

HERE’S AN ANALYSIS: MALAGASY PRESENTATIVES*

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1. Introduction

Many languages have a type of utterance often called “presentative”, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) a. *English*
Here comes the bride!
- b. *French* (Morin 1985)
Voilà Pierre qui est encore en train de pousser son vélo.
‘Here is Pierre still pushing his bicycle.’
- c. *Italian* (Wood and Zanuttini to appear)
Ecco una possibile soluzione.
‘Here is a possible solution.’

The syntax of this construction remains generally understudied (but see Morin 1985, Lakoff 1987, Thoms et al. 2019, Wood and Zanuttini 2023). Wood and Zanuttini (2023) (henceforth W&Z) propose a minimal structure for presentatives that includes two heads in the discourse component of the clause (CL_(ocation), CT_(ense)), an anaphoric T, and *v*. The complement to *v* can be a DP, small clause (SC) or full clause (CP).

In this paper, we show that (i) Malagasy presentative words morphologically encode the relevant functional heads, including *v*; (ii) the complement to *v* can be a DP, a small clause (pseudo-relative) or a finite clause (CP). Definiteness effects and word order variations, however, remain a puzzle. This paper is organized as follows: we first present the W&Z analysis in section 2. Sections 2 and 3 lay out the core data from Malagasy and our proposed analysis, which is based on W&Z. In section 5, we discuss some additional complications that arise when the full range of facts are considered, in particular the different word order possibilities and definiteness effects. Section 6 concludes.

2. Wood and Zanuttini (2023)

W&Z explore the syntax and semantics of presentatives, drawing mainly on data from English. In what follows, we focus on their syntactic analysis.

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2.1 Presentatives vs. locatives

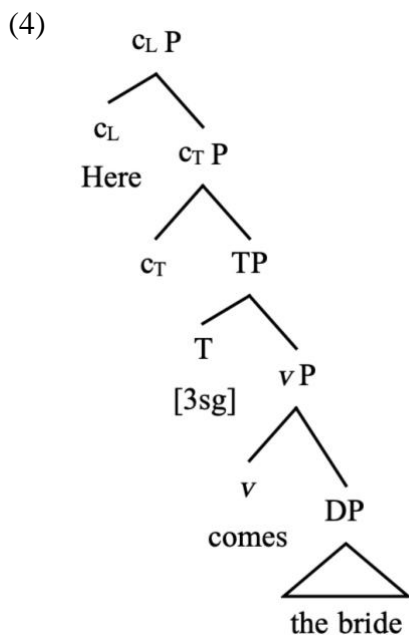
Presentatives bear some initial similarity to locatives, as both use the same lexical items (e.g., *here*, *there* in English). Some researchers (e.g., Thoms et al. 2019) have therefore argued that presentatives are derived from locatives via locative inversion. W&Z, following Lakoff (1987), show that this analysis is not plausible. They present several arguments, but we restrict ourselves to one here that shows not all presentatives have a locative counterpart (W&Z: (24), (25)).

- (2) a. Here's a problem. (presentative)
 b. # A problem is here. (locative)
- (3) a. Here's Jason singing. (presentative)
 b. # Jason singing is here. (locative)

Given the marked status of (2b) and (3b), it is implausible that locatives are the derivational source for presentatives. We refer the reader to the paper for seven other arguments. W&Z therefore propose that presentatives have a distinct syntactic representation.

2.2 Proposal

The structure proposed by W&Z draws on recent innovations that encode the speaker and addressee in the syntax. More specifically, they argue that the left periphery includes two heads, c_T and c_L , that encode the time and location of the speaker of the utterance and that the presentative word is base generated high, in or adjoined to c_L .



The functional head T in presentatives is anaphoric and does not encode an independent reference time. There is also a light verb (*v*), realized in English as *be*, *come*, or *go*. Finally, W&Z discuss how presentatives are used and propose the following pragmatic function:

- (5) Pragmatic function of presentatives (W&Z: (9)):
 Presentatives draw the addressee's attention to the presence of some entity (or set of entities) or the unfolding of an event that is within the perceptual sphere or in the mind of the speaker.

2.3 Cross-linguistic variation

Although the focus of W&Z is on English, they also explore presentatives in other languages and point out areas of variation. For example, while in all languages the presentative word encodes deixis, it can take different surface forms. English uses the locatives *here* and *there*; German uses locatives, but also demonstratives; Italian has a special particle *ecco*; and Serbian uses a distinct form that is related to locatives and demonstratives. Another point of variation lies in the content of *v*, which can be the light verbs *be*, *come*, *go* in English. In Italian, however, W&Z argue there is a null perception verb. Finally, the complement to *v* can vary. While in English, the complement is either a DP or a Small Clause, in Italian the complement can be a DP, a Small Clause, a finite clause, a pseudo-relative or an infinitival. These are the same complements as perception verbs. In the following section, we investigate these three aspects of presentatives in Malagasy and in section 4, we show how we can extend W&Z's analysis to cover the Malagasy facts.

3. Core Malagasy data

Malagasy is a predicate-initial Austronesian language spoken in Madagascar. As shown in (6b,c), it lacks an overt copula and subjects cannot be bare nouns (6b).

- (6) a. Mividy ny akoho i Bao.
 buy DET chicken DET Bao
 'Bao is buying a chicken.'
- b. Vorona ratsy feo *(ny) goaika.
 bird bad voice DET crow
 'The crow is a bird with a bad voice.'
- c. Faly amin 'ny zanany Rasoa.
 Happy with DET child.3 Rasoa
 'Rasoa is proud of her children.'

Relevant to our analysis, relative clauses are introduced by optional *izay*.

- (7) ny vehivavy (izay) mivoaka ny tanana
 DET woman REL leave DET city
 ‘the women who are leaving the city’

Complement clauses are introduced by a different element, *fa*, which is optional when the matrix verb is non-active, as in (8).

- (8) Heveriko (fa) mivoaka ny tanana ny vehivavy.
 think.1SG COMP leave DET city DET woman
 ‘I think that the women are leaving the city.’

3.1 The presentative word

We now turn to the presentatives. As discussed by Rajaona (1972: 632–635, 687–690), presentative words are morphologically complex. As can be seen in Table 1, they are derived from demonstratives (which are built on locatives) via the segment *n*, which appears after the initial *i-*. It should be noted that /n/ + /r/ → [ndr] is a regular phonological rule in the language.

Table 1. Locatives, demonstratives, and presentatives in Malagasy.

	Proximal		Medial		Distal		Neutral	
	-bound	+bound			-bound	+bound	-bound	+bound
LOC	visible	ety	eto	etsy	ery	eroa	eny	eo
	nonvis	aty	ato	atsy	ary	aroa	any	ao
DEM _{sg}	visible	ity	ito	itsy	iry	iroa	iny	io
	nonvis	izaty		izatsy	izary	izaroa	izany	izao
DEM _{pl}	visible	ireto		iretsy	irery	ireroa	ireny	ireo
	nonvis							
PRES _{sg}	visible	inty		intsy	indry	indroa	indry/iny	indro
	nonvis						injany	injao/inao
PRES _{pl}	visible	indreto			indrery	indreroa	indreny	indreo
	nonvis							

While there is some minor inter-speaker variation on which forms are used, Table 1 illustrates the rich array of presentative words in the language. These forms contain up to six morphemes, that encode distance, boundedness (precise vs. vague placement), visibility, number (*-re-* for plural), definiteness (*i-*), and presentative (*-n-*).¹ Note that the non-visible forms *injany*, *injao*, and *inao* are for presenting things that have been heard, rather than seen.

¹ Some forms are not morphologically transparent (e.g., the demonstrative *iny* and the presentative *iny* (not *inny*) and the demonstrative *io* and the presentative *indro* (not *ino*)).

The relationship between locatives, demonstratives, and presentatives can be seen in the following examples. The locative *eto* is illustrated in (9a), the demonstrative *ireto* in (9b), and the presentative *indreto* in (9c).

- (9) a. Eto ny mpianatra. (*e – t – o*: +VIS, PROX, BOUND)
 LOC DET student
 ‘The students are here.’
- b. ireto mpianatra ireto. (*i – re – t – o*: DEF, PL, PROX, BOUND)
 DEM.PL student DEM
 ‘these students’
- c. Indreto ny mpianatra. (*i – n – re – t – o*: DEF, PSTV, PL, PROX, BOUND)
 PSTV.PL DET student
 ‘Here are the students.’

In section 4, we propose that the presentative morpheme *-n* realizes *v*: as we will see there is no light verb in Malagasy presentatives. But we first turn to the basic word order facts.

3.2 Presentative syntax

Similar to languages like Italian, presentatives in Malagasy can involve a DP or a clause (CP with optional *fa*). That is, we can present an entity, as in (10a), or an event, as in (10b).

- (10) a. Inao [DP Rakoto].
 PSTV Rakoto
 ‘Here’s Rakoto.’ (we can hear him)
- b. Indreto [CP (*fa*) mivoaka ny tanana *(ny) vehivavy].
 PSTV.PL COMP leave DET city DET woman
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’

We note here some aspects of presentative utterances that will play an important role in the upcoming discussion. First, the DP in (10b) must be definite, like regular subjects (6b). We will have a more detailed discussion of definiteness in section 5. Second, unlike in English, the predicate is not limited to light verbs.

- (11) Indreo mitangorona ny vahoaka.
 PSTV.PL gather DET citizen
 (lit.) ‘Here gather the citizens.’

Third, the presentative word agrees with the DP, even when this DP is embedded in a clause, as in (10b) above (see section 4.4). Fourth, other word orders are also possible, where the DP precedes the predicate (see section 4.1), as in (12).

- (12) a. Indreto (ny) vehivavy mivoaka ny tanana.
 PSTV.PL DET woman leave DET city
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’
- b. Indreto *(ny) vehivavy fa mivoaka ny tanana.
 PSTV.PL DET woman COMP leave DET city
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’

Fifth, like in English, presentatives in Malagasy cannot be embedded (13).

- (13) *Azonao antoka ve fa indro ilay tsara?
 can.2SG guarantee Q COMP PSTV DEF good
 ‘Are you sure that here is the right one?’

Finally, we suggest that despite their position in the clause, presentative words in Malagasy are not predicates. They cannot, for example, be modified by typical pre-predicate particles, such as *samy* ‘each’.

- (14) *Samy indreto ny ankizy
 each PSTV.PL DET child
 ‘Here are each of the children.’

In the following section, we present our analysis with the aim to explain the different word orders and the definiteness restrictions.

4. Analysis

For our analysis, we essentially adopt W&Z’s proposed structure, presented in (15).

- (15)
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- ```

graph TD
 CLP[CLP] --- CL[CL]
 CLP --- CT_P[CT P]
 CL --- indreto[indreto]
 CT_P --- CT[CT]
 CT_P --- TP[TP]
 TP --- T[T]
 TP --- vP[vP]
 T --- 3pl["[3pl]"]
 vP --- v[v]
 vP --- CP_DP[CP/DP]
 v --- n["-n-"]
 CP_DP --- triangle((...))

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As in their analysis, the presentative word appears in  $CL$ . In what follows, we discuss the nature of the complement to  $v$ . We show that the complement can be a DP (16a), a CP (16b), or a Small Clause (17c) (see section 4.1).

- (16) a. Inao [ $DP$  Rakoto].  
 PSTV Rakoto  
 ‘Here’s Rakoto.’ (we can hear him)
- b. Indreto [ $CP$  (fa) mivoaka ny tanana \*(ny) vehivavy].  
 PSTV.PL COMP leave DET city DET woman  
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’

We propose that if the predicate appears before the DP, as in (16b), there is no structural ambiguity: this is an example of a CP complement (with optional *fa*). As can be seen in this example, the embedded subject DP must be definite (like all subjects, but see section 5 for discussion). We next turn to alternative word orders.

#### 4.1 Alternative word orders

To account for presentatives where the predicate appears after the DP, we propose that there is structural ambiguity. First, the complement can be a DP modified by a relative clause (with optional *izay*, as in (17a)). Second, the complement can be a pseudo-relative, as in (17b), to be discussed in more detail in section 4.2. Third, the complement can be a CP where the subject has been extracted (again with optional *fa*), as in (17c). This unusual option (from the perspective of Malagasy) will be described in section 4.3.

- (17) a. Relative clause (optional *izay*)  
 Indreto [ $DP$  (ny) vehivavy [ $REL$   $Op_i$  (izay) [ $TP$  mivoaka ny tanana  $t_i$ ]]].  
 PSTV.PL DET woman REL leave DET city  
 ‘Here are (the) women who are leaving the city.’
- b. Pseudo-relative (small clause) (no overt comp)  
 Indreto [ $DP$   $\emptyset$  [ $CP$  (ny) vehivavy  $\emptyset$  [ $TP$  mivoaka ny tanana  $pro$  ]]].  
 PSTV.PL DET woman leave DET city  
 ‘Here are (the) women leaving the city.’
- c. CP complement with movement of subject (optional *fa*)  
 Indreto [ $XP$  \*(ny) vehivavy $_i$  [ $CP$  (fa) mivoaka ny tanana  $t_i$  ]]].  
 PSTV.PL DET woman COMP leave DET city  
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’

Before turning to the other structures, we mention here the core properties of the relative clause option. Due to the presence of the DP complement, the presentative is interpreted as presenting an individual (and not an event). As mentioned earlier, the relative clause

marker *izay* is always optional. And, finally the DP can be indefinite, just like simple DP complements to the presentative, as in (18) (but see section 5 for more discussion).

- (18) Indreto olana telo.  
 PSTV.PL problem three  
 ‘Here are three problems.’

We now turn to one of the other possible structures: pseudo-relatives.

#### 4.2 Pseudo-relatives

Pseudo-relatives have been widely discussed in the literature, principally for Romance languages. We adopt the structure proposed by Moulton and Grillo (2015) where the pseudo-relative is a DP headed by an empty D head that selects for a CP. There is a DP in Spec, CP. We illustrate this structure in (19) for a Malagasy presentative.

- (19) Indreto [DP  $\emptyset$  [CP (ny) vehivavy  $\emptyset$  [TP mivoaka ny tanana pro ]]].  
 PSTV.PL DET woman leave DET city  
 ‘Here are (the) women leaving the city.’

In the pseudo-relative, an indefinite DP is permitted (unlike the DP in a complement CP (16b), but like simple DP complements (18) and relatives (17a)). Unlike a simple DP complement or relative, the pseudo-relative is interpreted as an event or situation. The utterance in (19) is therefore understood not as presenting an individual, but rather an event.

We note that the pseudo-relative structure arguably also appears as the complement to perception verbs (Pearson 2018) (20a) and to the existential verb *misy* (Paul 1998, 2000) (20b).<sup>2</sup>

- (20) a. Nahita [ (ny) mpianatra namaky boky ] ny vehivavy.  
 saw DET student read book DET woman  
 ‘The woman saw (the) students reading a book.’
- b. Misy [ ankizy telo mihinana vary ].  
 exist child three eat rice  
 ‘There are three children eating rice.’

We do not pursue an analysis of these constructions here.

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<sup>2</sup> Neither Pearson (2018) nor Paul (1998, 2000) argue for pseudo-relatives in these examples. Pearson argues for a truncated clause that is lacking the position for predicate fronting. Paul argues for a small clause but remains vague about the precise nature of the constituent.



### 4.3 Movement out of CP

The third possible structure is the most surprising from the perspective of Malagasy grammar. We propose that in examples such as (21), there is a CP but the subject moves out of the CP to a position immediately following the presentative.

- (21) Indreto [XP \*(ny) vehivavy<sub>i</sub> [CP t<sub>i</sub> (fa) mivoaka ny tanana t<sub>i</sub> ]].  
 PSTV.PL DET woman COMP leave DET city  
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’

This type of construction is otherwise unattested in Malagasy.<sup>3</sup> For present purposes, we propose that the movement is to Spec, DP via the intermediate Spec, CP, as illustrated in (22).

- (22) Indreto [DP \*(ny) vehivavy<sub>i</sub> [CP t<sub>i</sub> (fa) mivoaka ny tanana t<sub>i</sub> ]].  
 PSTV.PL DET woman COMP leave DET city  
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’

This type of movement from Spec, CP is visible in long-distance relative clause formation, where we see the optional *fa* in the embedded CP (23).

- (23) ny vehivavy [CP Op<sub>i</sub> (izay)/\*fa [ ataony  
 DET woman REL/COMP do.3  
 [CP t<sub>i</sub> (fa) [ mivoaka ny tanana t<sub>i</sub> ]]]  
 COMP leave DET city  
 ‘the women who s/he thinks are leaving the city’

A similar CP is proposed in Svenonius’ (1998) analysis of *it*-clefts, where the Spec, CP contains a trace rather than an operator. According to Svenonius, this CP is “anchored” to *it* in clefts. We propose that the presentative word itself does the anchoring in presentatives in Malagasy. As a result, this type of CP is not possible in existentials or with perception predicates (because there is no anchor), as can be seen by the ungrammaticality of the examples in (24).

- (24) a. \*Nahita [ (ny) mpianatra fa namaky boky ] ny vehivavy.  
 saw DET student COMP read book DET woman  
 ‘The woman saw (the) students reading a book.’

<sup>3</sup> One construction that may be similar is the “bodyguard” (Keenan 1976). When an adjunct, such as *omaly* ‘yesterday’, is clefted, the subject may also be fronted.

(i) Omaly Rabe no nanasa lovia maloto.  
 yesterday Rabe NO wash dish dirty  
 ‘It was yesterday that Rabe washed dirty dishes.’

Perhaps the movement of *Rabe* in (i) is parallel to the movement in (22).

- b. \*Misy [ ankizy telo fa mihinana vary ].  
 exist child three COMP eat rice  
 ‘There are three children eating rice.’

Moreover, this CP does not appear in clefts in Malagasy, as there is no pronominal anchor (note that clefts in Malagasy involve a particle (*no*) and not the complementizer *fa*).

- (25) Ny vehivavy no/\*fa mivoaka ny tanana.  
 DET woman NO/COMP leave DET city  
 ‘It’s the women who are leaving the city.’

In sum, there are three possible DP complements in Malagasy presentatives. First, a “normal” DP, which may carry a relative clause modifier. Second, a pseudo-relative (DP with a CP complement, DP in Spec, CP, no movement). Third, an unusual DP (DP with a CP complement, DP moves to Spec, DP via Spec, CP). The three structures are sketched out below.

- (26) a. [DP D N [CP Op<sub>i</sub> (izay) [TP ... t<sub>i</sub> ] ] ]                    relative clause  
 b. [DP  $\emptyset$  [CP DP  $\emptyset$  [TP ... pro ] ] ]                    pseudo-relative  
 c. [DP DP  $\emptyset$  [CP t<sub>i</sub> (fa) [TP ... t<sub>i</sub> ] ] ]                    DP movement out of CP

#### 4.4 Agreement

Before moving on to a more detailed discussion of the different word orders and the interactions with definiteness, we consider the mechanisms involved in number agreement. Recall that the presentative word agrees in number with the DP (see Table 1). What accounts for this agreement when the DP in question appears embedded within a pseudo-relative or a CP? We repeat relevant examples in (27).

- (27) a. Pseudo-relative  
 Indreto [DP  $\emptyset$  [CP (ny) vehivavy  $\emptyset$  [TP mivoaka ny tanana pro ] ] ].  
 PSTV.PL                    DET woman                    leave                    DET city  
 ‘Here are (the) women leaving the city.’
- b. CP complement  
 Indreto [CP (fa) mivoaka ny tanana \*(ny) vehivavy].  
 PSTV.PL    COMP    leave    DET city                    DET woman  
 ‘Here are the women leaving the city.’

We assume that the probe (matrix T) can interact with the DP or CP complement to  $\nu$  but will continue to probe for an appropriate DP goal (one with number features) (Deal 2015, Halpert 2018).

## 5. Definiteness puzzle

We conclude with a discussion of definiteness effects. In what follows, we have put the relevant DP. Recall that Malagasy subjects must be “definite” (there are no bare noun subjects), as seen in (28).

- (28) \*Mivoaka ny tanana **vehivavy vitsivitsy**.  
 leave DET city woman few  
 ‘Few women are leaving the city.’

This definiteness restriction initially appears to be true of presentatives, as shown by the examples in (29).

- (29) a. \*Indreny mivoaka ny tanana **vehivavy**.  
 PSTV.PL leave DET city woman  
 ‘Here are women leaving the city.’
- b. \*Indreny **vehivavy** fa mivoaka ny tanana.  
 PSTV.PL woman COMP leave DET city  
 ‘Here are women leaving the city.’

The restriction in presentatives is different, however: if the DP is modified (by a quantifier or a relative clause), it doesn’t require a determiner (Rajaona 1972: 689). Relevant examples are given in (30) (compare in particular (28) and (30b)).

- (30) a. Indreto **olana telo**.  
 PSTV.PL problem three  
 ‘Here are three problems.’
- b. Indreny mivoaka ny tanana **vehivavy vitsivitsy**.  
 PSTV.PL leave DET city woman few  
 ‘Here are a few women leaving the city.’

While we do not have a formal account of this difference, we suggest that the presentative “licenses” the indefinite (in some way yet to be determined). There is, however, an exception to this licensing: when the DP moves out of CP it must have a determiner. In other words, the strict definiteness restriction seen in (28) resurfaces in (31).

- (31) \*Indreny **vehivavy vitsivitsy**; [ fa mivoaka ny tanana  $t_i$  ].  
 PSTV.PL woman few COMP leave DET city

The reasons behind this restriction remain mysterious, but it appears that movement out of CP un-licenses the DP (despite there still being agreement between the presentative word and the moved DP). We leave a proper analysis of definiteness for future work.

## 6. Conclusion

While there remain many aspects of presentatives that require deeper analysis, we suggest that this investigation of a “minor” type of clause (e.g., presentatives), shines a new light on the syntax of the language. For example, we now have stronger evidence for pseudo-relatives in Malagasy. In addition, Malagasy provides evidence in favour of W&Z’s analysis, including the material in the left periphery. Intriguingly, the study of presentatives provides motivation for a CP predicate, an otherwise little-known construction on the language. Definiteness effects remain largely unexplained.

There are further remaining puzzles. First, demonstratives can also act as presentatives.

- (32) a. Ity akondro.  
 DEM banana  
 ‘Here’s a banana.’
- b. Ireo fa mamangy ny olona.  
 DEM.PL COMP visit DET person  
 ‘Here are people visiting.’

Second, while resisting regular embedding, presentatives can be embedded in clefts.

- (33) Rakoto no inty tonga.  
 Rakoto NO PSTV arrive  
 ‘Here is Rakoto who is coming.’  
 (lit.) ‘It’s Rakoto who here comes.’

We hope in future research to be able to extend our analysis to these puzzles.

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