The Clause Structure of Malagasy:

A Minimalist Approach

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the clause structure and word order of Malagasy within the framework of Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist Program and Kayne's (1994) Antisymmetry Theory. In particular, I focus on the status of the clause-final *external argument* (EA), conventionally analyzed as a nominative case-marked *subject*. I consider two major questions about this constituent: What hierarchical position does the EA occupy in the clause structure, and why does it surface in a right-peripheral linear position, following the predicate?

With regard to its syntactic status, I argue that the EA is not a *subject*, but a *topic*, similar in its distribution to clause-initial topics in verb-second languages like Icelandic. I propose that EAs undergo A′-movement to the specifier of a TopP (*topic phrase*) projection, located above tense and below the position of the complementizer. Concerning word order, I show that the right-peripheral position of the EA can be derived via leftward movement of the predicate phrase over the EA in SpecTopP, in a manner consistent with Kayne's Linear Correspondence Axiom. I suggest that predicate-fronting is triggered by the same lexical requirements responsible for T-to-C raising in Icelandic and other languages. The difference is that in Malagasy, unlike in Icelandic, T^0 does not constitute an independent morphological word, and so it cannot be moved without causing the derivation to crash at PF. Since T^0-movement is unavailable, TP-movement is employed instead. Malagasy may thus be regarded as the phrasal-movement analogue of a verb-second language.

The manuscript is divided into four chapters. In chapter 1 I summarize my analysis and discuss my theoretical assumptions. In chapter 2 I give an overview of Malagasy word order, clause structure, and morphology. I also offer a tentative treatment of the Malagasy voicing system, which I equate with wh-agreement in Chamorro and other languages. In chapter 3 I present evidence from reconstruction and locality effects to show that the EA position behaves as an A′-position rather than a case position, strongly suggesting that the EA is a topic-like element rather than a subject. I also provide an alternative analysis of the well-known wh-extraction restriction in Malagasy. Finally in chapter 4 I discuss my XP-movement analysis of EA-final word order. I cite evidence in favor of this analysis from two domains, speech-act particle placement and word order in embedded clauses.

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PREFACE

This manuscript is a revised version of my Ph.D. dissertation, completed in December of 2000. Numerous changes, both major and minor, have been made to the organization and analysis. An expanded version is planned for later this year, which will include further refinements to the analysis of the Malagasy voicing system given in chapter 2, as well as an additional chapter covering the derivation of word order within the predicate phrase.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1ex	first person plural exclusive
1in	first person plural inclusive
1s	first person singular
2p	second person plural
2s	second person singular
3	third person (singular or plural)
3p	third person plural
3s	third person singular
Acc	accusative case
AccP	accusative-pivot voice
Ag	agent phrase
Appl	applicative morpheme
Aux	auxiliary
Comp	complementizer
Cpl	completive
CrcP	circumstantial-pivot voice
CS	construct state
Dat	dative case
DatP	dative-pivot voice
Det	determiner
Emph	emphatic particle
Encl	enclitic
Erg	ergative case
Excl	exclamatory particle
F	feminine
Foc	focus particle
FS	free state
Fut	future tense particle
Imp	imperative
Incpl	incompletive
Inf	infinitive
Irr	irrealis tense/mood
Lnk	linking morpheme
M	masculine
Neg	negative marker
Nom	nominative case
NomP	nominative-pivot voice
Obj	object, objective case
Obl	oblique prefix
Perf	perfective aspect
Pres	present tense
Pst	past tense
Qu	yes/no question particle
Recip	reciprocal prefix
Redup	reduplicated stem
Rel	relativizer
Subj	subject
Top	topic particle
TrnP	translative-pivot voice
Wh	wh-expletive/operator