

*Tough Movement and Subjects in Malagasy*

*Tough-Movement* (TM), also known as Object-to-Subject Raising, relates the English translations in (1a) and (1b). This paper investigates the corresponding alternation in Malagasy, first discussed in Keenan 1976.

- (1) a. Sarotra ny mamaky ity boky ity (Keenan 1976:(125b))  
 difficult DET read.ACT DEM book DEM  
 lit. ‘Reading this book is difficult.’  
 ‘It is difficult to read this book.’  
 b. Sarotra vakina ity boky ity (Keenan 1976:(125c))  
 difficult read.PASS DEM book DEM  
 ‘This book is difficult to read.’

I show that Malagasy (1b) is parallel in its empirical behavior to English and should thus receive a similar analysis. In particular, in agreement with almost all analyses of TM since Chomsky 1977, there is A' movement of some element, shown as a null operator in (2), inside the complement clause:

- (2) sarotra [<sub>CP</sub> **Op** [<sub>TP</sub> vakina **t<sub>i</sub>**]] ity boky ity  
 difficult read.PASS DEM book DEM

English and Malagasy differ in at least one salient respect however: TM cannot target subjects in English, (3) (see Hicks 2017, among others). In Malagasy, in contrast, subject-TM is licit. I argue that this contrast follows from basic differences in the nature of extraction in the two languages.

- (3) a. \*John is tough [ \_\_ to love Mary] (Hicks 2017:(39b))  
 b. \*This book is difficult [ \_\_ to be read \_\_]

**Analysis.** TM predicates in Malagasy include *sarotra* ‘difficult’, *mafy* ‘hard’, *mora* ‘easy’, *tsara* ‘good’, and *mety* ‘possible’. Keenan 1976 shows that in (1a), the TM predicate has an “infinitival” nominalization as its subject. This is confirmed by well-known subject diagnostics (Keenan 1976, 1995) such as fronting, relativization, and question particle placement. For example, the nominalization can be fronted using the focus cleft construction, (4).

- (4) [Ny mamaky ity boky ity] no tena sarotra mihitsy (Keenan 1976:(126))  
 DET read.ACT DEM book DEM FOC very difficult indeed  
 ‘To read this book is very difficult indeed.’

The TM example in (1b), in contrast, has a structure in which only the final DP is the matrix subject, as subject diagnostics again clearly show. For example, focus clefting targets only the final DP:

- (5) [Ity boky ity] no sarotra vakina (Keenan 1976:(127))  
 DEM book DEM FOC difficult read.PASS  
 ‘It’s this book that is difficult to read.’

I argue that the movement that takes place in the embedded clause is A' movement, as in English. I argue against an analysis in which the movement is A movement in a restructuring context, as has been proposed for TM in German (Wurmbrand 2001), French (Authier & Reed 2009), and Malay (Selvanathan 2018). First, like English, and unlike the other languages, TM in Malagasy

is unbounded, (6). The verb forms in the embedded clause in (6) are those that are required in other long-distance extraction contexts (see Pearson 2005).

- (6) a. Omby iza no sarotra [nandresena lahatra ny mpiompy hovarotana \_\_\_]?  
 cow which FOC difficult persuade.CT DET farmer sell.PASS  
 ‘Which cow was difficult to persuade the farmer to sell \_\_\_?’  
 b. Valiny iza no sarotra [inoana [fa tsy fantany \_\_\_]]?  
 answer which FOC difficult believe.PASS that NEG know.PASS.3SG  
 ‘Which answer is difficult to believe that he doesn’t know \_\_\_?’

Second, the embedded clause allows a range of clause-level markers such as tense, aspect, modality, and negation, (7), that are not expected in clause union contexts.

- (7) Mety [tsy ho vetivety] izany  
 possible NEG IRR be.quick DEM  
 lit. ‘That is possible not to come quickly.’, ‘It is possible that that may not come quickly.’

Malagasy thus behaves like English and does not distinguish any of the various TM analyses: long movement (Rosenbaum 1967, Postal 1974, Brody 1993), base generation of the matrix subject (Chomsky 1977, Keine & Poole 2017), or smuggling (Hicks 2009). For concreteness, I adopt Chomsky’s (1977) null operator analysis in (2).

Differences in English versus Malagasy grammar explain why subjects undergo TM in Malagasy, (9a) and examples (1b) and (7) above, but not English, (8a). (8a) is ungrammatical because the null operator shown in (8b) cannot be assigned case. PRO must occur in this position, (8c); however, there is then nothing to license the matrix subject since *easy* does not assign an external  $\theta$ -role (Hicks 2017). In Malagasy, only subjects undergo A' movement (Keenan 1976, others). If TM involves an A' movement chain, then it is correctly predicted that TM will necessarily target subjects. Case is available for the null operator in (9b) since the complement clause is not infinitival.

- (8) a. \*The sheep are easy [ \_\_\_ to get lost].  
 b. \*The sheep are easy [<sub>CP</sub> OP<sub>i</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> to [<sub>VP</sub> get lost]]]  
 c. \*The sheep are easy [PRO to get lost].  
 (9) a. Mora very ny ondry  
 easy get.lost DET sheep  
 lit. ‘The sheep are easy to get lost.’, ‘It is easy for the sheep to get lost.’  
 b. Mora [<sub>CP</sub> Op<sub>i</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> very t<sub>i</sub>]] ny ondry

**Conclusion.** This paper argues that Malgasy has an English-like TM construction involving A' movement and not clause union. Differences between English and Malagasy follow from differences in the syntax of case in complement clauses and the grammar of extraction.

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