase, as shown in (11c); this follows if the predicate following no is embedded in some sort of subordinate clause, inasmuch as ve is confined to matrix clauses (embedded yes/no questions are formed using the complementizer raha ‘if/when’).

(11)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Manoratra} \textit{taratasy} \textit{ve} \textit{Rabe}?
   \text{AT.write} \text{letter} \text{Qu} \text{Rabe}
   ‘Is Rabe writing a letter?’
\item \textit{Rabe} \textit{ve} \textit{no} \textit{manoratra} \textit{taratasy}?
   \text{Rabe} \text{Qu} \text{NO} \text{AT.write} \text{letter}
   ‘Is it Rabe who is writing a letter?’
\item \textit{* Rabe} \textit{no} \textit{manoratra} \textit{taratasy} \textit{ve}?
   \text{Rabe} \text{NO} \text{AT.write} \text{letter} \text{Qu}
   ‘Is it Rabe who is writing a letter?’
\end{enumerate}

In addition, the focus behaves like verbal and nominal predicates (12a,b) in that it can be negated with tsy (12c). As (13) shows, non-focused nominal arguments may not be negated.

(12)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Tsy} \textit{nanoratra} \textit{ny} \textit{taratasy} \textit{ny} \textit{mpianatra}
   \text{Neg} \text{Pst.AT.write} \text{Det} \text{letter} \text{Det} \text{student}
   ‘The student didn’t write the letter’
\item \textit{Tsy} \textit{mpianatra} \textit{ny} \textit{rahalahiko}
   \text{Neg} \text{student} \text{Det} \text{brother.1s}
   ‘My brother is not a student’
\item \textit{Tsy} \textit{mpianatra} \textit{no} \textit{nanoratra} \textit{ny} \textit{taratasy}
   \text{Neg} \text{student} \text{NO} \text{Pst.AT.write} \text{Det} \text{letter}
   ‘It wasn’t a student who wrote the letter’
\end{enumerate}

(13)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{* Nanoratra} \textit{ny} \textit{taratasy} \textit{tsy} \textit{ny} \textit{mpianatra}
   \text{Pst.AT.write} \text{Det} \text{letter} \text{Neg} \text{Det} \text{student}
   ‘Not the student wrote the letter’
\item \textit{* Nanoratra} \textit{tsy} \textit{taratasy} \textit{ny} \textit{mpianatra}
   \text{Pst.AT.write} \text{Neg} \text{letter} \text{Det} \text{student}
   ‘The student wrote not a letter’ or ‘The student wrote no letter(s)’
\end{enumerate}

\footnote{Negation can also occur inside the no-phrase, in which case the focus phrase is interpreted outside its scope (e.g., compare (12c) with \textit{Mpianatra no tsy nanoratra ny taratasy} ‘It was a student who didn’t write the letter’). This is of course consistent with the pseudo-cleft analysis, since there is nothing to prevent the predicate within the headless relative clause from being negated.
The pattern in (12) and (13) is not due to a requirement that the negative particle come at the beginning of the clause. In addition to the focus construction, Malagasy has a second strategy for fronting arguments: As shown in (14a), contrastive topics normally occur at the beginning of the clause, separated from the predicate by the particle *dia*. Temporal adverbials (and other scene-setting elements) can also be fronted using the *dia* construction (14b). It is generally assumed that fronted topics and adverbials are not predicates, like focus phrases, but dislocated constituents, occupying a specifier or XP-adjoined position high in the left periphery of the clause (whether they raise into this position or are base-generated there, or whether both options are possible, is a matter of debate; see Paul 1999, 2001 and Flegg 2003 for discussion of this construction).

(14) a. *Ny mpianatra dia nanoratra taratasy omaly*
   Det student *Dia* Pst.AT.write letter yesterday
   ‘(As for) the student, (s/he) wrote a letter yesterday’

b. *Omary dia nanoratra taratasy ny mpianatra*
   yesterday *Dia* Pst.AT.write letter Det student
   ‘Yesterday, the student wrote a letter’

Returning to negation, we see that unlike focus phrases, fronted topics and adverbials cannot be negated (15a); instead, negation must follow *dia* (15b) (Paul 1999, 2001). Assuming that fronted topics are dislocated arguments rather than predicates, this follows if the negative particle *tsy* occurs at the left edge of the predicate phrase, rather than the left edge of the clause.

(15) a. * *Tsya i Bakoly dia nanapaka bozaka omaly*
   Neg Det Bakoly *Dia* Pst.AT.cut grass yesterday
   ‘Not Bakoly, she cut the grass yesterday’

b. *I Bakoly dia tsy nanapaka bozaka omaly*
   Det Bakoly *Dia* Neg Pst.AT.cut grass yesterday
   ‘Bakoly, she didn’t cut the grass yesterday’

Potsdam (2006b) gives additional evidence showing that focus phrases pattern as matrix predicates while fronted topics do not. As illustrated below, the modal *tokony* ‘should’ can combine with a verbal predicate (16a) or with a focus phrase (16b), but not with a fronted topic (16c). This pattern can be explained if the semantic type of *tokony* is such that it can select predicates but not arguments (much like the negative particle *tsy*).

(16) a. *Tokony hamangy an-dRabe Rasoa*
   should Irr.AT.visit Acc-Rabe Rasoa
   ‘Rasoa should visit Rabe’

b. *Tokony Rasoa no hamangy an-dRabe*
   should Rasoa NO Irr.AT.visit Acc-Rabe
   ‘It should be Rasoa who visits Rabe’

c. * *Tokony Rasoa dia hamangy an-dRabe*
   should Rasoa *Dia* Irr.AT.visit Acc-Rabe
   (‘Rasoa, she should visit Rabe’ or ‘Given that it should be Rasoa, she will visit Rabe’)
occur between dia and the verb (17d). If we assume that tena targets the left edge of a predicate phrase, this provides additional evidence that focus phrases behave as matrix predicates in a pseudo-cleft-like construction, while fronted topics do not.

(17) a. \textit{Tena hovidin' ny zaza ny fiaramanidina} 
indeed Irr.TT.buy Det child Det airplane  
‘The child will indeed buy the airplane’

b. \textit{Tena Rabe no mahandro vary} 
indeed Rabe NO AT.cook rice  
‘It is indeed Rabe who cooks rice’

c. * \textit{Tena ny fiaramanidina dia hovidin’ ny zaza} 
indeed Det airplane DIA Irr.TT.buy Det child  
‘Indeed the airplane, the child will buy (it)’

d. \textit{Ny fiaramanidina dia tena hovidin’ ny zaza} 
Det airplane DIA indeed Irr.TT.buy Det child  
‘The airplane, the child will indeed buy (it)’

3. \textbf{A challenge for the pseudo-cleft analysis: The status of the no-phrase}

Although there is general consensus (pace Sabel 2002, 2003) that the focus phrase is the matrix predicate, there is less agreement on the treatment of the no-phrase. As I mentioned above, Paul (1999, 2001) and Potsdam (2006a,b) analyze the no-phrase as an individual-denoting nominal constituent, a type of headless relative clause. This headless relative acts as the matrix trigger of the clause, standing in a predication relation with the focus-fronted constituent. For example, (18) below may be paraphrased ‘The $x$ such that $x$ wrote that letter (is) a student’.

(18) \textit{Mpianatra no nanoratra ilay taratasy} 
student NO Pst.AT.write that letter  
‘It was a student who wrote that letter’

There are at least two objections that one could raise to this analysis, the first having to do with the identity of the particle no. Paul (2001) tentatively identifies no as the determiner head of the DP containing the headless relative clause. However, as Law (2005) points out, no does not seem to function as a determiner outside of the focus construction. Instead, the usual determiner is ny (19a-c). Potsdam (2006a) analyzes no as a special relative complementizer. But outside of the focus construction, relative clauses are introduced by a different element, the operator izay (19b) (usually optional). Izay clauses can also occur as arguments by themselves, roughly equivalent to free relatives in English (19d). In addition, a headless relative construction can be formed simply by omitting the head noun, so that the modifying relative clause immediately follows the determiner (19c). Crucially, no may not be used in place of either ny or izay in any of the sentences in (19).\footnote{In support of his claim that no is a relative complementizer, Potsdam (2006a) notes that this particle can alternate with izay under certain circumstances. For example, when an indefinite quantifier of the form (na) $X$ na $X$—e.g., (na) iza na iza ‘someone, whoever’ (< iza ‘who’)—takes a clausal modifier denoting its range of quantification, that modifier may be headed by either no or izay:}

(i) a. \textit{Na iza na iza no tsy mamafa lalana dia voasazy} 
or who or who NO Neg AT.sweep road DIA Pass.punish  
‘Whoever doesn’t sweep the road will be punished’
(19) a. *Hitako [ny vehivavy]
   see.1s Det woman
   ‘I saw the woman’

b. *Hitako [ny vehivavy (izay) namaky ny boky]
   see.1s Det woman Rel Pst.AT.read Det book
   ‘I saw the woman who was reading the book’

c. *Hitako [ny Ø namaky boky]
   see.1s Det Pst.AT.read book
   ‘I saw the (ones) who were reading books’

d. Tsy fanta-dRakoto [izay nanasa lamba omaly]
   Neg known.Lnk-Rakoto Rel Pst.AT.wash clothes yesterday
   ‘Rakoto doesn’t know who washed clothes yesterday’

A second problem with analyzing the no-phrase as a headless relative comes from adjunct focus sentences. Recall that not only nominals, but also PPs and certain kinds of adverbials can be focused, with AT marking on the verb, as in (20a) (from Paul 1999). Here it is unlikely that the no-phrase is interpreted as a headless relative, since it does not appear to contain a gap (the trigger position within the no-phrase is filled). To account for such cases, Paul suggests that the no-phrase here denotes an event rather than an individual—i.e., the meaning is something like ‘(The event of) Bakoly cutting the grass (is) with a knife’. However, Law (1995) points out that this explanation is problematic for cases of long-distance focusing, such as (20b). This latter sentence cannot be taken to mean ‘(The event of) Rasoa saying that Bakoly cut the grass (is) with a knife’, where ‘with a knife’ is predicated of the saying event. Rather, ‘with a knife’ is associated with the event denoted by the embedded clause.

(20) a. Amin’ ny antsy no manapaka bozaka i Bakoly
   with Det knife NO AT.cut grass Det Bakoly
   ‘It’s with the knife that Bakoly is cutting the grass’

b. Na iza na iza izay tsy mamafa lalana dia voasazy
   or who or who Rel Neg AT.sweep road DIA Pass.punish
   ‘Whoever doesn’t sweep the road will be punished’

However, Law (2005) argues that (ia) and (ib) are not structurally equivalent. Phrases of the form (na) X na X izay ... pattern syntactically as noun phrases, while those of the form (na) X na X no ... do not. For example, the former but not the latter can function as the complement of a preposition:

(ii) Handihy amin’ iza na iza {izay / *no} tonga aloha i Rabe
    Irr.AT.dance with who or who Rel NO arrived first Det Rabe
    ‘Rabe will dance with whoever comes first’

I suggest tentatively that in (ib), na iza na iza izay tsy mamafa lalana ‘whoever doesn’t sweep the road’ is a trigger DP which has been topic-fronted; whereas in (ia), na iza na iza no tsy mamafa lalana is a clause containing a focused indefinite quantifier, which has been conjoined with the clause voasazy using the clause linker dia ‘then’ (see footnote 14). Example (ia) might be more literally translated: ‘If it’s someone or other who doesn’t sweep the road, then (that someone) will be punished’ (i.e., supposing it is true of some x that x doesn’t sweep the road, x will be punished).
Based on such examples, Law (2005) proposes an alternative to the pseudo-cleft analysis. He concurs with Paul and Potsdam that the focus construction is biclausal, and that the focus phrase is (contained within) the matrix clause. However, he argues that the focus phrase occupies the specifier of a null copular head ‘BE’, which selects the no-phrase as its complement. Under this analysis, the no-phrase is treated as an event-denoting expression (a full clause) embedded within a copular predicate, rather than an individual-denoting expression functioning as the trigger of the matrix clause.\(^6\)

Interestingly, neither of the above challenges to the pseudo-cleft analysis—the uncertain status of no, and possibility of adjunct focus in AT clauses—applies to constituent focus in Tagalog, a closely related language. Like Malagasy, Tagalog is a predicate-initial language where focused constituents undergo fronting and are separated from the rest of the clause by a particle. This is shown in (21a,b) below (taken from Richards 1998), where the latter sentence illustrates contrastive focus of the external argument. In Tagalog, as in Malagasy, the focus phrase necessarily controls the voice of the following verb. However, unlike in Malagasy, the focus particle (ang) is quite clearly a determiner—specifically, the determiner used to mark common noun triggers in non-focus sentences (cf. ang lalaki in (21a)). Hence the Tagalog counterpart of the no-phrase is transparently a nominal expression functioning as the matrix trigger, just as the Paul/Potsdam pseudo-cleft analysis would lead us to expect.

\[(21)\]
\[
\text{a. Bumili } \text{TDet man} \text{ Det cloth} \\
\text{AT.Pf.buy} \\
\text{'The man bought cloth'}
\]

\[
\text{b. Lalaki } \text{TDet man} \text{ Det cloth} \\
\text{ang } \text{AT.Pf.buy} \\
\text{'[The man] bought cloth' (lit. ‘The one who bought cloth is a man’)}
\]

Moreover, the construction in (21b) cannot be used to focus adjuncts. When an adjunct is interpreted contrastively, it undergoes simple fronting to preverbal position, as in (22) (from Richards 1998), where the focused adjunct is the temporal interrogative element kailan. Notice that the sentence is ungrammatical if the focus marker ang follows the adjunct.

\[(22)\]
\[
\text{Kailan (*) ang } \text{TDet man} \text{ Det cloth} \\
\text{AT.Pf.buy} \\
\text{'When did the man buy cloth?'}
\]

That (21b) is a pseudo-cleft construction while (22) involves simple fronting is shown by the placement of second-position clitics, such as the first person singular (non-trigger) pronounal ko: In (23a), with argument focus, ko appears inside the ang-phrase, immediately following the verb; while in (23b), with adjunct focus, ko immediately follows the fronted adjunct (examples from Kroeger 1993). Clitics in Tagalog are clause-bound (Kroeger 1993, Richards 1998). Hence, the position of ko in (23) shows that the argument focus construction is biclausal (ko is contained in a relative clause embedded in the ang-phrase) while the adjunct focus construction is monoclusal, with the focus constituent raising to the left periphery of the clause.

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\(^6\) Law argues that in most cases, the focus-fronted constituent raises out of the no-phrase into the specifier of the copula, rather than being base-generated in its surface position. He has little to say about the status of no, identifying it merely as a functional element heading the focus projection FocP within the embedded clause.
Itong tasa ang binili ko sa pamilihan
‘This cup is what I bought at the market’

Para kay Pedro ko binili ang laruan
‘For Pedro I bought a toy’

Why should the Tagalog focus construction differ from its Malagasy counterpart in just these respects? I propose that whereas the Tagalog focus construction (with ang) instantiates the pseudo-cleft structure Paul and Potsdam argue for, its Malagasy counterpart (with no) does not. In its place, I propose a structure for the Malagasy focus construction which incorporates properties of both the Paul/Potsdam approach and the alternative suggested by Law (2005). While I agree with Paul and Potsdam that the focus-fronted constituent is a genuine predicate (as opposed to the subject/specifier of a null copula), I agree with Law that the no-phrase is not an individual-denoting DP constituent (a headless relative), but rather an event-denoting CP constituent.

The key to the correct analysis of the Malagasy focus construction, I believe, lies in pinpointing the category and function of no. This in turn involves identifying contexts other than the focus construction in which no can appear. As discussed above, no does not appear in non-focus contexts as a determiner or relative complementizer/operator. However, no is sometimes used as a clause linker. I consider the properties of the clause linker no in the following two sections.

4. The focus particle as a clause linker

Alongside the focus construction discussed above and illustrated again in (24) below, we find sentences like those in (25) ((25a) is adapted from a textual example, while (25c) is taken from Rahajarizafy 1960). Here, no is preceded by what looks like a full clause, consisting of a predicate phrase and a trigger, rather than a DP or PP.

Ny mpianatra no nanoratra ny taratasy
‘It was the student who wrote the letter’

Mbola tanora izy no tonga tany Amerika
‘S/he was still young when (s/he) came to America’

Nijery fahitalavitra aho no injay naneno ny telefaonina
‘I was watching television when suddenly the phone rang’

Efa nanomboka ny dinika no tonga Rangahy
‘The meeting had already begun when the gentleman arrived’

For purposes of discussion, I will refer to the construction in (25) as the TEMPORAL NO CONSTRUCTION. Here, no functions similarly to English when or French lorsque, establishing a temporal relation between
two eventualities (events or states of affairs), each denoted by a full clause. As I discuss below, there is evidence that the clause preceding no is the matrix clause, while the clause following no is embedded. Hence I analyze the no in (25) as a kind of subordinator (a complementizer or subordinating conjunction). In this section I consider some of the formal properties of the temporal no construction, before turning to its information structure properties in section 5. I then compare the temporal no construction with the focus construction in (24), and conclude that the subordinator no and the focus particle no are one and the same.

4.1. Event framing and constraints on event type

In the examples in (25) above, the eventuality expressed by the first (matrix) clause introduces a temporal context or orientation—or, in the terminology of Chung and Timberlake (1985), an EVENT FRAME—for the eventuality expressed by the second (embedded) clause. In addition, a temporal ordering is imposed on the two clauses: The time of the event frame either includes the time of the framed event, as in (25a,b), or the time of the event frame properly precedes the time of the framed event, as in (25c). (Alternatively, perhaps the time of the event frame always includes the time of the framed event, and in (25c) the event frame denotes the state resulting from a telic event—rather than an activity, as in (25b).)

Crucially, the time of the event frame never follows the time of the framed event. Hence, in (26) it is understood that plate fell first, and then the speaker grabbed it: this sentence can describe a situation where the speaker picked up a fallen plate from the floor, but not a situation where the speaker grabbed the plate out of a cupboard and then dropped it.

(26) Nianjera ny lovia no noraisiko
Pst.AT.fall Det plate NO Pst.TT.take.1s
‘The plate had (already) fallen when I grabbed it’
≠ ‘The plate fell when I grabbed it’

Given its framing function, there appear to be restrictions on the event type (aktionsart) of the matrix clause. For example, (27a) below is well-formed, with the first clause interpreted as durative and the second clause as more or less punctual: the event of Rakoto watching television is interrupted by the ringing of the phone. However (27b), with the two clauses reversed, was judged unacceptable by most of the speakers I consulted:

(27) a. Nijery fahitalavitra Rakoto no naneno ny telefaonina
Pst.AT.look.at television Rakoto NO Pst.AT.ring Det telephone
‘Rakoto was watching television when the phone rang’

b. # Naneno ny telefaonina no nijery fahitalavitra Rakoto
Pst.AT.ring Det telephone NO Pst.AT.look.at television Rakoto
(‘The phone rang when Rakoto watched television’)

This is presumably because activities (and states) are plausible event frames for highly punctual events, but not vice versa. One speaker I consulted suggested that (27b) was acceptable, but only under a pragmatically odd reading where the phone rang for some time, and rather than answering it Rakoto chose to start watching television instead (‘It was while the phone was ringing that Rakoto began watching television’). In order to make sense of (27b), it seems, the first clause must be interpreted as relatively durative, while the second clause is interpreted as punctual, its predicate referring to the beginning point of the watching event rather than to the event as a whole.

Notice that in (25a) there is no overt trigger in the second clause. In Malagasy, it is common—for some speakers, virtually obligatory—to omit the trigger of a clause when it corefers with the trigger of an earlier clause in the same sentence or stretch of discourse. See section 7.2 below for discussion.
Compare also the sentences in (28). In (28a), *natory* ‘slept’ is most naturally understood as durative: the leaving event is properly contained within the time frame established by the sleeping event. In (28b), which switches the order of the clauses, the relationship between the two events is reversed. Here *natory* is most naturally interpreted as punctual, and taken to refer to the beginning point of the sleeping event (‘went to sleep’). The leaving event—or rather, its result—provides the frame for the beginning point of the sleeping event.8

(28)  a.  *Natory   aho   no   lasa   ny   vadiko*
    Pst.AT.sleep  1sNom  NO  left   Det  spouse.1s
    ‘I was sleeping when my husband left’

    b.  *Lasa   ny   vadiko   no   natory   aho*
    left   Det  spouse.1s  NO  Pst.AT.sleep  1sNom
    ‘My husband was gone when I went (back) to sleep’

4.2.  Constraints on voice

In some cases, the choice of voice form seems to affect the acceptability of the temporal *no* construction. For example, when the matrix clause is transitive, there is a strong tendency to prefer the actor-trigger (AT) form of the clause over the theme-trigger (TT) form. In many cases, the TT form was flat-out rejected by my consultants:

(29)  a.  *Nandoko   ny   trano   aho   no   nandalo   ny   namako*
    Pst.AT.paint Det  house  1sNom  NO  Pst.AT.pass  Det  friend.1s
    ‘I was painting the house when my friend passed by’

    b.  *Nolokoiko   ny   trano   no   nandalo   ny   namako*
    Pst.TT.paint.1s  Det  house  NO  Pst.AT.pass  Det  friend.1s
    ‘I was painting the house when my friend passed by’

(30)  a.  *Nitady   ny   kiraroko   aho   no   injay   naneno   ny   telefaonina*
    Pst.AT.look.for Det shoe.1s  1sNom  NO  voilà  Pst.AT.ring  Det  telephone
    ‘I was looking for my shoes when the phone rang’

    b.  *Notadiaviko   ny   kiraroko   no   injay   naneno   ny   telefaonina*
    Pst.TT.look.for.1s  Det shoe.1s  NO  voilà  Pst.AT.ring  Det  telephone
    ‘I was looking for my shoes when the phone rang’

This pattern seems consistent with the observation that, under certain poorly understood conditions, the choice of voice form affects the aspectual interpretation of the clause (Pearson 2001). It seems that, all else being equal, TT clauses are interpreted as more telic, more punctual, more perfective, or otherwise higher in transitivity (in the sense of Hopper and Thompson 1980) than their AT counterparts. For example, speakers I consulted interpreted the AT clause in (31a) below as describing a durative activity, where the woman applies continuous force to the cart to move it forward, while the TT clause in (31b) describes a punctual achievement, lacking a continuous application of force:

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8 Importantly, uninflected root predicates such as *lasa* tend to be ambiguous between a change-of-state reading, in which case they denote punctual events (= ‘leave’), and a resultative reading, where they denote states (= ‘have left, be gone/absent’).
(31) a. Nanosika sarety ny vehivavy
Pst.AT.push cart Det woman
‘The woman pushed / was pushing a/the cart’

b. Natosiky ny vehivavy ilay sarety
Pst.TT.push Det woman that cart
‘The woman gave that cart a push’

In other cases, the choice of AT inflection sometimes seems to place *aspectual focus* (in the sense of Erteschik-Shir and Rapoport 1999) on the inception or activity component of the event, while TT inflection places aspectual focus on the endpoint or result. For instance, the TT clause in (32b) is construed as telic/perfective, with the temporal phrase *nandritra ny adiny roa* measuring the time from the inception of the event to its endpoint; whereas the AT clause in (32a) is construed as atelic/imperfective, with the measure phrase expressing the time from the inception to some arbitrary stopping point.

(32) a. Nanoratra ny taratasy nandritra ny adiny roa izy
Pst.AT.write Det letter Pst.AT.last Det hour two 3Nom
‘She wrote / was writing the letter for two hours’ (but didn’t necessarily finish it)

b. Nosoratany nandritra ny adiny roa ny taratasy
Pst.TT.write.3 Pst.AT.last Det hour two Det letter
‘She wrote the letter in two hours’

Returning to (29) and (30), it is possible that the (b) sentences were judged unacceptable for much the same reason as (27b): TT morphology favors a (relatively) punctual reading for the event, and (certain kinds of) punctual events are less than fully natural as frames for other events. Interestingly, in those cases where speakers judge that the AT and TT forms were both acceptable in the matrix clause of the temporal *no* construction, they generally report a difference in meaning between the two. AT inflection forces a reading where the framing event properly contains the framed event (cf. (25a,b) and (28a) above), but with TT inflection it is understood that the framing event precedes the framed event (cf. (25c) and (28b)):9

(33) a. Nijery fahitalavitra Rakoto no naneno ny telefaonina
Pst.AT.look.at television Rakoto NO Pst.AT.ring Det telephone
‘Rakoto was watching television when the phone rang’

b. Nojen-dRakoto ny fahitalavitra no naneno ny telefaonina
Pst.TT.look.at-Rakoto Det television NO Pst.AT.ring Det telephone
‘Rakoto had watched television when the phone rang’

(34) a. Nijinya vary ilay mpamboly no avy ny orana
Pst.AT.harvest rice that farmer NO came Det rain
‘The farmer was harvesting rice when it rained / began to rain’

9 It is unclear why (29b) would be judged ungrammatical, rather than assigned the reading ‘I had (already) painted the house when my friend passed by’; likewise for (30b). This might have to do with how readily a given predicate can be interpreted as denoting the result of an activity rather than the activity itself. Clearly further investigation of the relation between voice and aspect is needed.
5. Clause linking no and information structure

According to one of my consultants, in (35) the speaker is emphasizing the writing event over the breaking event. It appears that the use of no as a clause linker imposes a certain information structure on the sentence, where the first clause provides the INFORMATION FOCUS, while the content of the second clause is PRESUPPOSED.

(35) Nanoratra ilay taratasy Rabe no injay tapaka ny pensilihazo
Pst.AT.write that letter Rabe NO voilà broken Det pencil
‘Rabe was writing the letter when suddenly the pencil broke’
or ‘It was while Rabe was writing the letter that the pencil suddenly broke’

As evidence for this, note that speakers readily accept clefts as translation equivalents of temporal no sentences, where the clefted constituent corresponds to the first (matrix) clause. Occasionally speakers even volunteer clefts as translations, as with the French glosses in (36). I construe these as attempts to convey that the clause preceding no is focused, while the clause following no is interpreted as given information.

(36) a. Lasa ny vadiko no natory aho
left Det spouse.1s NO Pst.AT.sleep 1sNom
‘It was when my husband (had) left that I went back to sleep’
(original gloss: ‘C’est quand mon mari est parti que je me rendormi’)

b. Nitsangatsangana aho no hitako ny bokiko very
Pst.AT.Redup.walk 1sNom NO found.1s Det book.1s lost
‘It was while I was walking in the woods that I found my lost book’
(original gloss: ‘C’est pendant que je me suis promené que j’ai retrouvé mon livre perdu’)

Additional evidence comes from the question-answer pairs given below. Speakers report that (37a,b) is a felicitous question-answer pair. Since (37a) presupposes that the pencil broke, presumably (37b) does as well (while asserting that Rabe was writing the letter when this happened). On the other hand, (38a,b) is not an acceptable question-answer pair, since (38a) does not presuppose that the pencil broke. Instead, speakers volunteered (38c) (optionally including a subordinate clause headed by rehefa ‘when/while’) as an appropriate answer to (38a).

(37) a. Q: Oviana no tapaka ny pensilihazo?
when NO broken Det pencil
‘When did the pencil break?’

b. A: Nanoratra ilay taratasy Rabe no tapaka ny pensilihazo
Pst.AT.write that letter Rabe NO broken Det pencil
‘It was while Rabe was writing the letter that the pencil broke’

(38) a. Q: Inona no nahazo ny pensilihazo?
what NO Pst.AT.get Det pencil
‘What happened to the pencil?’
b. # A: Nanoratra ilay taratasy Rabe no tapaka ny pensilihazo
   Pst.AT.write that letter Rabe NO broken Det pencil
   ‘It was while Rabe was writing the letter that the pencil broke’

c. A: Tapaka ny pensilihazo (rehefa nanoratra ny taratasy Rabe)
   broken Det pencil while Pst.AT.write Det letter Rabe
   ‘The pencil broke (while Rabe was writing the letter)’

I conclude that the embedded clause headed by no is necessarily old information, providing a presupposed (discourse-given or accommodated) event with respect to which the proposition asserted by the main clause is interpreted. Typically the main clause asserts an event frame for the embedded clause, as discussed above. However, other kinds of relations between the two clauses appear to be possible as well. Consider the examples in (39), from Rahajarizafy (1960). Here the main clause asserts the reason or motivation for the event in the embedded clause. (Notice that in (39a) Rahajarizafy glosses the no clause as a conditional.)

(39) a. Marary angamba i Koto no tsy nianatra
   sick perhaps Det Koto NO Neg Pst.AT.study
   ‘Perhaps it’s because Koto is sick that (he) didn’t study’
   (original gloss: ‘Si Koto n’a pas etudié, c’est que peut-être il est malade’)

b. Marary angaha ianao no matory?
   sick Qu 2sNom NO AT.sleep
   ‘Are you sick, and that’s why (you) are sleeping?’
   (original gloss: ‘Es-tu malade pour que tu dormes?’)

That subordinator no should introduce a presupposition is hardly surprising, if it is in fact the same element as the focus particle no. Compare the temporal no construction in (40a) below with the focus construction in (40b): In both cases, the predicate preceding no maps to the focus domain of the sentence, while the constituent following no provides given/old information.

(40) a. FOCUS .......... PRESUPPOSITION
       Mbola tanora izy no tonga tany Amerika
       still young 3Nom NO arrived Pst.there America
       ‘It was while he was still young that (he) came to America’

10 This conditional reading of the biclausal no construction appears to be less common than the temporal reading illustrated above. Consider (37b), for example: The speakers I consulted claimed that this sentence would be an appropriate answer to the question ‘When did the pencil break?’, but not ‘Why did the pencil break?’—despite the plausibility that there might be a cause-and-effect relation between the writing event and the breaking event.

Rahajarizafy (1960) gives examples of yet another construction involving no, illustrated below. Here no occurs in combination with the linker ka ‘and so’ (i) or kanefa ‘however’ (ii). I have nothing insightful to say about this construction, except to note that in (i) the predicate following no seems to be presenting background information (Rahajarizafy glosses no using French si ‘if’, as he does in (39a)).

(i) No matanjaka, hoy i Botity, ka nazeran’ ny hazo dia tapaka ny feko?
   NO strong said Det Botity so Pst.TT.knock.down Det tree DIA broken Det thigh.1s
   ‘If (I’m so) strong, said Botity, then why did the tree knock (me) over and break my thigh?’

(ii) No miasa ianao kanefa marary?
    NO AT.work 2sNom however sick
    ‘How can you work when you’re sick?’
In the next section I present certain scopal parallels between the focus construction in (40b) and the temporal no construction in (40a). I go on to propose an analysis which treats the focus construction as a special case of the temporal no construction.

6. The focus and temporal no constructions compared

Note for a start that the focus and temporal no constructions behave alike with respect to the scope of matrix negation. In both cases, when the constituent preceding no is negated, the no-phrase is interpreted as outside the scope of negation: (41a) entails (or at least strongly implicates) that somebody wrote the letter, and asserts that that individual was not Rasoa. Likewise, (41b) entails (or strongly implicates) that Rakoto left, but denies that the speaker was asleep when this event occurred.\(^{11}\)

\[(41)\]
\[
a. \quad Tsy \text{ Rasoa no nanoratra ilay taratasy} \\
\text{Neg Rasoa NO Pst.AT.write that letter} \\
\text{‘It’s not Rasoa who wrote that letter’}
\]
\[
b. \quad Tsy \text{ natory aho no lasa Rakoto} \\
\text{Neg Pst.AT.sleep IsNom NO left Rakoto} \\
\text{‘I wasn’t sleeping when Rakoto left’ or ‘It wasn’t while I was sleeping that Rakoto left’}
\]

Similarly, the focus and temporal no constructions behave alike with regard to the scope and placement yes/no question particle ve. Recall that in unmarked sentences, ve appears between the predicate phrase and the trigger (cf. the examples in (1)). Ve behaves as an operator, taking scope over the portion of the sentence to its left.\(^ {12}\) Consider the examples below, which differ in the position of the locative PP tany antokotany ‘in the garden’, whether inside the predicate phrase (42a) or extraposed to the right of the trigger (42b). These sentences differ in whether the PP is inside or outside the scope of ve: the first sentence might be paraphrased ‘Is writing a letter in the garden what the student did?’ (ve scopes over the PP), while the second would be paraphrased ‘Is writing a letter what the student did in the garden?’ (ve does not scope over the PP).

\[(42)\]
\[
a. \quad Nanoratra taratasy tany an-tokotany ve ny mpianatra? \\
\text{Pst.AT.write letter Pst.there Obl-garden Qu Det student} \\
\text{‘Did the student [ write a letter in the garden ]?’}
\]
\[
b. \quad Nanoratra taratasy ve ny mpianatra tany an-tokotany? \\
\text{Pst.AT.write letter Qu Det student Pst.there Obl-garden} \\
\text{‘Did the student [ write a letter ] in the garden?’}
\]

In focus constructions, ve follows the focus phrase (43a), and may not occur within the no-clause (43b), as discussed in section 2. This is just where we expect ve to occur, given the observation that it scopes

\[\text{\footnotesize 11 When the predicate following no is negated, (41b) is judged unacceptable by the speakers I consulted (*Natory aho no tsy lasa Rakoto ‘It was while I was sleeping that Rakoto didn’t leave’). I suspect that such sentences are not actually ungrammatical, but merely pragmatically deviant, insofar as it is odd to specify an event frame for an event that did not take place.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 12 Sentences with fronted topics (cf. (14)) are an exception to this generalization. See Paul (1999) for discussion.}\]
over the portion of the clause to its left. Question operators operate over the focus domain of the clause, and in the focus construction it is the constituent preceding no which defines this domain.

(43) a. Rasoa ve no nanoratra ilay taratasy?
     Rasoa Qu NO Pst.AT.write that letter
     ‘Is it Rasoa who wrote that letter?’

   b. *Rasoa no nanoratra ilay taratasy ve?
     Rasoa NO Pst.AT.write that letter Qu
     ‘Is it Rasoa who wrote that letter?’

Turning to ve-placement in the temporal no construction, we see a comparable distribution: ve may occur in the first clause, either before (44a) or after (44b) the trigger; however, it may not occur in the second clause (44c). As expected, the second clause is interpreted outside the scope of ve: (44a,b) presuppose that Rakoto came to America. Note that, inasmuch as ve is confined to root contexts (cf. section 2), the data in (44) provide evidence for treating the first clause as the matrix clause and the second clause as embedded.

(44) a. Mbola tanora ve Rakoto no tonga tany Amerika?
     still young Qu Rakoto NO arrived Pst.there America
     ‘Was Rakoto still young when he came to America?’

   b. ?Mbola tanora Rakoto ve no tonga tany Amerika?
     still young Rakoto Qu NO arrived Pst.there America
     ‘Was Rakoto still young when he came to America?’

   c. ?*Mbola tanora Rakoto no tonga tany Amerika ve?
     still young Rakoto NO arrived Pst.there America Qu
     ‘Was Rakoto still young when he came to America?’

As a final piece of evidence suggesting that the focus and temporal no constructions are isomorphic, note that in a complex sentence containing the clause linker no, neither the trigger of the first conjunct nor the trigger of the second conjunct can itself be focused. In other words, the focus particle no and the subordinator no are mutually exclusive in the same sentence. Speakers I consulted rejected (45b,c) as “having too many no’s”, and gave the grammatical paraphrases in (45a,b) (with the temporal subordinators amin ‘at, when’ and rehefa ‘while’) in their place. This could be due to a semantic or processing constraint against a sentence having multiple foci, or against the focus (or presupposition) being itself partitioned into a focus and a presupposition.

(45) a. Nijery fahitalavitra Rakoto no naneno ny telefoanina
     Pst.AT.look.at television Rakoto NO Pst.AT.ring Det telephone
     ‘Rakoto was watching television when the phone rang’

   b. *Rakoto no nijery fahitalavitra no naneno ny telefoanina
     Rakoto NO Pst.AT.look.at television NO Pst.AT.ring Det telephone
     ‘It’s Rakoto who was watching television when the phone rang’

13 It is unclear to me why (44a) and (44b) are both judged grammatical (albeit with a definite speaker preference for the former), and whether there is a structural and scopal difference between the two. I set these questions aside for future investigation, noting merely that some speakers marginally allow ve to follow the matrix trigger under certain circumstances, even when no no-phrase is present.
c. * Ny telefaonina no nijery fahitilavitra Rakoto no naneno
   Det telephone NO Pst.AT.look.at television Rakoto NO Pst.AT.ring
   ‘It’s the telephone that Rakoto was watching television when (it) rang’

(46) a. Rakoto no nijery fahitilavitra tamin’ ny telefaonina naneno
   Rakoto NO Pst.AT.look.at television at/when Det telephone Pst.AT.ring
   ‘It’s Rakoto who was watching television at (the time when) the phone rang’

b. Ny telefaonina no naneno rehefa nijery fahitilavitra Rakoto
   Det telephone NO Pst.AT.ring while Pst.AT.look.at television Rakoto
   ‘It’s the telephone that rang while Rakoto was watching television’

7. The structure of the no-phrase revisited

Based on the data in the previous sections, we have reason to believe that sentences like (47a,b) are structurally identical, differing only in the apparent category (clause versus DP) of the constituent preceding no. This is the hypothesis that I will defend here. More specifically, I will argue that the focus construction in (47b) as a special case of the temporal no construction in (47a).

(47) a. Mbola tanora izy no tonga tany Amerika
   still young 3Nom NO arrived Pst.there America
   ‘S/he was still young when (s/he) came to America’

b. Rasoa no tonga tany Amerika
   Rasoa NO arrived Pst.there America
   ‘It’s Rasoa who came to America’

In its broad outlines, my approach to the focus construction follows that of Paul (1999, 2001), Potsdam (2006a,b), and Law (1995), all of whom treat focus sentences like (47b) as biclausal, with the focus phrase in the matrix clause and the predicate following no embedded. Like Paul and Potsdam, but unlike Law, I treat the focus phrase as the matrix predicate (Law treats it as the specifier of a null copula ‘BE’). Like Law, but unlike Paul and Potsdam, I treat the no-phrase as an event-denoting constituent (a CP) rather than an individual-denoting constituent (a DP containing a headless relative clause). I differ from both Paul/Potsdam and Law regarding the position of the no-phrase: In the temporal no construction (47a), the no-phrase is neither the matrix trigger nor a complement, but is instead an adverbial clause extraposed to the right of the trigger (as adverbial clauses generally are in Malagasy). I assume the same is true of the no-phrase in the focus construction (47b). In the latter case, the matrix trigger is null, possibly an expletive element of some sort. My structures for (47a,b) are schematized in (48), where PredP stands for the matrix predicate phrase and the extraposed adverbial clause is labelled CP:

(48) a. [predP mbola tanora] [Trigger izy] [CP no tonga tany Amerika]

b. [predP Rasoa] [Trigger Ø] [CP no tonga tany Amerika]

What are the semantics of the focus construction under this approach? For Paul and Potsdam, who treat the no-phrase as a headless relative occupying the trigger function, the semantic relation between the no-phrase and the focus phrase is one of (equative) predication between a topic and a comment: Rasoa no tonga tany Amerika means ‘The x such that x came to America = Rasoa’. Under my analysis, the no-phrase is a full clause, and denotes a presupposed state of affairs rather than a presupposed individual. In both the focus and temporal no constructions, the no-phrase provides a logical or temporal context or contingency for the main clause. In this respect, the no-phrase is similar to a conditional clause (cf. (39)
above and (55) below), and the semantic relation between the no-phrase and the focus phrase is essentially one of implication (‘if/when A, then B’) rather than predication (‘A is B’). Under this approach, a sentence like Rasoa no tonga tany Amerika might be paraphrased ‘If/when/given that x came to America, x is Rasoa’, or ‘It’s when x is Rasoa that x came to America’ (I return to the nature of x, the gap in the no-phrase, below).

The discourse functional parallels between conditional constructions and topic-comment constructions (sentence-level predication) have been observed by a number of authors, notably Haiman (1978). Haiman notes that in topic-comment structures, the topic denotes an existentially presupposed entity, whose identification as discourse-relevant is a necessary precondition for the interpretation of the comment. When a topic is new or contrastive, its discourse-relevance is asserted by the speaker, and the fact that it is presupposed must be accommodated by the listener. Likewise in conditional constructions of the form ‘if A then B’, the conditional clause ‘if A’ establishes a presupposition for the event in the main clause ‘B’—in this case, a presupposed eventuality rather than a presupposed discourse participant. As with topics, the propositional content of the conditional clause is asserted by the speaker, and its presuppositionality accommodated by the listener (even if only provisionally, as a hypothetical proposition). Haiman treats this function of establishing a presupposition as a defining property of topics, and hence he regards conditional clauses as a special kind of topic. Insofar as this analysis is supported, my interpretation of the Malagasy focus construction (where the no-phrase is a kind of conditional clause) is not substantially different from that assumed by Paul and Potsdam (where the no-phrase is a topic-like trigger constituent): Under both approaches, the role of the no-phrase is to introduce a background, or framework, for the assertion contained within the matrix predicate (the focus phrase). However, my approach generalizes to the temporal no construction in (47a), where the relationship between the no-phrase and the main clause cannot be one of predication.

Before concluding this paper, I briefly consider some of the consequences of my treatment of the focus construction.

### 7.1. Adjunct focus revisited

As discussed in section 3, there are sentences in which the no-phrase does not look like a headless relative clause, in that it does not seem to contain a gap. Paul (1999, 2001) and Law (2005) point out examples like (49), in which a PP adjunct or adverbial is focused, and the constituent following no appears to be a complete clause containing an overt trigger (Rasoa).

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14 Haiman supports his treatment by noting that contrastive topics and conditional clauses show formal parallels in many languages (see also Thompson and Longacre 1985, Bril 2005). Interestingly, Malagasy is one such language: As discussed briefly in section 3, the particle dia functions as a marker of fronted contrastive topics (ia). In addition, dia acts as a clause linker, commonly used to introduce the consequence (apodosis) in a conditional construction (ic). Moreover, when the contrastive topic is new (not previously mentioned in the discourse), it is optionally preceded by the conditional marker raha ‘if’, as in (ib) (Keenan 1976 refers to (ia) and (ib) as WEAK TOPICALIZATION and STRONG TOPICALIZATION, respectively). I leave the analysis of dia—and potential semantic and syntactic parallels between dia constructions and no constructions—as a subject for future research.

(i) a. **Rabe dia manoratra taratasy**
   Rabe DIA AT.write letter
   ‘Rabe, he’s writing a letter’

b. **Raha Rabe dia manoratra taratasy**
   if Rabe DIA AT.write letter
   ‘As for Rabe, he’s writing a letter’

c. **Raha tsara ny andro dia hilomano aho**
   if good Det day DIA Irr.AT.swim 1sNom
   ‘If the weather is nice, I will go swimming’
Tamin’ ny pensilihazo no nanoratra ilay taratasy Rasoa
‘It was with a pencil that Rasoa wrote the letter’

Under my approach, examples like (49), far from being a problem for the analysis of the focus construction, actually represent the syntax of this construction more transparently than nominal focus sentences like (47b). I have argued that the no-phrase is always a full clause, comprised of a predicate phrase and a trigger, and this is clearly the case in (49). The no-phrase establishes a presupposed state of affairs and stands in an implicational relation with the proposition denoted by the main clause, which in turn consists of the focus phrase predicated of an empty trigger. Under this approach, we might translate (49) roughly as ‘Inasmuch as Rasoa wrote that letter, (it was) with a pencil’, or ‘It’s when (it was) with a pencil that Rasoa wrote that letter’ (the interpretation of ‘with a pencil’ as the instrument of the writing event being a matter of inference). Since there is no direct predication relation between the no-phrase and the focus phrase, there is no need to assume—as there is under the pseudo-cleft analysis—that the no-phrase contains a gap coindexed with the focus phrase.

7.2. The nature of the gap

What should we say about nominal focus sentences like (50), where the trigger position within the no-phrase is occupied by a gap? Here the no-phrase looks superficially like a headless relative, in conformity with the pseudo-cleft analysis of the focus construction.

Rasoa [ no nanoratra ilay taratasy Ø ]
‘It’s Rasoa who wrote the letter’

I claim that the phonologically null trigger in the no-phrase is not the kind of gap which previous analyses have assumed it to be. It is not a trace of the focus phrase, as in Law (1995), nor is it the trace of an empty operator coindexed with the focus phrase, as in Paul (1999, 2001), Pearson (2001), and Potsdam (2006a,b). Rather, it is a null pronominal, comparable in its distribution to a logophor (Koopman and Sportiche 1989) or perhaps (the trace of) a null topic (Huang 1984). Under this approach, the meaning of (61) is something like ‘It is when (we’re talking about) Rasoai that e wrote the letter’. Logophors and the traces of null topics pattern as variables. Hence, this analysis of the gap in (50) is consistent with Pearson’s (2005) treatment of voice morphology as a kind of obligatory WH-AGREEMENT on the verb (cf. Chung 1998), whose role is to identify the grammatical function of an operator-variable chain in the clause containing that verb.

Note that gapping of embedded triggers is extremely common in Malagasy. For example, in complex sentences where the external argument of the main clause is coreferential with an argument in the complement clause, the latter is most naturally realized as a null trigger rather than an overt pronominal. Consider the following examples from Keenan (1976).15

Mihevitra Rabe [ fa tadiavin-dRasoa Ø ]
‘Rabe, thinks that Rasoa is looking for (him,)’

Mihevitra Rabe [ fa tadiavin-dRasoa izy ]
‘Rabe, thinks that Rasoa is looking for him,’

15 Keenan reports that the preference for (51a) over (51b) is “absolute” for some speakers, though not all. As expected, the sentence in (51b) is fully natural under the reading where izy is not bound by Rabe.
Indeed, we see what appears to be the same phenomenon in the temporal no construction. In (47a), repeated below as (52), the trigger of the no-phrase is omitted under coreference with the trigger of the main clause. I suggest that (50) has essentially the same structure as (52) (modulo the absence of an overt matrix trigger in (50)).

(52) *Mbola tanora izy [ no tonga tany Amerika Ø ]
    still young 3Nom NO arrived Pst.there America
    ‘S/he was still young when (s/he) came to America’

As for why gapping of the trigger in the no-phrase is obligatory when the matrix clause is a DP predicate (in nominal focus sentences) but optional otherwise, I leave this as a question for future research.

7.3. The bodyguard construction

There are a number of challenges to treating the focus construction as a special case of the temporal no construction. Here I will mention only one such challenge here. When the focus phrase is an adjunct (a PP or adverbial) and the trigger of the no-phrase is overt, the latter optionally appears immediately in front of no rather than at the right periphery, as in (53b). This fronted trigger is called the BODYGUARD, following Keenan (1976). According to the speakers I consulted, when no acts as a subordinator in the temporal no construction, the trigger of the no-phrase may not occur in the bodyguard position, as shown in (54b).

(53) a. Tamin’ ny pensilihazo no nanoratra ilay taratasy Rasoa
    Pst.with Det pencil NO Pst.AT.write that letter Rasoa
    ‘It was with a pencil that Rasoa wrote the letter’

b. Tamin’ ny pensilihazo Rasoa no nanoratra ilay taratasy
    Pst.with Det pencil Rasoa NO Pst.AT.write that letter
    ‘It was with a pencil that Rasoa wrote the letter’

(54) a. Natory ny vadin-dRakoto no lasa izy
    Pst.AT.sleep Det spouse.Lnk-Rakoto NO left 3Nom
    ‘It was while Rakoto’s wife was sleeping that he left’

b. *Natory ny vadin-dRakoto izy no lasa
    Pst.AT.sleep Det spouse.Lnk-Rakoto 3Nom NO left
    ‘It was while Rakoto’s wife was sleeping that he left’

If the focus construction is simply a special case of the temporal no construction, it is unclear why the former but not the latter would license a bodyguard. In any case, the ban on bodyguards in the temporal no construction may not be absolute. Consider (55), taken from Rahajarizafy (1960). In this example we have what appears to be the subordinator no, heading a conditional clause which has been fronted. Here the trigger of the no clause has itself been fronted, and appears before no. It is possible that (54b) is not actually ungrammatical, but merely disfavored for processing reasons: perhaps speakers dislike having a

16 Paul (1999) presents evidence from coordination to show that the bodyguard forms a constituent with the following no-phrase to the exclusion of the focus phrase. This suggests that the bodyguard is at the left edge of the no-phrase, rather than in the trigger position within the matrix clause.

(i) Omaly [ Rasoa no nivarotra hena ] ary [ Rakoto no nividy mofo ]
    yesterday Rasoa NO Pst.AT.sell meat and Rakoto NO Pst.AT.buy bread
    ‘It was yesterday that Rasoa sold meat and Rakoto bought bread’
sequence of two triggers (e.g., *ny vadin-dRakoto izy*), and fronting of the trigger within the *no* clause is disallowed just in case it produces such a sequence. I leave this as one of many issues for further research.

(55)  

*Izaho no mananatra anao, tiako ho hendry ianao*  
1sNom NO AT.give.advice 2sAcc want.1s Irr wise 2sNom  
‘If I give you advice, it’s (only) because I want you to be wise’  
(original gloss: ‘Si je te donne des avis, c’est que je veux que tu sois sage’)

8. Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that the Malagasy focus particle *no* also functions as a clause linker, roughly comparable to English *when/if* or French *lorsque/si*, which heads a subordinate clause denoting a presupposed state of affairs. I referred to descriptively as the temporal *no* construction. I presented preliminary data on this construction, showing that its syntactic and discourse structure properties are comparable to those of the focus construction.

I then argued that the focus particle *no* is actually a special case of the clause linker *no*, rather than a determiner or relative clause marker introducing a topicalized headless relative clause, as in earlier analyses (Paul 1999, 2001; Potsdam 2006a,b). Under this approach, the Malagasy focus construction is not a pseudo-cleft, where the *no*-phrase denotes an individual and stands in a predication relation with the focus phrase. Instead, the *no*-phrase denotes a proposition, and stands in an implicational relation with the proposition denoted by the matrix clause (containing the focus phrase as its predicate), making the focus construction more akin to a conditional construction. Treating *no* as a clause linker accounts straightforwardly for the fact that [i] the constituent preceding *no* need not be a DP or PP, but can be a root clause, and [ii] the constituent following *no* need not contain a gap. This analysis also explains some crucial differences between the Malagasy focus construction and its functional counterpart in Tagalog, which does appear to possess the properties of a pseudo-cleft. Other issues surrounding the focus construction remain to be addressed, such as the proper treatment of voice restrictions (why focused nominals control the voice of the verb within the *no*-phrase, while focused adjuncts do not) and the position of overt triggers within the *no*-phrase (the bodyguard construction).

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