

## NEWS ABOUT THE *NO*-PHRASE: SPECIFICATIONAL PSEUDOCLEFTS IN MALAGASY\*

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This paper argues for a specificational pseudocleft account of the *no* focus construction in Malagasy. Using evidence from connectedness and referentiality, the *no*-phrase is shown to be a predicate (type <e,t>) that is predicated of the focused constituent and moves to subject/topic position of the matrix clause. In light of this analysis, the paper explores a phenomenon that has eluded prior explanation—non-topic focus. Across nearly all syntactic constructions in Malagasy, only the clause-final subject/topic (whose role in the VP is encoded through ‘voice’ morphology on the verb) can undergo A’ movement or gapping. However, in the *no* focus construction, PP arguments and certain adjuncts can be focused with the verb in any voice, i.e., without corresponding to the underlying subject/topic. The VP-raising analysis of Malagasy, combined with crosslinguistic observations about specificational pseudoclefts, free relatives, and islands, can account for the grammaticality of non-topic focus in *no* pseudoclefts. Specifically, it is proposed that Malagasy’s presuppositional post-topic position—by virtue of being structurally outside the raised VP (which is an island)—can host an *in situ* gap, allowing constituents that can appear in this post-topic position in regular clauses to be focused even when they are not the subject/topic.

### 1. Introduction

Malagasy is a predicate-initial/VOXS Austronesian language. The clause-final subject/topic<sup>1</sup> position is generally restricted to definite and specific DPs, with the role of the topic in the predicate encoded through ‘voice’ morphology on the verb. Malagasy has three basic ‘voices’: Actor Topic (AT), Theme Topic (TT), and Circumstantial Topic (CT), demonstrated with the verb root *sasa* (‘to wash’) in (1a-c), respectively:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a. Manasa    lamba    amin-ny    savony    Rabe  
      wash.AT clothes with-the soap    Rabe  
      ‘Rabe washes clothes with soap.’

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<sup>1</sup> It is debated whether the clause-final argument is a subject, topic, ‘trigger’, ‘pivot’, or something else entirely (see, e.g., Schachter 1976, Schachter 1996, and Pearson 2005). The clause-final DP is discussed briefly in section 2 and will be referred to as a topic throughout the paper.

<sup>2</sup> Here and throughout the paper, underlining indicates that the underlined string is in a topic position.

- b. Sasan-d-Rabe      amin-ny   savony   ny   lamba  
 wash.TT-GEN-Rabe   with-the   soap   the clothes  
 ‘The clothes are washed with soap by Rabe.’
- c. Anasan-d-Rabe      lamba   ny   savony  
 wash.CT-GEN-Rabe   clothes   the soap  
 lit: ‘The soap are washed clothes with by Rabe.’

When the verb is in AT form, (1a), the clause-final DP (the topic) is the verb’s underlying Agent. When the verb is in TT form, (1b), the topic is the verb’s Theme. Finally, in CT form, (1c), the topic corresponds to a PP argument or VP adjunct; full PPs are banned from topic position, so PPs that become topics lose their P and surface as bare DPs (Keenan 1976).<sup>3</sup> Across most syntactic constructions (and across all ‘voices’ and constituent-types), there is a strict rule that only the topic is a target for A’ movement or gapping, e.g., in relative clauses and raising constructions (Keenan 1976). This paper explores one particular construction in Malagasy—the *no* focus construction—that violates this ‘topics only’ restriction.

The structure of the *no* focus construction is given in (2):

- (2)      [<sub>XP</sub> focused constituent]   *no*   CP/TP

The focused constituent—most often a PP or DP—is followed by the particle *no*, followed by a clause lacking the constituent that corresponds to the focused XP. Certain PPs and adjuncts can appear in the focused position even when the gap in the CP/TP is not in topic position:<sup>4,5,6</sup>

- (3)   a. [ (Amin-) ny   savony ] *no*   anasan-d-Rabe      ny   lamba   \_\_\_\_\_  
           (With) the soap      *no* wash.CT-GEN-Rabe   the clothes  
           ‘How Rabe washes the clothes is with the soap.’
- b. [ Amin-ny   savony ] *no*   manasa   lamba   Rabe  
           With-the   soap      *no*   wash.AT   clothes   Rabe
- c. [ Amin-ny   savony ] *no*   sasan-d-Rabe      ny   lamba  
           With-the   soap      *no*   wash.TT-GEN-Rabe   the clothes

(3a) shows the expected case: the focused constituent corresponds to the embedded topic, such that there is a clear gap (underlined) in the clause-final topic position; the introductory preposition with a focused PP topic is optional, as indicated in the example. The focused

<sup>3</sup> For a more extensive discussion of voices and the syntactic motivation for the appearance of different arguments in topic position, see, e.g., Guilfoyle, Hung, and Travis 1992 and Pearson 2001 (Ch. 3).

<sup>4</sup> (3b-c) have the same paraphrase as (3a).

<sup>5</sup> Here and throughout the paper, bracketing indicates that the bracketed string is under focus/in a focused position.

<sup>6</sup> Abbreviations used in this paper: AT = Actor Topic; TT = Theme Topic; CT = Circumstantial Topic; NOM = Nominative; GEN = Genitive; ACC = Accusative; 2S = 2nd person singular; 3S = 3rd person singular; COMP = complementizer

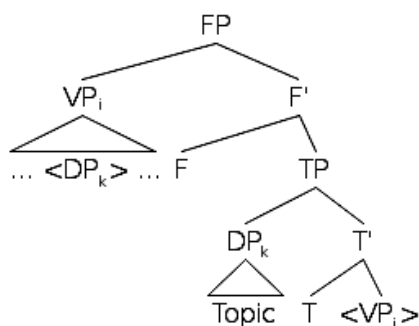
constituents in (3b-c), however, do not correspond to topic position; this position is overtly filled by another constituent (the Theme and the Agent, respectively), and the preposition *amin-* in the focused phrase is obligatory. Given the robust observation that Malagasy has a ‘topics only’ constraint on movement/gapping, the grammaticality of (3b-c) is surprising.

There are two main goals of this paper: (i) to find the source of the seemingly idiosyncratic behavior of adjuncts and PP arguments in the *no* focus construction (namely, their ability to be focused without corresponding to topic position); and (ii) to support and extend the (specificational) pseudocleft analysis of this construction (e.g., Paul 2001; Pearson 2001; Potsdam 2006, 2007; Travis 2008). The paper will be organized as follows. Section 2 outlines Malagasy syntax and introduces the ‘topics only’ restriction. Section 3 presents the *no* focus construction and previous analyses of its syntactic structure. Section 4 extends the pseudocleft analysis of the *no* focus construction on the basis of new data. In particular, it is proposed that *no* pseudoclefts are always specificational and that the gap in non-topic pseudoclefts is post-topic, in a VP-external position available for adjuncts and PPs in regular (non-focus) clauses. Finally, section 5 reviews the updated pseudocleft analysis and discusses directions for future research.

## 2. Malagasy Syntax

Malagasy is a predicate-initial language with a three-way ‘voice’ system, demonstrated in (1). In regular clauses, the argument picked out by the verbal voice morphology appears at the very end of the clause.<sup>7</sup> This paper will assume that the derivation of VOS word order in Malagasy results from VP-raising (e.g., Pensalfini 1995; Rackowski and Travis 2000; Pearson 2001):

(4)



The topic is in a leftward functional specifier position (given as spec,TP here), and the VP raises above the topic to a higher functional specifier. The DP in spec,TP may move out of the VP before the VP raises (as will be assumed here) or may be base-generated in its surface position and co-indexed with an element in the VP, much like clitic dislocation (Travis 2006). There are several types of evidence that support VP raising over an account in which the specifier of TP branches to the right, including mirror image adverb ordering, mirror image argument ordering in double object constructions, and mirror image object shift (Pearson 2000).

<sup>7</sup> We will see later, however, that certain oblique constituents can follow the topic; these constituents will play a crucial role in the analysis of non-topic focus.

The spec,TP position exhibits some topic/A'-like and some subject/A-like properties. Like a subject position, the clause-final slot must be filled in every clause, and the argument in this position controls the verbal morphology. However, spec,TP also exhibits definitively topic-like characteristics, including: (i) only definite DPs known from previous context may occupy spec,TP; and (ii) surface occupation of spec,TP is irrelevant for binding, i.e., all DP licensing occurs from merged positions within the VP. The clause-final DP will thus be considered a topic in this paper.<sup>8</sup> (See Schachter 1976, Schachter 1996, and Pearson 2005 for detailed discussions.)

The VP-raising account of Malagasy predicts the fronted VP to be an island (Rackowski and Travis 2000), since moved constituents are generally taken to be islands to further movement/gapping (e.g., Wexler and Culicover 1980). In this context, it is unsurprising that across most syntactic constructions, only the topic (which is outside the VP) can undergo such processes. A clear-cut example of the 'topics only' restriction occurs in relative clauses—the head noun must correspond to the topic argument in the embedded clause, as shown in (5):

- (5) a. *ny fitaovana* [ (*izay*) *anasan-d-Rabe* *lamba* \_\_\_\_\_ ]  
       the instrument (COMP) wash.CT-GEN-Rabe clothes  
       'the instrument that Rabe washes clothes with'
- b. \**ny fitaovana* [ (*izay*) *manasa* *lamba* *Rabe* ]  
       the instrument (COMP) wash.AT clothes Rabe
- c. \**ny fitaovana* [ (*izay*) *sasan-d-Rabe* *ny lamba* ]  
       the instrument (COMP) wash.TT-GEN-Rabe the clothes

The head noun, *fitaovana*, corresponds to an oblique element in the embedded VP. In order to relativize into the oblique position, the verb must be in CT form, such that the oblique is the topic (i.e., outside the VP); this is satisfied in (5a), but not in (5b) or (5c). Parallel observations hold for head nouns that correspond to an Agent or Theme; see Keenan 1976 for examples. The generalization is that in all relative clauses, topics are accessible to relativization/gapping while non-topic arguments and non-topic adjuncts are not. The *no* focus construction, introduced in the next section, poses a problem for this 'topics only' restriction.

### 3. The *No* Focus Construction

Malagasy has a focus construction with the following structure (repeated from the introduction):

- (6) [ <sub>XP</sub> focused constituent ] *no* CP/TP

The focused phrase linearly precedes *no*, which is followed by a clause missing the argument or adjunct that corresponds to the focused constituent. The particle *no* and the following clause form a constituent (Paul 2001), referred to as the '*no*-phrase' in this paper. This section delves into 'topic focus' and 'non-topic focus' and reviews syntactic analyses of the *no* construction.

<sup>8</sup> This will simplify later derivations, but necessitates stipulating that spec,TP is an A' position in Malagasy.

### 3.1. Topic and Non-Topic Focus

As expected given the ‘topics only’ restriction, the verb in the post-*no* CP/TP must be in AT form in order for an Agent to be focused and must be in TT form for a Theme to be focused:

- (7) a. [ Ny lamba ] no sasan-d-Rabe amin-ny savony \_\_\_\_\_  
 The clothes *no* wash.TT-GEN-Rabe with-the soap  
 ‘What Rabe washes with soap are the clothes.’
- b. \*[ Ny lamba ] no manasa amin-ny savony Rabe  
 The clothes *no* wash.AT with-the soap Rabe
- c. \*[ Ny lamba ] no anasan-d-Rabe ny savony  
 The clothes *no* wash.CT-GEN-Rabe the soap

It is possible to focus the Theme, *ny lamba*, when the verb is in TT form, as in (7a), but not when the verb is in any other form, as in (7b-c). (7a) is an instance of ‘topic focus’—the focused constituent corresponds to a gap in topic position in the *no*-phrase.

The puzzle that the *no* construction presents for Malagasy’s ‘topics only’ restriction is the fact that PP arguments and certain adjuncts can be focused even when the verb is not in CT form, as demonstrated in (3) in the introduction. (3a) involves topic focus—the gap is in topic position, just like (7a). The unexpected formations are (3b-c), which involve ‘non-topic focus’—the gap is not in topic position, and topic position in the *no*-phrase is filled with another argument. In fact, it is unclear where the gap is, or whether there is a gap corresponding to the focused phrase at all.

Several grammatical phenomena correlate with the type of focus (topic vs. non-topic), two of which will be discussed here. First, with topic focus, there can be an NP (*fomba* in (8)) after *no* that is a superset of the focused constituent, optionally followed by a complementizer:

- (8) Amin-ny savony no (\*ny) fomba (izay) anasan-d-Rabe lamba \_\_\_\_\_  
 With-the soap *no* (the) manner (COMP) wash.CT-GEN-Rabe clothes  
 ‘The manner in which Rabe washes clothes is with the soap.’

The superset can be a broad category NP (e.g., ‘manner’ in (8)) or a more specific NP (e.g., modified by an adjective or with a possessor), but can never be introduced by a definite determiner. Contrasting with topic focus, non-topic focus completely disallows superset NPs, even though there are (semantically) suitable supersets for focused obliques (e.g., *fomba* in (8)).

The second phenomenon correlating with focus type is the ‘Bodyguard Condition’ (Keenan 1976). In non-topic focus constructions, the DP in the embedded topic position can optionally appear before *no*, right-adjacent to the focused constituent, as its ‘bodyguard’ (e.g., *Rabe* in (9); the bodyguard’s canonical clause-final position is indicated in angled brackets):

- (9) [ Amin-ny savony ] Rabe no manasa lamba <Rabe>  
 With-the soap Rabe *no* wash.AT clothes  
 ‘How Rabe washes the clothes is with the soap.’

(9) exemplifies the Bodyguard Condition: the embedded topic appears between the focused non-topic and the *no*-phrase. The bodyguard can occur with the verb in any voice and does not change the clause's interpretation—there is still only one constituent in focus, namely, the pre-bodyguard constituent. The bodyguard forms a constituent with the *no*-phrase (Paul 2002).

In sum, focus type correlates with two key phenomena that will help guide later analyses: the superset NP (which occurs with topic focus) and the bodyguard (which occurs with non-topic focus).<sup>9</sup> The rest of this paper attempts to answer four main questions about the *no* construction:

- (10) The puzzles of the *no* focus construction:
- What is its overall syntactic structure, and what is the role of the particle *no*?
  - Is there a gap in non-topic focus constructions? If so, where is this gap?
  - Why is it possible to focus a non-topic, while non-topics are not accessible to movement/gapping elsewhere in Malagasy (e.g., in relative clauses)?
  - What accounts for the correlated phenomena (the bodyguard and superset NP)?

To anticipate the solutions: (a) the *no* construction is a specificational pseudocleft, and *no* is a determiner that allows a predicate free relative to occupy topic position; (b) yes, there is a gap in non-topic focus constructions, in post-topic position; (c) non-topics can be focused due to the selectional properties of *no*, which can take either a CP or TP complement; and (d) the correlated phenomena fall out from the differential structures of topic and non-topic focus. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 wrap up this background discussion with an overview of previous syntactic analyses.

### 3.2. Previous Analyses

There have been a number of proposals about the syntax of the *no* focus construction. An early analysis by Keenan (1976) offers a surface description: “to form a CS [(Cleft Sentence)], move the NP to the left of the verb and insert the invariable particle *no* between the moved NP and the verb” (pg. 268). One later account takes this movement analysis to heart, positing that the focused constituent A' moves to spec,CP, and *no* is the head complementizer (Sabel 2002). This analysis is challenged by the observation that the focused phrase can be flanked by pre- and post-predicate particles (Paul 2001; Potsdam 2006), indicating that the focused phrase constitutes a VP or predicate at some level of representation (and thus cannot simply be a DP in spec,CP).

Recent accounts incorporate the focused-constituent-as-VP/predicate observation in various ways, each giving a different role to the particle *no*. Law (2005, 2007) proposes that *no* is a focus particle that heads an FP and selects an IP complement; the FP itself is the complement of a null copula. The focused constituent moves leftward out of the embedded IP (creating a gap), through spec,FP, ultimately landing in spec,VP of the matrix clause. Finally, the embedded IP (complement of *no*) extraposes at PF to right-adjoin to the matrix IP. This PF movement leaves the focused constituent as the sole overt material in the VP, giving it VP/predicate-like properties with respect to particle placement. (See Law 2007 for the proposed structures.)

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<sup>9</sup> There is actually another potentially important correlation: if the focused phrase is a PP (or corresponds underlyingly to a PP), the preposition is optional with topic focus but obligatory with non-topic focus. This was mentioned briefly in the introduction. For space reasons, PP optionality will not be discussed further here.

A second account argues that the *no* focus construction is a pseudocleft (e.g., Paul 2001; Potsdam 2006; Pearson 2001), with the *no*-phrase in topic position and the focused constituent as the complement of a null copula. Under this analysis, unlike Law's, the focused constituent does not originate in the embedded clause, but rather is connected to the gap by co-indexation. A third account looks at a different formation that involves *no*—conditional constructions—to argue that *no* is a clause-linker and that the *no* focus construction has a conditional structure (Pearson in prep).<sup>10</sup> The analysis adopted and argued for in the remainder of this paper is the pseudocleft analysis, which is explored in more depth in the following section.

### 3.3. The *No* Focus Construction as a Pseudocleft

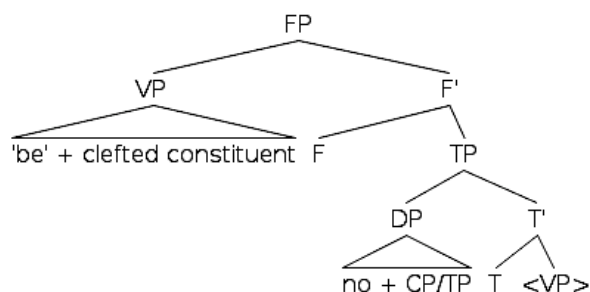
Pseudoclefts are a biclausal grammatical strategy for putting focus on a constituent that supplies new information in a clause. An example of an English pseudocleft is given in (11).

- (11) [<sub>FR</sub> What the dog chewed] was [<sub>FOC</sub> the bone].

The focused phrase is structurally below the non-focused material, as the complement of copular 'be'. The non-focused clausal material takes the form of a free relative (FR), an "embedded [clause] with a gap in argument or adjunct position" (Caponigro 2004, p. 39); this FR arguably appears in subject position (e.g., Higgins 1979).

The pseudocleft analysis of the *no* focus construction that will be used in this paper was proposed by Paul (2001, 2002) and is similar to that of Pearson (2001) and Potsdam (2006):<sup>11</sup>

- (12)



Before movement, the FR *no*-phrase originates in a predication relationship with the focused constituent in the VP; the FR then raises to matrix topic position, and the VP raises to spec,FP, deriving (12). On the surface, the focused phrase is the sole overt material left in the matrix VP.

Within the pseudocleft analysis, explanations of the correlated phenomena and non-topic focus have been proposed. Paul (2001, 2002) argues that the *no*-phrase is a headless relative clause (with *no* as the head determiner) and the bodyguard, when it appears, occupies spec,DP as a sort of 'possessor' of the headless relative. Paul does not mention the superset NP, but it could plausibly occupy the regular head NP position. As for non-topic focus, Pearson (2001) postulates

<sup>10</sup> For further details about the pros and cons of each analysis, see Pearson in prep.

<sup>11</sup> (12) is equivalent to Paul's pseudocleft structure, but replaces her right-branching spec,TP with VP-raising.

that “the blocking effect [(that requires *Op* to move through the topic position)] is suspended when the clefted/topicalized constituent belongs to a lexical category other than DP” (pg. 141), resulting in non-DPs being able to be focused without corresponding to a gap in topic position.

Law (2007) raises several objections to the pseudocleft analysis, focusing on two points: the *no*-phrase (which occupies a position reserved for DPs) is not DP-like, and the focused constituent (which occupies the VP) is not truly VP/predicate-like. However, these observations do not necessitate a complete overhaul of the pseudocleft proposal. On the contrary, by analyzing the *no* construction as a certain type of pseudocleft—a specificational pseudocleft—these obstacles are overcome. Law’s two observations straightforwardly fall out from crosslinguistic characteristics of specificational pseudoclefts: the FR *no*-phrase is a predicate in subject position (so it is not fully DP-like), and the focused constituent is the underlying subject, though it ends up left in the VP after the FR raises (so it is not a typical VP/predicate). The following section discusses specificational pseudoclefts and expands upon the pseudocleft proposal.

#### 4. A New Look at *No* and the *No*-Phrase

The following section demonstrates that the *no* pseudocleft is specificational, looks for the gap in non-topic pseudoclefts, and offers an analysis of the internal structure of the *no*-phrase.

##### 4.1. The *No* Focus Construction as a Specificational Pseudocleft

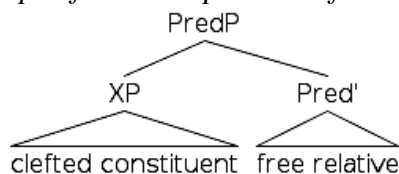
Pseudoclefts split into two types, centering on the phenomenon of ‘connectedness’, whereby a displaced constituent behaves as though it were in its canonical (gapped) position for binding and other structure-sensitive properties (Higgins 1979). When the focused phrase is ‘connected’ to the gap, the pseudocleft is ‘specificational’—the focused constituent takes on the interpretation and form it would have in the gap. When not ‘connected’, the pseudocleft is ‘predicational’—the focused constituent is distinct from the gap and functions as the matrix predicate (Partee 1986).

Pseudoclefts in English can be ambiguous (from Iatridou and Varlokosta 1998):

- (13)    [<sub>FR</sub> What John is] is [<sub>FOC</sub> silly].  
           *Connected (specificational) paraphrase:* ‘John is silly.’  
           *Non-connected (predicational) paraphrase:* ‘Some property that John has is silly.’

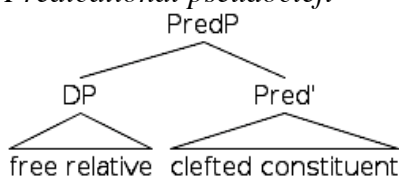
The pseudocleft in (13) enables both a specificational and predicational reading. The difference between specificational and predicational pseudoclefts can be characterized as a difference in underlying structure (shown in (14)-(15), adapted from Iatridou and Varlokosta 1998), though on the surface, it is always the FR that ends up in spec,TP/subject position.

- (14)    *Specificational pseudocleft*





(15) *Predicational pseudocleft*



(14) illustrates that the FR is the main predicate in specificational pseudoclefts, while the focused constituent is the subject of that predicate. (15) shows that the opposite relationship holds in predicational pseudoclefts: the focused constituent is the main predicate, while the FR is the subject of this predicate, as a referring entity that stands apart from the focused phrase.

Drawing on this characterization of pseudoclefts, Potsdam (2007) and Travis (2008) have proposed that the *no* pseudocleft is specificational, i.e., the *no*-phrase serves as the underlying predicate before it raises to topic position. This claim can be tested empirically in several ways. First, if *no* pseudoclefts are specificational, then the focused constituent should have the form and interpretation it would have if it were in the gapped position of the *no*-phrase. The data bears out this prediction, as demonstrated in (16) with a canonical/non-focus binding relationship (quantifier-bound pronoun) set up in (16a) and focused versions of (16a) given in (16b-c):

- (16) a. Nametraka vary t-ao anatin-ny viliany<sub>i</sub> ny zaza rehetra<sub>i</sub>  
 PST.put.AT rice PST-at inside-the plate.3S the child every  
 ‘Every child put rice on their plate.’
- b. [ Ny zaza rehetra<sub>i</sub> ] no nametraka vary t-ao anatin-ny viliany<sub>i</sub>  
 The child every no PST.put.AT rice PST-at inside-the plate.3S  
 ‘Who put rice on their plate was every child.’
- c. [ T-ao anatin-ny viliany<sub>i</sub> ] no nametraka vary ny zaza rehetra<sub>i</sub>  
 PST-at inside-the plate.3S no PST.put.AT rice the child every  
 ‘What every child put rice on was their plate.’

Binding relationships are not altered when one of the arguments (either the binder or the bindee) is focused, whether it is topic focus, as in (16b), or non-topic focus, as in (16c). (16) exemplifies ‘connectedness’: bound pronouns and anaphors are licensed in the clefted constituent or *no*-phrase by virtue of the focused constituent behaving as though it were in the gapped position. It is useful to note here that (16c) would be very surprising if non-topic focus were gapless.

Another characteristic of specificational pseudoclefts is that the FR is the underlying predicate, so the entity-denoting status of the FR can be diagnostic (Higgins 1979). If an FR is entity-denoting (type <e>), then it should be replaceable by a demonstrative; this is impossible for the *no*-phrase. Further, the *no*-phrase cannot replace entity-denoting DPs (from Law 2007):

- (17) Nanoroka ny zaza [ ny/\*no lehilahy (izay) nanapaka ity hazo ity ]  
 PST.kiss.AT the child the/no man (COMP) PST.cut.AT this tree this  
 ‘The man who cut this tree kissed the child.’

The semantic requirement for ‘kiss’ to have an entity-denoting Agent is satisfied by the relative clause version of (17), with the determiner *ny*, but not by a nearly identical *no*-phrase; this ungrammaticality would be surprising if the *no*-phrase were entity-denoting. Unlike the *no*-phrase, the clefted constituent can be entity-denoting (e.g., an R-expression, as in (7a)), which is compatible with the underlying ‘subject’ role of the focused constituent in specificational pseudoclefts. In addition, given that the clefted constituent can be type <e>, the *no* pseudocleft is unlikely to be predicational, since the clefted phrase would have to be the underlying predicate.

Given previous typologies of pseudoclefts (starting with Higgins 1979) and the Malagasy data above (which established connectedness, the non-entity denoting status of the *no*-phrase, and the non-predicate status of the clefted constituent), the *no* pseudocleft seems to be unambiguously specificational, with the underlying structure in (14). The essential conclusion to be drawn from this is that the *no*-phrase is the underlying predicate, i.e., it is type <e,t>. In order for the *no*-phrase to be <e,t>, it must contain a gap, both in topic pseudoclefts (with an obvious gap in topic position) and non-topic pseudoclefts (with a non-transparent gap location). In support of this, (16c) showed that connectedness—a relationship between a gap and a displaced constituent—holds even with non-topic focus. One major question has thus been answered: is there a gap in non-topic pseudoclefts? Yes, because the *no*-phrase is type <e,t>. The next section investigates the location of this gap by looking at the post-topic position in Malagasy.

## 4.2. The Gap in Non-Topic Pseudoclefts

In addition to their exceptional behavior in *no* pseudoclefts, there is another way in which obliques deviate from other arguments: in regular/non-focus clauses in any voice, PP arguments and certain adjuncts can appear post-topic:<sup>12</sup>

- (18) a. Nanome (ny) vola ho an-dRabe ianao  
 PST.give.AT (the) money to ACC-Rabe 2S.NOM  
 ‘You gave (the) money to Rabe.’
- b. Nanome (ny) vola ianao ho an-dRabe
- c. \*Nanome ho an-dRabe ianao (ny) vola

Canonical/neutral (18a) allows an argument PP to surface post-topic, as in (18b), but not an argument DP, as in (18c). Aside from a pragmatic consequence—post-topic constituents are interpreted as presuppositional—occupying this position does not alter clause meaning. The post-topic constituent could potentially attach in a number of locations, e.g., as an adjunct to TP or in a functional specifier position below TP. The post-topic PP could be base-generated in its surface position or could originate in the VP and raise. (See Pearson 2001 (Ch. 4) for more discussion.) The crucial observation is that the surface syntactic position of the post-topic constituent must be outside of the VP island to obtain the attested word order, since the VP precedes the topic.

<sup>12</sup> PP arguments and PP adjuncts can always be post-posed, but not all non-PP VP-modifiers/adjuncts can be postposed. For example, *omaly* (‘yesterday’) can be postposed, but *mafy* (‘loudly’) cannot.

Post-topic constituents are related to *no* pseudoclefts because of a robust observed correlation: if an argument or adjunct can appear in the post-topic position, then it can be focused in a non-topic *no* pseudocleft.<sup>13,14</sup> (19) shows this correlation in action, correlating with (18b).

- (19) [ Ho an-dRabe ] no nanome vola ianao  
to ACC-Rabe no PST.give.AT money 2S.NOM  
‘Who you gave the money to was Rabe.’

The PP *ho an-dRabe* can appear post-topic, (18b), and can be focused as a non-topic, (19). DP arguments cannot appear post-topic (e.g., (18c)), and they can never be focused as a non-topic.

The two constituents that can be focused with *no* (topics and post-topic constituents) share an important characteristic that makes them a sort of ‘natural class’: both are outside the VP before the VP raises (either via base generation or movement); both escape the VP island and are thus, in theory, eligible for gapping/movement. The proposal made here is that non-topic pseudoclefts are possible precisely because there is a non-topic position that is a target for gapping—the post-topic position. The condition on *no* pseudoclefts is therefore that a constituent can be focused only if it can surface outside of the VP island. Topics can be clefted because they are (by their nature) outside the VP, and certain adjuncts and PP arguments can be clefted whether or not they are topics because these constituents can always surface outside of the VP, either in topic or post-topic position. The final question is why the post-topic position is accessible to gapping in the *no*-phrase but not in relative clauses, even though on the surface the two constructions look nearly identical. This challenge is addressed in the following section.

#### 4.3. The Syntax of the *No*-Phrase

There are several points to reconcile about the *no*-phrase. It was noted in section 2 that only definite DPs known from previous context can occupy the topic position in Malagasy. While the *no*-phrase is not a definite DP (type <e>), it is ‘known from previous context’ by virtue of being the non-focused component of the pseudocleft. Arguably, then, the *no*-phrase is a DP (since it is a topic) and the particle *no* is the head determiner. The role of *no* seems to be to allow a specific but non-definite DP to occupy the topic position while maintaining its <e,t> denotation.

Previous researchers (e.g., Paul (2001) and Pearson (2001)) have argued that the DP *no*-phrase is a headless relative clause in topic position. However, there are several reasons to doubt that the *no*-phrase has a relative clause structure. First, *no*-phrases cannot be replaced by a nearly identical relative clause (achieved by substituting *no* for *ny* in the presence of a superset NP):

- (20) Rabe [ no/\*ny lehilahy (izay) manasa lamba \_\_\_\_\_ ]  
Rabe no/the man (COMP) wash.AT clothes  
‘The man who washes clothes is Rabe.’

<sup>13</sup> Consistent with fn. 12, *omaly* can be focused as a topic or non-topic, while *mafy* can only be focused as a topic.

<sup>14</sup> Potsdam (personal communication) noted that comparative *noho*-clauses in Malagasy can appear VP-internally or post-topic, yet cannot be focused as non-topics; it is possible that *noho*-clauses cannot be focused for independent reasons, or that their post-topic position is distinct from the presuppositional post-topic position discussed here.

The *ny*-phrase in (20) is a grammatical relative clause, yet cannot replace the *no*-phrase. Related to this, *no*-phrases are not entity-denoting, while relative clauses are (see (17)). Finally, the *no*-phrase allows a non-topic gap, whereas relative clauses strictly obey the ‘topics only’ constraint.

It is proposed here that the structure of the *no*-phrase is more transparent than that of a (headless) relative clause. In topic pseudoclefts with a superset NP, this NP makes the FR refer to a smaller set of entities, similar to the set-restricting function of spec,CP wh-words in FRs crosslinguistically (Caponigro 2004); plausibly, then, the superset NP in Malagasy FRs (*no*-phrases) occupies spec,CP. The most straightforward way to embed a CP in the *no*-phrase is for *no* to directly select a CP. Similarly, the simplest way to account for the lack of a superset NP (e.g., in non-topic pseudoclefts) is for *no* to select a clausal projection smaller than a CP, e.g., a bare TP<sup>15</sup> instead of a CP. The generalization is thus that *no* can select a TP or a CP.

The difference in complement selection results in two distinct *no*-phrase derivations. In topic pseudoclefts with a superset NP, *no* selects a CP that contains a set restrictor in topic position that is co-indexed with the focused constituent. This set restrictor raises to spec,CP, creating a gap in topic position and deriving the required type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ .<sup>16</sup> The mechanism ensuring that movement originates in topic position (and not in post-topic position) when *no* selects a CP is Relativized Minimality (Rizzi 1990, 2001), a condition on constituent movement that states that no constituent can skip an intervening eligible landing site. In the case of A’ movement, the effect is that no constituent can A’ move over an intervening eligible A’ position. The landing site for the superset NP in the *no*-phrase is spec,CP, and the structurally closest A’ position compatible with spec,CP is the topic position (spec,TP). As such, due to Relativized Minimality, the A’ movement of the superset NP must originate from topic position.

Non-topic pseudoclefts and topic pseudoclefts without a superset involve a somewhat different derivation, starting with *no* selecting a TP. The presence of a gap in the *no*-phrase is required for its status as an  $\langle e, t \rangle$  predicate, yet spec,CP is no longer present as a potential landing site for creating this gap. With no place for constituents to move to, the gap must be found *in situ* in the embedded clause.<sup>17</sup> The VP is opaque for finding the *in situ* gap, by virtue of having raised and become an island to gapping/movement. There are, however, two potential locations outside of the VP for an *in situ* gap: the topic position and the post-topic position. When the topic position is empty, the location of the *in situ* gap is transparent/evident, resulting in a topic pseudocleft (with no superset NP). When the topic position is overtly filled in the embedded TP, the grammar of Malagasy allows for the interpretation of a gap in one other location—the post-topic position—resulting in a non-topic pseudocleft.

Relativized Minimality does not play any role when *no* selects a TP, because there is no movement involved in creating the gap. The only constraint on the location of the gap is the VP-island—so long as a constituent is outside the VP island, it can be gapped. When *no* selects a CP,

<sup>15</sup> Actually, under a VP-raising account, it is not the bare TP that is selected, but the FP above TP. However, for clarity, this complement of *no* will be referred to as a TP, since the important difference is the lack of a CP layer.

<sup>16</sup> It must be stipulated that the moved superset cannot itself feed into the derived  $\langle e, t \rangle$  function, as this would eliminate the gap. Caponigro’s (2004) characterization of English wh-words can provide a solution: the set restrictor/superset is type  $\langle e, t \rangle$  and composes with the TP via Predicate Modification, not Function Application.

<sup>17</sup> It is not clear why the gap cannot be *in situ* when the CP layer is present; perhaps the featural content of C in the *no*-phrase requires movement of some constituent and/or disallows an *in situ* gap. McCloskey’s (2001) discussion of a similar process among three complementizers in Irish may shed light on the behavior of this C/CP in Malagasy.

on the other hand, Relativized Minimality plays the crucial role of ensuring that the focused constituent corresponds to a topic gap in topic position, via the origin of the superset NP in topic position. This invocation of Relativized Minimality relates to why relative clauses strictly obey the ‘topics only’ restriction: relative clauses implicate an embedded CP (modifying the head NP); the presence of the CP layer disallows movement of any constituent other than the topic.

Before concluding the analysis, it is worth noting that Paul’s (2001) proposal that the bodyguard is in spec,DP is compatible with this new characterization of the *no*-phrase. If *no* selects a TP in all non-topic pseudoclefts, then movement of the embedded topic to spec,DP (bodyguard position) would be a one-step movement to the next eligible specifier position. The motivation for this movement is not clear and will not be discussed further here.

## 5. Conclusion and Further Directions

In this final section, the empirical and theoretical contributions of this paper are reviewed and some of the numerous questions raised by the data and analysis are noted.

### 5.1. Summary

This paper has argued that the seemingly deviant behavior of non-topic constituents in pseudoclefts is not exceptional at all. On the contrary, non-topic pseudoclefts follow straightforwardly from other aspects of Malagasy grammar—namely, VP-fronting and the post-topic position—when combined with crosslinguistic characteristics of pseudoclefts and FRs. Empirically, this paper introduced several new types of data, demonstrating the range of constituents that can be superset NPs, that can appear post-topic, and (related to this) that can be focused as non-topics. Most importantly, this paper found a direct correlation between those constituents that can appear post-topic and those that can be focused as non-topics.

The theoretical proposals made here offer answers to the puzzles presented in (10). Section 4.1 showed that the *no* pseudocleft is specificational, leading to the conclusion that the *no*-phrase always contains a gap, since the *no*-phrase is a predicate (type <e,t>). Section 4.2 argued that the gap in non-topic pseudoclefts is in the presuppositional post-topic position, which is accessible to gapping due to being outside the VP island. Section 4.3 characterized the syntax of the *no*-phrase as distinct from relative clauses and proposed a mechanism by which topics and non-topics are focused—either by an *in situ* gap (as in non-topic pseudoclefts and topic pseudoclefts without a superset) or through movement of the topic constituent to spec,CP (as in topic pseudoclefts with a superset). It was suggested that the particle *no* is a special determiner that allows a predicate to be in topic position; *no* can select a CP (with a gap derived by movement) or a TP (with an *in situ* gap). Although the account is far from complete, this paper provides a starting point for exploring non-topic focus within Malagasy grammar as a whole.

### 5.2 Implications and Further Directions

The analysis offered here raises many new questions. First, the semantic and syntactic account of *no* itself needs to be much more thorough. The existence of clause-linking *no* (Pearson in prep) was not addressed; ideally, these cases would be compatible with the pseudocleft analysis and/or

incorporate the *no*-phrase as type <e,t>. Second, there are other focus constructions in Malagasy that have not been touched upon here, e.g., *dia* pseudoclefts, which Paul (2008) proposes have an English-like predicationalspecificational ambiguity. There are also true entity-denoting headless relatives (e.g., *ny manasa lamba*, ‘the one who washes clothes’); their status as type <e> may be due to the determiner *ny* (vs. *no*). Third, the post-topic position was only cursorily introduced and needs a more thorough analysis. Exploring the presuppositional nature of the post-topic position may yield insights into the function of non-topic pseudoclefts, e.g., perhaps non-topic pseudoclefts convey a contrastive topic (which has both focus-like and presuppositional/topic-like properties). Fourth, there may be differences among Malagasy dialects as to which types of constituents can appear post-topic and/or be focused as non-topics; the prediction of this paper is that the correlation will still hold: if a dialect allows a certain constituent to occupy the post-topic position, then this constituent will also be able to be focused as a non-topic. Fifth, the observation that only VP-external constituents can be gapped may constitute another argument in favor of the VP-raising analysis of Malagasy syntax, as this appears to be a VP island effect.

Finally, on a crosslinguistic level, the *no* focus construction may contribute important insights into a typology of pseudoclefts. Iatridou and Varlokosta (1998) observe that “the languages that have specificational pseudoclefts form free relatives either with the items used in headed relatives or the items used in questions [... i.e.,] items that participate in predicative structures” (pg. 19). When a language does not use these items (e.g., Modern Greek), the FR cannot act as a predicate, but only as a referring entity; in other words, all pseudoclefts are predicationals in these languages. This paper showed that the opposite generalization holds for the *no* pseudocleft in Malagasy: all *no* pseudoclefts are specificational, precisely because the FR cannot be interpreted as entity-denoting and must always be a predicate. This and the other avenues noted above are left open for future research.

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