

## Backward Object Control: Against an Empty Category Analysis

**Introduction.** Backward Control (BC) is a control construction in which the non-overt controllee is structurally superior to the overt controller, as in the hypothetical *I persuaded PRO<sub>i</sub> [Sandy<sub>i</sub> to leave]*. Recent work has established the empirical reality of BC: one finds Backward Subject Control in Japanese (Kuroda 1978), Tsez (Polinsky & Potsdam 2002), and Mizo (Subbarao 2003) and Backward Object Control in Brazilian Portuguese (Farrell 1995) and Korean (Monahan 2003). This paper documents a case of Backward Object Control in the Austronesian language Malagasy and explores the theoretical consequences. I argue that a base-generated empty category (*pro*) approach (Cormack & Smith 2004) is untenable. I propose an updated Minimalist analysis based on Polinsky & Potsdam 2002 that relies on analyzing the control relation using movement (Hornstein 1999).

**The phenomenon.** Malagasy is a predicate-initial language in which one argument of the verb must be externalized to a clause-final position (Pearson 2005). The thematic role of this argument is marked by morphology on the verb. If the agent is externalized, the verb has active topic (AT) morphology, yielding VXS word order, (1a). If a theme or oblique element is externalized, then the verb has theme topic (TT) or oblique topic (OT) morphology, (1b), and the word order is VSX.

Malagasy has typical object control verbs like *persuade*, *ask*, *force*, *remind*, and *tell*. As in English, these verbs select three arguments: an agent, a theme, and a clause. Evidence for this argument structure comes from well-known diagnostics, including non-control uses, selectional restrictions, idioms, and passive-active non-synonymy. For example, (2) shows that *force* places selectional restrictions on the theme. When these control verbs are used in their oblique topic forms, they show an alternation in the position of this theme. In ordinary control, the theme is realized as the matrix clause direct object, (3a). In backward object control (BOC), the theme appears as the subject of the complement clause, (3b). The core properties of the BOC structure are (A) the overt controller is structurally in the embedded clause and (B) the control verb nonetheless assigns a  $\theta$ -role to a silent object/theme controllee.

It is clear from the word order and the verb-initial nature of Malagasy clauses that the overt DP is in the embedded clause in BOC, (3b). The structure is thus bi-clausal, which is further supported by the possibility of independent negation or temporal specifications for each clause, (4). Evidence that the matrix clause contains an unpronounced syntactic entity corresponding to the theme is equally strong. Assuming that  $\theta$ -role assignment is local, theory-internal considerations require that there be a syntactic object that bears this  $\theta$ -role. Empirically we see that the null element licenses reciprocal morphology on the control verb, (5), and it can alternate with an overt DP, (6). I conclude that the verbs under consideration instantiate BOC.

**Analysis.** Cormack & Smith 2004 argue that BOC should be analyzed with a base-generated empty category in the matrix clause object position. The unpronounced theme of the object control verb is *pro*. As shown in (7), *pro* must be base-generated below the complement clause so that it does not c-command its antecedent and trigger a Condition C violation.

For Malagasy, this analysis cannot be right. First, Malagasy is simply not an object pro-drop language. Second, an overt pronoun in place of *pro* is impossible, (8), while reversing the pronoun and the R-expression is grammatical, (6). This contrast indicates that the theme does c-command the complement clause, contra the *pro* analysis. Finally, the *pro* analysis predicts that a variable binding configuration between the controller and controllee should be illicit since there is no c-command. This is incorrect: the overt DP in BOC can be a non-referential wh-phrase, quantifier, NPI, or reflexive, (9), which must bind the controllee. I therefore reject an empty category analysis of BOC.

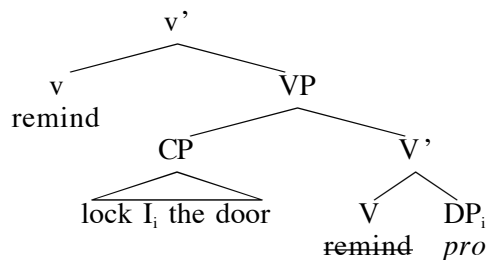
Instead I follow Polinsky & Potsdam 2002 and Monahan 2003 in proposing that Malagasy BOC can be successfully analyzed using control-as-movement (Hornstein 1999). The controller-controllee relationship is derived via movement of the overt DP from one clause to another. These researchers argue that backward control results when the control movement occurs covertly. If the DP does not raise into the matrix clause until LF, we obtain the desired “backward” word order at Spell Out. The syntactic and thematic consequences of a theme argument obtain at LF when the DP moves into the matrix clause. At LF, ordinary and backward control structures are identical. I update the analysis with an implementation in a version of the Minimalist Program without covert movement.

**Conclusion.** This paper documents and analyzes a robust instance of BOC in the non-pro-drop language Malagasy. It offers arguments against a base-generation, empty category approach to backward control and, by extension, control phenomena in general. It shows how a movement approach to control successfully accounts for the data. The paper will go on to explore the difficult empirical question of whether there are any differences between backward and forward control or whether they are simply two structures in free variation.

## Data and References

- (1) a. hanidy ny varavarana Rasoa  
lock.AT the door Rasoa  
b. hohidian- dRasoa ny varavarana  
lock.TT- Rasoa the door  
'Rasoa will lock the door.'
- (2) a. #nanery ny vato hianjera ao amin' ilay trano aho  
force.AT the rocks fall.AT on that house I  
b. #nanere- ko ny vato hianjerana ilay trano  
force.OT- I the rocks fall.TT that house  
'#I forced the rocks to fall on that house.'
- (3) a. nampahatsiahivin- dRasoa **ahy** [hohidiana ny varavarana ORDINARY CONTROL  
remind.OT Rasoa **me** lock.TT the door  
b. nampahatsiahivin- dRasoa [hohidia-**ko** ny varavarana BACKWARD CONTROL  
remind.OT Rasoa lock.TT **I** the door  
'Rasoa reminded me to lock the door.'
- (4) a. nampahatsiahivi- ko [**tsy** hambaran- dRasoa ny tsiambarateloko  
remind.OT I NEG reveal.TT Rasoa the my.secret  
'I reminded Rasoa not to reveal my secret.'  
b. **tsy** nampahatsiahivi- ko [hambaran- dRasoa ny tsiambarateloko  
NEG remind.OT I reveal.TT Rasoa the my.secret  
'I did not remind Rasoa to reveal my secret.'
- (5) n-**if**-anampian' ny mpianatra Δ [hovakia-ny ity boky ity  
RECIP-help.OT the students read.TT- they this book this  
'The students helped each other to read this book.'
- (6) nampahatsiahivi- ko **ny mpiompy** [hovonoi- **ny** ny omby  
remind.OT I **the farmer** kill.TT **he** the cow  
'I reminded the farmer to kill the cow.'

(7)



- (8) \*nampahatsiahivi- ko **azy<sub>i</sub>** [hovonoin' **ny mpiompy<sub>i</sub>** ny omby  
remind.OT I **him** kill.TT **the farmer** the cow  
'(I reminded the farmer to kill the cow.)'
- (9) a. nampahatsiahivi- ko [hovonoin' **iza** ny omby?  
remind.OT I kill.TT **who** the cow  
'Who did I remind to kill the cow?'  
b. nampahatsiahivi- ko [hovakian' **ny mpianatra rehetra** ity boky ity  
remind.OT I read.TT **the student every** this book this  
'I reminded every student to read this book.'

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