A principled account of Malagasy deverbal nouns
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The paper presents an analysis of Malagasy deverbal nouns. I argue that a prefix \( f \) that appears on these nouns is part of the verbal structure that is present but null on verbal forms. I assume the phase theory of Chomsky (2001) and the generalized doubly-filled \( \text{COMP} \) filter of Sportiche (1992) and Koopman and Szabolcsi (2000).

In Malagasy, a prefix \( f \) appears on deverbal nouns; this is exemplified in (1), where the nominal forms in (1a'-b') are the nominal counterparts of (1a-b), respectively. Given this pattern, it is not unreasonable to assume that \( f \) is a nominalizing affix.

(1)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{m-an-adina} & \quad \text{a'.} & \quad \text{f-an-adina} \\
& \quad \text{TOP-V.CAU-question} & \quad & \quad \text{\( f \)-V.CAU-question} \\
& \quad \text{‘to ask’} & \quad & \quad \text{‘questionnaire’} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{an-vono-ana} & \quad \text{b'.} & \quad \text{f-an-vono-ana} \\
& \quad \text{V.CAU-kill-TOP} & \quad & \quad \text{\( f \)-V.CAU-kill-TOP} \\
& \quad \text{‘to kill’} & \quad & \quad \text{‘tool used for killing’}
\end{align*}
\]

However, there is a problem with such an analysis in that there is a regular paradigmatic gap in the distribution of \( f \). Malagasy verbs have three forms, here referred to as Actor Topic (AT), Circumstantial Topic (CT), and Theme Topic (TT); the form of the verb determines which argument in the clause appears in the sentence-final subject position. Of the three forms, AT and CT freely accept \( f \)-nominalization (shown in 2a'-b'), whereas TT forms categorically disallow \( f \)-nominalization.

(2)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{AT:} & \quad \text{CT:} & \quad \text{TT:} \\
\text{a.} & \quad \text{m-an-adina} & \quad & \quad \text{b.} & \quad \text{an-adina-ana} & \quad & \quad \text{c.} & \quad \text{adina-ina} \\
& \quad \text{TOP-V.CAU-question} & \quad & \quad & \quad \text{V.CAU-question-TOP} & \quad & \quad \text{question-TOP} \\
& \quad \text{‘to ask’} & \quad & \quad & \quad \text{‘to ask’} & \quad & \quad \text{‘to ask’} \\
\text{a'.} & \quad \text{f-an-adina} & \quad & \quad \text{b'.} & \quad \text{f-an-adina-ana} & \quad & \quad \text{c'.} & \quad \text{*f-adina-ina/ana} \\
& \quad \text{\( f \)-V.CAU-question} & \quad & \quad & \quad \text{\( f \)-V.CAU-question-TOP} & \quad & \quad \text{\( f \)-question-TOP} \\
& \quad \text{‘questionnaire’} & \quad & \quad & \quad \text{‘exam’} & \quad & \quad ---
\end{align*}
\]

I argue that the prefix \( f \) that appears on deverbal nouns is not a nominalizer, but is rather part of the verbal complex, a functional head that cross-linguistically selects for little \( v \). A candidate for the category of the head is Flav(or), a functional category proposed by Key (2010) to encode the semantic “flavor” of little \( v \) in Turkish. As a causative (and assuming that Malagasy bundles Voice and Cause in the sense of Pylkkänen 2008), it is Flav that introduces an external argument in its specifier. Independent evidence suggests that Flav is a phase head, and Flav\( \text{P} \) a phase.

The question arises, then, as to why \( f \) is not pronounced in verbs. This question can be answered in utilizing the doubly-filled \( \text{COMP} \) filter (3):
(3) **Generalized Doubly-filled COMP filter:**

If H is a head containing some feature F, *[HP XP [H’ H° … ] ] when XP and H° both overtly encode F.

If the generalized doubly-filled COMP filter applies at the completion of a phase, which FlavP is claimed to be, then Flav is null to prevent violation of the filter. This is schematized in (4):

(4)  
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         Phase Boundary
           ↑
         TP
   T   FlavP
     ↓   ↓
   t_i  Flav'
     ↓   ↓
   Flav  vP
       ↓   ↓
    v    …
```

Under this analysis, the distribution of Flav is predicted. In nouns, argument structure is impoverished; in the cases of nominals, no external argument is introduced, and Flav is pronounced. TT nominals are also predicted to be impossible, as they lack the prefixes identifiable as little v for which Flav selects.

Flav also appears when an additional causative is affixed to a verb, as in (5). In these cases, there is no overt addition of another argument (and express specification thereof is impossible). Here, the overt Flav introduces no argument, as is thus pronounced. The outermost Flav introduces an argument, and is thus unpronounced to satisfy the doubly-filled COMP filter.

(5)  
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a.    m-Ø-an-sambotra  b.    m-Ø-an-fl-an-sambotra
   TOP-FLAV-v-caught     TOP-FLAV-v-FLAV-v-caught
   ‘to catch X’            ‘to have X caught’
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The analysis proposed here then utilizes an analysis of Turkish causatives to explain the distribution of Malagasy Flav, which has previously been considered to be a language-specific trait of Malagasy verbs.

Word count: 582

References

