

Questions and clefts in Malagasy

Paul (2001) suggests that questions in Malagasy are formally (concealed) pseudo-clefts, having a structure in which the clause-initial *wh*-phrase is a matrix (copula) predicate and is followed by a headless relative in subject position (cf. also Dahl 1986, Pearson 1996 and Potsdam 2004). In this paper, I show that the analysis is both conceptually and empirically problematic. I argue that questions in Malagasy are on a par with English, where the *wh*-phrase is fronted from post-verbal argument position (cf. Maclaughlin 1995, Pensalfini 1995, Sabel 2002 and Potsdam 2003).

In Paul's analysis, the particle *no* is part of a DP containing a headless relative clause (henceforth *no*-DP), e.g. *I sahondra* [_{DP} *no* _ *nanapaka ity hazo ity*] 'the one who cut this tree was Sahondra' (the _ represents the empty head). The conceptual problem with this view is three-fold. First, *no*-DPs with this sort do not occur elsewhere, as she notes. Second, it is unclear what the categorial status of *no* is (cf. Potsdam 2004). It is neither a determiner nor a complementizer in relative clauses, for it largely does not alternate with the determiner *ny* or the relative complementizer *izay* (cf. *nanapaka ny/*no hazo ny/*no lehilahy* 'the man cut the tree', *fantatro ny lehilahy (izay/*no) mividy boky* 'I know the man buys books'). It is by no means obvious that the alternation in *na iza na iza no/izay tsy mamafa lalana dia voasazy* 'whoever doesn't sweep the road will be punished.') is in the same structure (cf. the variant *voasazy izay/*no tsy mamafa lalana na iza na iza*). Third, if some PP-adjunct clefts may be derived by movement (cf. *amin'ny antsy_i no manapaka bozaka t_i i Bakoly* 'it is with a knife that Bakoly is cutting glass' with active morphology on the verb) because adjuncts cannot be relativized without being promoted to subject (cf. **ny antony izay manapaka bozaka i Bakoly* 'the reason why Bakoly is cutting glass'), as she suggests, then it is hard to see a non-ad hoc way to exclude a subject argument from being moved in the same structure. Empirically, it is not self-evident why the *no*-DP with a headless relative clause may not be predicated of by an adjective, in contrast with DPs with the determiner *ny* and a relative clause whose head is possibly empty (cf. *lava Rabe/ny (lehilahy) fantatro* 'Rabe/the man/one I know is tall' vs **lava no _ fantatro*).

I suggest a bi-clausal analysis of clefts and questions in which the predicate in the matrix clause is an empty copula taking the projection of the particle *no*, a functional category, as complement (for non-questions), and *no* in turn takes a clausal complement. Alternatively, the copula may also take a CP complement whose head C takes the projection of *no* as complement (for questions). A (clefted) non-*wh*-phrase thus moves from the clausal complement of *no* to the Spec of *no*, while a (clefted) *wh*-phrase moves to SpecCP in questions. My analysis therefore accommodates the fact that an adjunct *wh*-phrase and a non-*wh*-phrase argument may occur to the left of the particle *no* (cf. *aiza Rasoana no mividy mofo?* 'where does Rasoana buy bread?', Keenan's (1976) bodyguard condition). Since both adjunct fronting and argument clefting are independently possible, the same mechanisms can apply to yield this word-order. There is then no need to assume the Cluster Hypothesis (Sabel 2003) or an erstwhile unattested structure in which the *no*-DP hosts the clefted phrase in its Spec (Paul 2003). The fact that *no* does not occur inside DPs also follows directly. Moreover, since the clefted phrase is in the same position, it is interpreted as topic (old information), regardless of the fronting of the adjunct *wh*-phrase.

My analysis is consistent with the negation *tsy*, the verbal particle *toa* 'seem' and the pre-predicate particle *tokony* 'should' occurring to the left of the clefted phrase (cf. *tsy Rasoana no nanoroka an-dRakoto* 'it's not Rasoana who kissed Rakoto', *toa Rasoana no nanoroka an-Rakoto* 'Rasoana seems to have kissed Rakoto' Paul 2002 and *tokony iza no manangy an-dRabe?* 'who should visit Rabe?' Potsdam 2004). In these cases, *tsy*, *toa* and *tokony* actually precede the empty copula. I suggest that the particle *daholo* 'all' is placed between two overt XPs, accounting for why it can never appear immediately before the verb or at the end of the clause (cf. *iza no (*daholo) nihinana vary (*daholo)?* 'who ate the rice all?' vs *nihinana vary daholo ny vahiny* 'all the guests ate rice' and *iza daholo no nihinana vary?* 'who all ate rice?', Potsdam 2004).