

Malagasy Clause Structure

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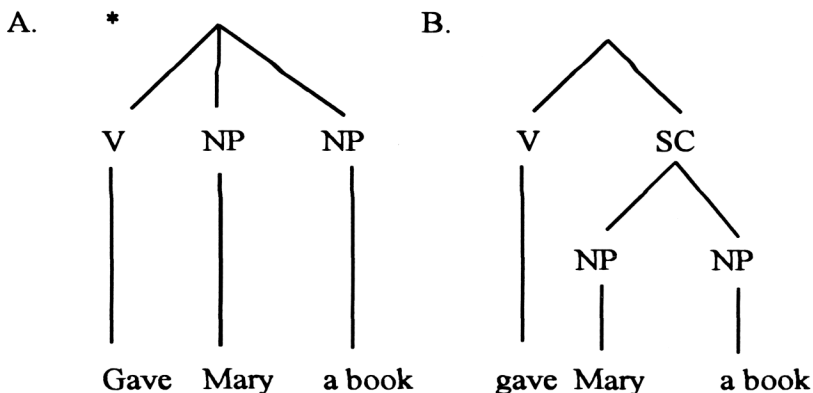
1. Introduction.

The main purpose of this paper is to show how specifically Kayne's 1981 notion of Binary Branching supplemented with the process of Incorporation makes the acquisition of complex structures found in languages such as Malagasy more transparent. In particular, it will be shown in some detail with numerous illustrative Malagasy examples how we can decide whether a given constituent of a sequence is an argument of a complex verb or a mere adjunct—where relevant a few examples from Malagasy taken from the literature will be reviewed/revised in light of the processes alluded to above. Such examples will include, but will not be restricted to causative constructions and motion verbs.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 will present the concept of Binary Branching, refer to some crucial basic assumptions and succinctly introduce Malagasy tense/aspect before describing how Incorporation as a process works in this language. Section 3 will then show how Binary Branching will apply to Malagasy data involving di-transitive verbs, motion verbs, lexical causative verbs like 'kill' and periphrastic causatives. Section 4 will finally critically review analyses of similar Malagasy data recently made available, specifically Ileana (2000) and Keenan (1999).

2.1 Binary Branching.

R. Kayne (1981) in his article entitled 'Unambiguous Paths' proposes the diagram shown in B below as the relevant one for representing the predicate found in sentence (1), and not the tree seen in A:



- (1) John gave Mary a book.
- (2) John believed Mary a genius.
- (3) Mary persuaded John to leave.

Indeed in the tree shown in A, we have the predicate going into three different branches made up of 'gave', 'Mary' and 'a book' respectively; whereas in the one in B, we only have two branches in that the noun phrase, i.e. for short, NP 'Mary' and the NP 'a book' form a constituent labelled SC or Small Clause with the consequence that at all levels of analysis branching always remains binary.

The construction illustrated in (2) supports the kind of Binary Branching analysis thus proposed since the NP 'Mary' and the NP 'a genius' form a Small Clause, i.e. not comprising a verb; whereas the sentence in (3) may initially pose a difficulty for such an analysis: In (3) it is well-known that traditionally the verb 'persuade' subcategorizes for an NP 'John' as well as an embedded S 'to leave'. We will address this specific issue below, suggesting that in Malagasy even this type of predicate is optimally analyzed as involving Binary Branching.

2.2 Crucial Assumptions.

Along with Chomsky (1981), we will assume that the head of a Malagasy clause can be either the inflections for tense, as in (4) and (5) below or those for aspect, as in (6). As a direct result of such an assumption and in conformity with

Pollock (1989), it will become evident that certain types of Malagasy clause will have tense as their head, as in (4) and (5) whereas other types of clause will have aspect as their head, as in (6).

2.3 Malagasy Tense/Aspect.

In Malagasy, there exist two main types of clause—see Rajaona (1972) for detail—depending on whether the predicate inside the clause is verbal or nonverbal in nature. A Malagasy predicate is verbal when it can combine with a tense-marker such as the prefix *n-* for past, *m-* for present and *h-* for future when the verb is in the active voice; when the verb is in the passive voice, then the relevant prefixes are *no* for past tense, *o* for present tense and *ho* for future tense. For additional relevant examples, consult Randriamasimanana (forthcoming). As suggested in Randriamasimanana (1999b: 518–24) and as explained in Randriamasimanana (1986: 29–74), one atomic feature, i.e. ‘Control’ plays a crucial role in determining whether a given predicate will combine with either a tense-marker only or an aspect-marker only. Tense and aspect as used here refer to notions as defined in Comrie (1985, 1976 respectively).

Below in (4) and (5), we have illustrative examples where the predicates are accompanied by a positive value for the feature Control and where the predicate can take a tense-marker, in both cases, the past tense-marker *n-* since the verbs are in the active voice.

- (4) N-andidy mofo i Paoly.
Past-cut bread art Paul
‘Paul cut bread.’
- (5) N-andeha i Paoly.
Past-go art Paul
‘Paul went to Antsirabe.’

- (6)a. \emptyset -any Antsirabe i Paoly.
 Nonperf-at Antsirabe art Paul
 'Paul is at Antsirabe.'
- b. T-any Antsirabe i Paoly.
 Perf-at Antsirabe art Paul
 Either 'Paul was at Antsirabe' or 'P. went to A.'
- (7) N-andeha t-any Antsirabe i Paoly.
 Past-go perf-at/to Antsirabe art paul
 'Paul went to Antsirabe.'
- Randriamasimanana (1999b:510–11)

On the other hand, (6)a. shows a predicate characterized by a negative value for the feature Control since the sentence can only have a location meaning. Yet, when the sequence in (6)b. merges with (5), as is quite obvious in (7), only the motion verb interpretation is possible for the perfective aspect-marker indicated by the prefix *t-* on the preposition 'any' inside the lower clause: As indicated in (6)b., the perfective aspect-marker allows an ambiguous interpretation for this nonverbal sentence in isolation. However, when a merger occurs between (5) and (6)b., only the motion verb interpretation of the lower clause is possible. This suggests that in Malagasy, where complex motion verbs are concerned, incorporation of the lower nonverbal clause shown in (6)b. can only take place if and only if the embedded predicate contains a positive value for the atomic feature Control, thereby allowing the newly added constituent to become an argument of the higher motion verb shown in (5), which itself already contains the same feature with a positive value for it.

2.4 Incorporation in Atayal.

In her analysis of the circumstantial voice found in Atayal, a Malayo-Polynesian language found on Taiwan, Huang (1993) notes a distinction between the meaning