

Tense Marked Obliques in Malagasy

Matt Pearson
Reed College

In Malagasy, spatial deictic adverbs and certain prepositions (referred to here as 'obliques') can take the prefix *t-*. When the oblique functions as the main predicate, *t-* marks past tense (1b) while its absence marks present tense (1a). It is usually claimed that within a verbal predicate, an oblique must 'agree' with the verb in tense: the oblique is *t*-marked if the verb is past tense, and bare otherwise. However, recent investigation shows that while non-past tense verbs require bare obliques, past tense verbs take either *t*-marked or bare obliques. When the oblique denotes an instrument or location, *t*-marking yields a simple past reading (2a), while absence of *t-* results in a past habitual reading (2b). However, when the oblique expresses a goal, absence of *t-* seems to mark 'recent past'--e.g., in (3) *any* is used if the children are no longer at school, and *tany* if they are at school now, or are on their way.

In this paper I describe the various *t*-marking patterns in detail, and explore proposals for a unified structural account. For example, I suggest that goal obliques are (contained within) resultative verb complements, which include a temporal argument representing the terminal state (endpoint) of the motion event. The oblique in (3) is *t*-marked when that terminal state properly precedes the utterance time, and bare when it does not precede the utterance time. I propose that *t-* is licensed within the scope of a [+PAST] tense head, while its covert counterpart (on bare obliques) must be outside the scope of [+PAST] (cf. Stowell 1996). In (3a), both verb and oblique are within the scope of [+PAST], such that the motion event and terminal state are both over: the theme reached the goal and is now no longer there. In (3b), by contrast, the resultative complement scopes outside [+PAST]: hence the terminal state is interpreted as following (by defining the endpoint for) the motion event, but not properly preceding the utterance time--i.e., the change event is over, but the resulting state is not: the theme has reached the goal and is still there, or is currently on the way there. I speculate on how a scope-based analysis might extend to cover the aspectual contrast found with locative/instrumental obliques.

- (1)a. Any anatin' ny ala ny gidro
there inside DET forest DET lemur
'The lemur is in the forest'
- b. Tany anatin' ny ala ny gidro
T-there inside DET forest DET lemur
'The lemur was in the forest'
- (2)a. Nandidy mofo tamin' ny antsy i Naivo
PST-cut bread T-with DET knife DET Naivo
'Naivo cut bread with the knife'
- b. Nandidy mofo amin' ny antsy i Naivo
PST-cut bread with DET knife DET Naivo
'Naivo would/used to cut bread with the knife'

- (3) Nalefan' ny vehivavy (t)any am-pianarana ny ankizy
PST-send DET woman T-there OBL-school DET children
'The woman sent the children to school'

REFERENCES

Stowell, T. 1996. The phrase structure of tense. *Phrase structure and the lexicon*, ed. J. Rooryck and L. Zaring. Kluwer.