

## IT'S JUST A PHASE, IT'LL PASS: A MALAGASY GUIDE ON HOW TO UNLOCK FROM A DISTANCE

• **Synopsis:** Based on fieldwork, I make two novel claims on Malagasy: (i) while clause-internal promotion to pivot (PTP) involves A-movement to a case-assigning A/A'-position via composite probing, long-distance PTP involves A'-movement to a non-case A'-position via probe splitting, alongside a distinct option of prolepsis; (ii) embedded CP complements that either become the matrix pivot themselves, or allow their own pivot to extract to the matrix pivot site, must first undergo A-movement to the matrix left-periphery. I propose that cross-clausal PTP proceeds via Phase Unlocking, mediated by matrix C°, due to the interaction of two independent factors: the formation of the verbal complex via roll-up VP-movement, and the relative order between Merge and Agree in the Voice° cycle, resulting in smuggling of the theme across the agent under Theme Voice only.

• **Clause-internally:** Malagasy employs a three-way *voice*-marking system: **Agent Voice**, **Theme Voice**, **Circumstantial Voice**. Its pivot must be formally definite and semantically familiar (Paul 2009), and appears in clause-final position, derived via remnant predicate fronting (Pensalfini 1997), and diagnosed by the immediate precedence of elements like the yes/no question particle *ve*. Clausebound PTP fixes underlying Condition C violations, ameliorates weak crossover (WCO) and reconstructs for variable binding (Travis 1998; Paul 2002; Pearson 2005). I therefore assume that pivot DPs carry an information-structural (topic-like) A'-feature and A-move to a case-assigning A/A'-position, attracted by a composite probe in a designated scope-discourse projection at the (low) left periphery (simply say C°): A-movement feeds variable binding, while the availability of case at the landing site bleeds Condition C (Takahashi & Hulsey 2009). I further assume that *voice*-marking spells-out different flavors of (heads around) Voice° and involves an intermediate rearrangement of argument structure that renders the prospective pivot accessible to the high probe (cf. Aldridge 2008; Brodtkin 2022).

• **Cross-clausally:** Besides its discourse profile, the A'-part of the composite probe also manifests in the pivot's capacity of crossing a finite clausal boundary: a matrix pivot may be thematically linked to a declarative CP complement (1), with a gap in the embedded pivot site. These CPs, as logical objects, can themselves be the matrix pivot, triggering TV/CV on the embedding verb. Pivot-to-pivot long-distance (LD) dependencies require (i) the embedded CP's *voice* to mark its thematic gap as the pivot; and (ii) the matrix verb to agree with the CP complement, as if the CP was the matrix pivot, before the CP's own pivot fills the matrix pivot position.

(1) *Heverin-dRabe* [fa andidian' ny vehivavy ny mofo e<sub>i</sub>] [ve] ny antsy<sub>i</sub>?  
 TV.think-Rabe.GEN C CV.cut DET woman DET bread Q DET knife  
 'The knife, does Rabe think that the woman is cutting the bread (with it)?'

• **Movement vs. prolepsis:** Pearson (2005) extends his high base-generation analysis of pivots to LD dependencies, while Davies (2005) treats such constructions in Indonesian Madurese as prolepsis. I rather argue that genuine LD dependencies in Malagasy involve overt movement of the embedded pivot to the matrix pivot site. As evidence, reconstruction for variable binding into the embedded CP is possible (2), but island-sensitive (3).

(2) *Nantenain-dRabe<sub>j</sub>* [fa hovangian' ny ankizy tsirairay<sub>i</sub> e<sub>i</sub>] [ve] ny rai=ny<sub>i/j</sub>?  
 PST.TV.hope-Rabe.GEN C FUT.TV.visit DET child each Q DET father=3SG.GEN  
 'His<sub>i/j</sub> father, did Rabe<sub>j</sub> hope that every child<sub>i</sub> will visit (him)?'

(3) *Nalahelovan-dRabe<sub>j</sub>* [satria tsy novangian' ny ankizy tsirairay<sub>i</sub> e<sub>i</sub>] [ve] ny rai=ny<sub>\*i/j</sub>?  
 PST.TV.sad-Rabe.GEN because NEG PST.TV.visit DET child each Q DET father=3SG.GEN  
 'His<sub>\*i/j</sub> father, was Rabe<sub>j</sub> sad because each child<sub>i</sub> did not visit (him)?'

In fact, I show that prolepsis *is* possible, albeit restricted, and when unambiguously identified, differs from overt LD movement in a way that speaks for base-generation: (i) the pivot-only extraction restriction, reflected in *voice* morphology, holds neither for the matrix nor for the embedded clause; (ii) island-sensitivity disappears but resumption is required, especially if the embedded argument to which the proleptic argument corresponds is not the embedded pivot (4); (iii) reconstruction for variable binding, even across no island, is unavailable.

(4) *Noheverin-dRabe ny rai=ny<sub>\*i/j</sub>* [fa fantatr' ny ankizy tsirairay<sub>i</sub> [ny antony nandehanan\*(=ny)]]?  
 PST.TV.think-Rabe DET father-3SG.GEN C TV.know DET child each DET reason PST.CV.go=3SG.GEN  
 'His<sub>\*i/j</sub> father, did Rabe<sub>j</sub> think that each child<sub>i</sub> knows the reason that (he) left?'

• **A'-movement:** I suggest that LD pivot movement exhibits a fully A'-profile: once a CP boundary is crossed, it induces WCO (4) and obligatorily reconstructs for Condition C (5) relative to arguments in the embedding clause. This serves as indirect evidence in favor of overt cross-clausal movement: given the A-properties of clausebound PTP, if the thematic embedded pivot was base-generated directly at the matrix clause and only moved inside it, it should be able to obviate WCO and Condition C, as in regular clause-internal movement.

(5) \**Nantenain' ny rai=ny<sub>i</sub>* [fa handalo Ambositra t<sub>i</sub>] [ve] ny mpianatra tsirairay<sub>i</sub>?  
 PST.TV.hope DET father=3SG.GEN C FUT.AV.hope Ambositra Q DET student each  
 Int.: 'Each student<sub>i</sub>, did their<sub>i</sub> father hope that (they) will visit Ambositra tomorrow?'

- (6) \**Heveri=ny<sub>i</sub>* [ *fa tonga omaly t<sub>i</sub>* ] ve *ny rain-dRakoto<sub>i</sub>?*  
 TV.think=3SG.GEN C PST.arrive yesterday Q DET father-Rakoto.GEN  
 Int.: 'Rakoto<sub>i</sub>'s father, does he<sub>i</sub> think that (he) arrived yesterday?'

• **Phase Unlocking:** Since LD movement requires an embedding *voice* marking as if the entire CP were the matrix pivot, I adopt a Phase Unlocking (PU) account (Rackowski & Richards 2005): the probe that subextracts the embedded pivot must first agree with the CP phase to undo its locality domain. However, I diverge from Rackowski & Richards (2005) and van Urk & Richards (2015), who posit PU at the  $v^\circ$  probing cycle for Tagalog and Dinka, respectively. In Malagasy, I rather propose that PU happens by the high composite probe on  $C^\circ$  which splits: its A-part detects and case-licenses the embedded CP, attracting it to a(n inner) matrix SpecCP; its A'-part then reprojects to search into the unlocked CP, and subextracts the embedded pivot to an outer matrix SpecCP. As the second step is triggered by the A'-probe alone, WCO is induced, and as the embedded pivot is already case-licensed inside the complement CP, with no matrix case available, Condition C emerges.

• **CP covert movement:** Due to a tendency of CPs in Malagasy to extrapose, the exact structural height of an embedded CP under matrix TV/CV, with or without further subextraction, is not surface-apparent. In both cases, though, I demonstrate that the embedded CP *does* moves, like regular DPs, albeit covertly, to the higher matrix pivot position. Evidence comes from two sources: (i) Malagasy NPIs must be in the scope of a negative operator (Paul 2005; Potsdam 2022); thus, the non-licensing of NPIs contained within a pivot CP (6) or a CP under LD pivot extraction, both triggering TV on the matrix verb, indicates that the clause is structurally higher than, and not c-commanded by, matrix negation; in turn, negation will be shown to stand higher in the inflectional domain, based on word order and scope facts; (ii) a Quantifier Phrase (QP) within a non-pivot embedded CP cannot outscope a matrix QP; yet, once the CP complement becomes the matrix pivot or allows for extraction of its own pivot to the matrix clause (7), the embedded QP may outscope a thematic matrix QP.

- (7) *Tsy mihevitra aho* / \**heveri=ko* [ *fa nandroso vary tamin' n'iza-n'iza Rabe* ]  
 NEG AV.think 1SG.NOM TV.think=1SG.GEN C PST.AV.serve rice PST.P **anyone** Rabe  
 'I don't think that Rabe served rice to anyone.'

- (8) *Nolazain' ny mpampianatra tsirairay* [ *fa namaky ny boky roa* ] ve *ny mpianatra?*  
 PST.TV.say DET teacher each C PST.AV.read DET book two Q DET students  
 'The students, did each teacher say that (they) read two books?' (each > 2, 2 > each)

• **Unlocking cross-clausal QR:** Even if the CP complement in (8) moves higher, to the matrix pivot site, the embedded QP is still contained within the CP on surface, and so does not c-command the matrix QP argument to outscope it. Strikingly, it appears that, once a CP is unlocked for overt extraction, it is for covert movement as well: it ceases being a scope island and enables QR of the surface-embedded QP, in compliance with Scope Economy and Shortest Move (Fox 2000). This corroborates that CP movement creates an A-chain, otherwise it should exhibit scope freezing effects, typically associated with operator A'-movement (Epstein 1992).

• **Smuggling and timing:** I propose that the exceptional height of PU at  $C^\circ$ , instead of  $v/Voice^\circ$ , is a conspiracy of two factors: (i) the way that the verbal complex is formed, and (ii) the order of (External) Merge and Agree at the  $Voice^\circ$  cycle. Firstly, Malagasy employs successive roll-up VP-movement instead of head V-movement (Pearson 1998; Rackowski 1998). Secondly, suppose that the Malagasy pivot maps onto the surface subject, and that the subject function is assigned to the highest A-position within  $VoiceP$  (Ershova 2023; Bobaljik 2024); it then follows that the outermost Spec $VoiceP$  must be filled by the external argument (EA) under AV, but by the IA under TV. I assume this is achieved because, under AV, a movement-inducing Agree operation that posits the IA to the edge of  $VoiceP$  precedes Merge of the EA, forming an (only) apparent tucking-in configuration; under TV, Merge of the EA precedes that Agree+Move process. As this very ordering parameter has been suggested by Müller (2009) to derive different alignment systems (i.e., Agree > Merge yields NOM-ACC; Merge > Agree yields ERG-ABS), this might partly explain why Malagasy (and other Austronesian languages) have been viewed as (split-)ergative (Paul & Travis 2006). In contrast to Dinka and Tagalog, where matrix  $v/Voice^\circ$  directly attracts the IA (e.g., in Dinka, to satisfy  $v^\circ$ 's V2 requirement), in Malagasy, due to its roll-up VP movement,  $Voice^\circ$  agrees not with the IA, but with its verb-phrasal sister that contains the IA and raises as a whole to Spec $VoiceP$ . Hence, under TV, the IA never reaches the outer Spec $VoiceP$  alone, but is *smuggled* across the EA in the course of roll-up VP movement (cf. Collins 2005). PU is then undertaken by the splitting composite probe on  $C^\circ$  simply because  $Voice^\circ$  never gets a chance to independently agree with its complement to unlock it. The nominal nature of CPs, along with Cyclic Agree (Bejar & Rezac 2009) and a minimal-search algorithm that combines *in-depth* and *in-breadth* approaches to probing (cf. Branen & Erlewine 2022) will ensure that, under TV, the CP complement is a closer matching goal than the EA at the inner Spec $VoiceP$ .