

CLAUSAL COMPLEMENTATION IN MALAGASY

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This paper looks at the interactions between the matrix verb and embedded clause in Malagasy, building on previous research on control. We show that there are at least three “sizes” of complement clause and the size of the complement clause depends on the matrix verb. Moreover, as has been hypothesized by Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2019), the verbs fall into three classes and these classes form an implicational hierarchy in terms of their clausal complements.

1. Introduction

Research on clausal complementation suggests there is a hierarchical correspondence between the semantics of the selecting verb and the syntax of the embedded clause (Givón 1980, Wurmbrand & Lohninger 2019). Within this context, we look at Malagasy, a language that lacks morphological distinctions between tensed and tenseless clauses. The previous literature on clausal complementation in Malagasy has recognized that there are different clause sizes, including full CPs headed by *fa* and smaller clauses, lacking the CP layer (e.g. Potsdam & Polinsky 2005, Pearson 2018). We build on this research and propose that there are (at least) three types of clausal complements to lexical verbs: PROPOSITION (CP) (1a), SITUATION (TP) (1b), and EVENT (VoiceP) (1c).¹ Malagasy also has functional restructuring with *te* ‘want’ (Cinque 2004) (1d), but for reasons of space, we do not discuss functional restructuring in this paper.²

- (1) a. manantena i Soa [_{CP} fa hividy fiara] PROPOSITION
AT.hope DET Soa COMP FUT.AT.buy car
‘Soa hopes to buy a car.’
- b. mandà [_{TP} hihira] i Soa SITUATION
AT.refuse FUT.AT.sing DET Soa
‘Soa refuses to sing.’
- c. mankahala [_{VoiceP} mamaky boky] ny mpianatra EVENT
AT.hate AT.read book DET student
‘The student hates to read books.’

¹ For the purposes of this paper, we set aside perception verb complements (Pearson 2018), but see Section 2 for examples and a brief discussion.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all examples are from our fieldnotes. We follow the Leipzig glossing conventions with the following additions: AT Actor Topic, TT Theme Topic, CT circumstantial topic.

Previous research on Malagasy reveals different types of clausal complementation. For example, Pearson (2018) provides an analysis of what he calls INVERSE ORDER PERCEPTION VERB COMPLEMENTS, where the embedded subject *ireo ankizy ireo* ‘these children’ is initial in the clause, as illustrated in (5).

- (5) mahita [ireo ankizy ireo mitomany] ny lehilahy.
AT.see DEM child DEM AT.cry DET man
‘The man sees these children crying.’

Pearson argues that the complement is indeed clausal (and not nominal), but it lacks a position for TP fronting. The absence of TP fronting then leads to SVO. In other words, the clausal complement to the perception verb is smaller than a CP.

There is also a significant body of research on control in Malagasy (Keenan 1976, Randriamasimanana 1986, 2007, Law 1995, Polinsky & Potsdam 2002, 2003, 2005, inter alia).

- (6) a. nanandrana namono ny akoho Rabe
PST.AT.try PST.AT.kill DET chicken Rabe
‘Rabe tried to kill the chicken.’
b. nandraman- dRabe novonoina ny akoho
PST.TT.try Rabe PST.TT.kill DET chicken
‘Rabe tried to kill the chicken.’

While the different authors offer different analyses, Polinsky & Potsdam (2005) argue that the control verb selects for a complement clause that lacks the A-bar layer that hosts the subject. As with perception verbs, the complement clause is smaller than CP. In the remainder of this paper, we look more closely at a range of matrix verbs and provide evidence for a three-way distinction in the size of the complement clause (CP, TP, VoiceP). Before turning to the empirical facts, however, we first present the theoretical background that informs our study.

3. Implicational Complementation Hierarchy (ICH)

Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2019) suggest that clausal complements differ in size in a systematic way. Complement clauses are not selected (or only in a very limited way) and any apparent restrictions arise from the resulting interpretation of the combination of the matrix predicate with the complement clause. Some motivation for this approach comes from the observation that the matrix predicate and the embedded clause can affect each other (the relationship is bi-directional). Wurmbrand & Lohninger (building on Givón 1980 and Ramchand & Svenonius 2014) propose three classes of clausal complements. These clausal complements differ in their transparency to cross-clausal A/A’ dependencies, where PROPOSITION complements are the least transparent and the most clausal, while EVENT complements are the most transparent and the least clausal. SITUATION complements are somewhere in between. They thus form a hierarchy as in (7).

- (7) Proposition >> Situation >> Event

The different clausal complements can be distinguished as follows. Proposition complements can be assigned a truth value and are temporally unrestricted. Some English predicates that occur with proposition complements are: *believe*, *forget* (factive), *know* (factive). Situation complements are eventualities that are temporally anchored to the matrix (commonly irrealis). Some typical verbs are: *agree*, *know* (modal), *need*, *refuse*. Finally, in event complements, the time of the embedded event must be simultaneous with matrix (often infinitive/tenseless). The English verbs *begin*, *forget* (implicative), and *try* are all examples of verbs that take event complements. The prediction of the ICH is that event complements will never be more syntactically complex than situation or proposition complements. And situation complements will never be more syntactically complex than proposition complements. On the other hand, there is no one-to-one mapping cross-linguistically between the type of complement clause and specific syntactic nodes. For example, situation complements could be CP in one language and TP in another.

We now turn to the Malagasy data and show that there is indeed evidence for the ICH in Malagasy and that proposition complements are CPs, situation complements are TPs and event complements are VoicePs.

4. Diagnostics

The following discussion builds on Scott (2019, 2020). We consider four syntactic diagnostics that distinguish between the different types of complement clause. We note in passing that all three types are compatible with the extraposition of the clause to the right of the subject (as in (4) above). Given that extraposition is possible with most constituents other than DPs (Potsdam 2021), this pattern is not surprising.

4.1. Complementizer

As illustrated in (8) and (9), the complementizer *fa* can appear with proposition complements (see Potsdam & Polinsky 2007).

(8) manantena Rabe fa hianatra teny anglisy PROPOSITION
 AT.hope Rabe COMP FUT.AT.study language English
 ‘Rabe hopes to learn English.’

(9) milaza i Koto fa mihinana atin-kena PROPOSITION
 AT.say DET Koto COMP AT.eat inside-meat
 ‘Koto says that he eats liver.’

This complementizer is either ungrammatical with other verbs, as in (10) and (11), or leads to a meaning shift, as seen in the pair of sentences in (12). Without *fa*, the verb *manadino* ‘forget’ is interpreted as implicative. With *fa*, however, the meaning is factive.

(10) *mandà i Koto fa hihinana atin-kena SITUATION
 AT.refuse DET Koto COMP FUT.AT.eat inside-meat
 ‘Koto refuses to eat liver.’

- (11) *mankahala ny mpianatra fa mamaky boky EVENT
 AT.hate DET student COMP AT.read book
 ‘The student hates to read books.’
- (12) a. nanadino nividy akondro Rasoa EVENT
 PST.AT.forget PST.AT.buy banana Rasoa
 ‘Rasoa forgot to buy bananas.’ (implicative)
- b. nanadino Rasoa fa efa nividy akondro PROPOSITION
 PST.AT.forget Rasoa COMP already PST.AT.buy banana
 ‘Rasoa forgot that she already bought bananas.’ (factive)

Given that situation and event complements are not compatible with the complementizer *fa*, we take this to be initial evidence that they are smaller than CP.

There are, however, other complementizer-like elements in Malagasy. For example, *mba*, which is often translated as ‘in order to’, can appear in most control structures (Potsdam and Polinsky 2007).

- (13) mila [mba mividy sira] ny mpahandro
 AT.need COMP AT.buy salt DET cook
 ‘The cooks need to buy salt.’

Similarly, *ny* is a determiner that can surface in the complement clause of many control verbs (see Randriamasimanana 1986, 2007; Ntelitheos 2012, 2013; Potsdam and Polinsky 2015).

- (14) mila [ny mividy sira] ny mpahandro
 AT.need DET AT.buy salt DET cook
 ‘The cooks need to buy salt.’

We follow Potsdam and Polinsky (2015) and assume that the complement clause in (14) has undergone zero nominalization, given that it otherwise patterns with DP complement. A more thorough investigation of *mba* and *ny* is beyond the scope of this paper.

4.2. Tense

Turning now to tense, we see that proposition complements are unrestricted for tense: the embedded verb may be present, future or past.³

- (15) milaza i Koto fa m/h/nihinana atin-kena PROPOSITION
 AT.say DET Koto COMP PRS/FUT/PST.AT.eat inside-meat
 ‘Koto says that he eats/will eat/ate liver.’

³ For expository purposes, we gloss the initial *m* in this example as present tense, but present tense is in fact \emptyset . See Pearson (2005: 400 fn.14) for an explanation.

Situation complements, on the other hand, are consistently marked with future/irrealis (dependent tense).

- (16) mandà *m/h/*nihinana atin-kena i Koto SITUATION
 AT.refuse PRS/FUT/PST.AT.eat inside-meat DET Koto
 ‘Koto refuses to eat liver.’

Finally, we find matching tense in event complements: the embedded and matrix predicates must match (anaphoric tense).

- (17) mankahala m/*h/*namaky boky ny mpianatra EVENT
 AT.hate PRS/FUT/PST.AT.read book DET student
 ‘The student hates to read books.’

The data from tense thus provide evidence in favour of the three-way distinction between the complements. We discuss the differences in more detail in Section 5.

4.3. Partial control

As long noted in the literature, some control predicates allow for what is called partial control, where the controllee is not necessarily identical to the controller. Partial control is possible with the English verb *prefer*, but not with *manage*, as seen by the contrast in (18). The predicate *gather*, when used intransitively, requires a plural subject. Given that *manage* is an exhaustive control predicate, the controllee is interpreted as identical to the singular subject *the chair*, giving rise to ungrammaticality in (18)b. With *prefer*, however, the controllee can be understood as being a group comprised of the chair plus other people; this is the partial control reading in (18)c.

- (18) a. The chair managed to gather the committee at 6.
 b. *The chair managed to gather at 6.
 c. The chair preferred to gather at 6. [Landau 2000:5]

Cross-linguistically, partial control is possible with proposition and situation complements and we now turn to this diagnostic in Malagasy.

We begin with a Malagasy test for partial control: *miaraka* is a predicate that can appear as a compound with another verb, creating a predicate that requires a plural subject, as seen in (19).

- (19) a. miara-miasa ny mpianatra
 together-AT.work DET student
 ‘The students work together.’
 b. *miara-miasa i Soa
 together-AT.work DET Soa
 ‘Soa works together.’

As illustrated in (20), proposition and situation complements allow partial control, event complements do not.

- (20) a. manantena hiara-hiasa Rasoa PROPOSITION
 AT.hope FUT.together-FUT.AT.work Rasoa
 ‘Rasoa hopes to work together.’
- b. mandà hiara-hiasa i Soa SITUATION
 AT.refuse FUT.together- FUT.AT.work DET Soa
 ‘Soa refuses to work together.’
- c. *mankahala miara-miasa i Soa EVENT
 AT.hate together-AT.work DET Soa
 ‘Soa hates to work together.’

As noted above, the Malagasy data pattern with the cross-linguistic facts and show that event complements are distinct from situation (and proposition) complements.

4.4. Adverbs

The final diagnostic looks at the position of adverbs with respect to clausal complements. Adverbs can appear between proposition and situation verbs and their complements (21)a,b, but not between event verbs and their complements (21)c. Adverbs appear instead after the complement to an event verb, as shown in (21)d.

- (21) a. manantena **foana** hianatra teny anglisy Rabe PROPOSITION
 AT.hope always FUT.AT.study language English Rabe
 ‘Rabe still hopes to learn English.’
- b. mandà **matetika** hihira i Soa SITUATION
 AT.refuse often FUT.AT.sing DET Soa
 ‘Soa often refuses to sing.’
- c. *mankahala **foana** mamaky boky ny mpianatra EVENT
 AT.hate always AT.read book DET student
 ‘The student always hates to read books.’
- d. mankahala mamaky boky **foana** ny mpianatra EVENT
 AT.hate AT.read book always DET student
 ‘The student always hates to read books.’

4.5. Summary

Table 1 summarizes the properties of the different complements that we have seen in this section. For reasons of space, the data from extraposition have not been presented here. The different

diagnostics allow us to distinguish between the different types of complements and thus we find initial evidence for the different verb types, as proposed in Wurmbrand and Lohninger (2019).

		Comp	Free Tense	Partial Control	V1 Adv V2	Extrapolation
P	<i>manantena</i> ‘hope’	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
S	<i>mandà</i> ‘refuse’	no	no - fut	yes	yes	yes
E	<i>mankahala</i> ‘hate’	no	no - match	no	no	yes
	<i>te</i> ‘want’	no	no	no	no	no

Table 1: Summary of diagnostics

Below, we provide a list of the Malagasy verbs that have been tested and the category they belong to.

- (22) a. PROPOSITION: *milaza* ‘say’, *mino* ‘believe’, *manantena* ‘hope’, *manadino* ‘forget (factive)’
 b. SITUATION: *mandà* ‘refuse’, *mikasa* ‘intend’, *manaiky* ‘agree’, *miezaka* ‘make an effort’, *mihofo* ‘persist’
 c. EVENT: *mankahala* ‘hate’, *manadino* ‘forget (implicative)’, *manandrana* ‘try’, *mila* ‘need’, *manomboka* ‘start’, *mitsahatra* ‘stop’

In the following section, we propose an initial analysis of the structural correlates of the diagnostics discussed above.

5. Analysis

5.1. First Pass

The diagnostics presented in Section 4 all suggest that complements to proposition verbs are CPs. In particular, an overt complementizer is possible and tense is unrestricted, providing evidence in favour of an independent T head. Given the CP structure, we propose that there is a PRO subject in the embedded clause and, following Landau (2000), PRO allows for partial control readings. Finally, we assume that CPs can scramble to the right of adverbs (see Section 5.2).

Turning now to situation complements, we analyze these as TPs, lacking the CP layer. The absence of C leads to the impossibility of an overt complementizer (setting aside *mba* for present purposes). The TP layer is present, but the T head must be irrealis, as is common for situation complements across languages (Wurmbrand & Lohninger 2019). Just like proposition complements, there is an embedded PRO subject, leading to the possibility of partial control. As for the position with respect to adverbs, we assume that TPs can undergo scrambling (see Section 5.2 for more discussion of scrambling).

Finally, the complements to event verbs are structurally smaller and we suggest they are VoicePs.⁴ Like situation complements, no overt complementizer is possible (setting aside *mba*). Unlike situation complements, however, event complements lack T. In the absence of an

⁴ Alternatively, they could be vPs. Voice marking on the embedded predicate, however, suggests the presence of Voice, if Malagasy voice is in fact related to VoiceP. See Section 5.2 for some discussion.

independent T head, the embedded event is interpreted as simultaneous with the time of the matrix event. We can see a similar effect in English, where the complement of *try* must be interpreted as taking place at the same time as the matrix. The embedded clause may not contain temporal adverbials that conflict with the matrix (as in (23)a). Similarly, as shown in (23)b, the embedded predicate may not carry distinct tense specifications.

- (23) a. Sandy tried to eat liver (*tomorrow).
b. *Sandy tried to have eaten liver (yesterday).

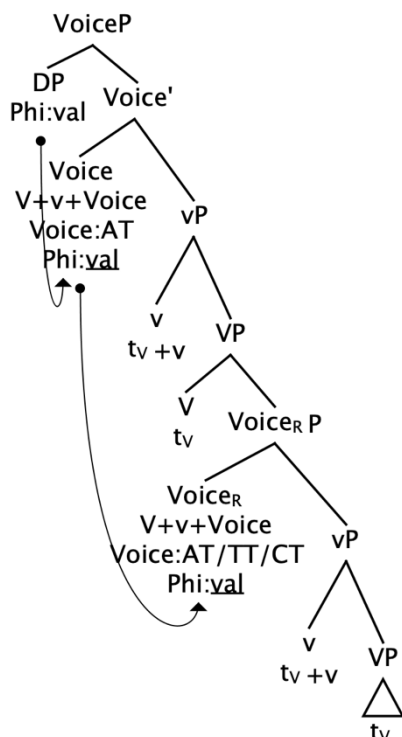
This restriction gives rise to overt morphological tense matching in Malagasy, given that in this language verbs must be marked for tense morphology (there are no bare verb forms). Finally, because the TP layer is missing, there is no position for PRO and therefore only exhaustive control is possible (see 5.2). We discuss the position of adverbs in the next section.

Although this analysis is tentative, it links the properties of the different complement clauses to their structural complexity. As predicted by Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2019), proposition complements are structurally more complex than situation complement, which are in turn more complex than event complements. Before concluding, we discuss event complements in more detail.

5.2. More on Event Complements

We suggested above that event complements lack an embedded subject position and as a result they show exhaustive control. One formal means to capture this restriction is through Voice Restructuring, where the embedded VoiceP is defective, lacking agent phi features (Wurmbrand & Shimamura 2017). The phi features of the embedded Voice head are therefore inherited from matrix Voice head and this leads to exhaustive control (the features must be identical). The tree in (24) illustrates this dependency: the phi features of the matrix Voice head are valued by the DP in its specifier. These features are then passed down to the embedded Voice head. Note that there is no specifier in the embedded VoiceP, therefore no separate agent.

(24)



We note here that in the tree above, Voice features are not defective: the voice of the embedded verb is mostly free (subject to semantic/pragmatic compatibility), as illustrated in (25).

- (25) a. mila anasana lamba ity savony ity
 AT.need CT.wash cloth DEM soap DEM
 ‘This soap needs to be used to wash clothes.’
- b. mila sasan- dRasoa ilay zaza.
 AT.need TT.wash Rasoa DEF child
 ‘The child needs to be washed by Rasoa.’
- c. nanomboka najaina ny lalana
 PST.AT.start PST.TT.respect DET law
 ‘The law started to be respected.’

The examples in (25), however, could be taken to be examples of raising. While such an analysis is plausible for (25), it is not the case for all event predicates. For example, *mankahala* ‘hate’ is an event predicate, but is clearly not raising as it is incompatible with inanimate subjects. The voice of the embedded predicate, however, does not need to match the matrix, as shown in (26).

- (26) a. mankahala sasana ilay zaza.
 AT.hate TT.wash DEF child
 ‘The child hates to be washed.’

- b. mankahala dokafana ilay mpampianatra
AT.hate TT.praise DEF teacher
'The teacher hates to be flattered.'

Thus the absence of voice matching cannot be linked to raising. On the other hand, not all event predicates are free with respect to voice. The verb *manandrana* 'try' requires voice matching.

- (27) a. *manandrana sasana ilay zaza.
AT.try TT.wash DEF child
'The child tries to be washed.'
- b. *manandrana dokafana ilay mpampianatra
AT.try TT.praise DEF teacher
'The teacher tries to be flattered.'

The variable restrictions on voice are left as a puzzle for future research.

We now turn to the position of adverbs: what accounts for the lack of shift of event complements? The relevant example is repeated in (28), where the complement clause *mamaky boky* 'read books' cannot shift to the right of the adverb *foana* 'always'.

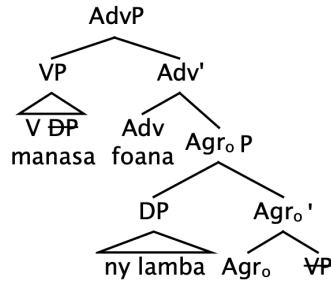
- (28) mankahala (*foana) mamaky boky (foana) ny mpianatra
AT.hate always AT.read book always DET student
'The student always hates to read books.'

While we cannot provide a definitive answer here, we suggest that the word order restriction in (28) resembles the facts about the ordering between adverbs and DPs. In particular, it has been observed that VP-level adverbs can appear to the right or left of (definite) objects (Rackowski 1998, Rackowski & Travis 2000) (see (29)a). Indefinite objects, however, must appear to the left of adverbs, as shown in (29)b.

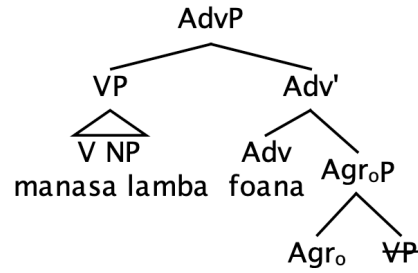
- (29) a. manasa (foana) ny lamba (foana) Rakoto
AT.wash always DET cloth always Rakoto
'Rakoto always does the laundry.'
- b. manasa (*foana) lamba (foana) Rakoto.
AT.wash always cloth always Rakoto
'Rakoto always does laundry.'

To account for this pattern, Rackowski (1998) and Rackowski & Travis (2000) propose that definite objects can undergo object shift; while indefinites cannot. The relevant structures are in (30): definite (DP) objects can optionally move to the specifier of AgrP. Subsequent remnant movement places the VP (now missing the object) in a position the precedes both the adverb and the shifted object (30)a. Indefinite (NP) objects, however, cannot move out of the VP and therefore are moved with the VP to a position that precedes the object (30)b.

(30) a.



b.



We hypothesize that event complements are like indefinite objects and cannot shift. It remains to be determined exactly what explains this restriction; why can CP and TP complements shift, but VoiceP cannot?

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have provided Malagasy data in favour of the Implicational Complementation Hierarchy (ICH) (Wurmbrand and Lohninger 2019), despite the language lacking morphological cues for finiteness. Moreover, although we did not discuss the data here, Malagasy also has a distinct class of functional predicates (e.g. *te* ‘want’). Thus, ICH effects are independent of the lexical-functional distinction. Event complements pattern with functional restructuring, but the matrix verb is lexical.

Many issues require future research, including the status of *mba* and *ny* as embedding elements, the nature of voice dependencies, the restrictions on scrambling (shift), and the properties of functional restructuring.

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