Spec-CP as an A-position: an argument from hyperraising in Mongolian

1. Overview. In Mongolian, the subject of embedded finite clauses can bear NOM or ACC case.

(1) Bat [margaash **Dulmaa** / **Dulmaa-g** nom unsh-n gej] khel-sen.
Bat [tomorrow Dulmaa.NOM / Dulmaa-ACC book read-N.PST COMP] say-PST
'Bat said that Dulmaa will read a book tomorrow.'

I will propose in (6) that the ACC version is derived by movement of the embedded subject to Spec-CP. From that position, the embedded subject can receive ACC from the matrix *v* without violating the PIC. Furthermore, movement to Spec-CP extends the binding domain of a reflexive: if a reflexive is attached to the embedded subject, it can only be bound by the matrix subject if the embedded subject is ACC. Finally, movement to Spec-CP explains why the ACC can move into the matrix clause: Spec-CP may act as an escape hatch into the matrix clause. If this analysis is correct, the relevance of Mongolian ACC subjects is that movement through Spec-CP may feed the creation of new antecedents for binding:

(2) a. Öör-iin-kh n'$_{*i/j}$ bagsh **oyuutan bür(-iig)**$_i$ sain oyuutan gej khel-sen.
self-GEN-EPTH POSS.3 teacher student every(-ACC) good student COMP say-PST
'Their teacher said that every student is a good student.' **variable binding*

b. **Oyuutan bür-iig**$_i$ öör-iin-kh n'$_i$ bagsh [*t* sain oyuutan gej] khel-sen.
student every-ACC self-GEN-EPTH POSS.3 teacher [*t* good student COMP] say-PST
'For every student *x*, *x*'s teacher said that *x* is a good student.' *✓variable binding*

This is a signature property of A-movement. Spec-CP would have to be an A-position, contrary to the common assumption that this is inherently an $\overline{\text{A}}$-position. We could, instead, assume that syntactic positions are defined by the features that create them (Obata & Epstein:2011; van Urk:2015).

2. ACC subjects are embedded arguments. The ACC subject in (1) follows an embedded adverb, like the NOM subject. Given the absence of long distance scrambling of adverbs in Mongolian, we may conclude that both subjects in (1) are inside the embedded clause. However, it may not always be clear whether the ACC DP is the embedded subject or a matrix, proleptic argument (Salzmann:2017, *i.a.*). ACC subjects can be argued to be base-generated inside the embedded clause based on *(i)* clausal scrambling that includes the ACC subject (not shown); *(ii)* idiom preservation (not shown); *(iii)* the possibility of interpreting nonreferential DPs in the scope of the matrix predicate (3); *(iv)* NPI licensing (4), which must be licensed by clause-mate negation in Mongolian.

(3) Lusyn dagina bodit endalrach bai-deg-güi ch, Navchaa [**lusyn dagina(-iig)** irch
mermaid real in.life COP-HAB-NEG CH Navchaa [mermaid(-ACC) come.FUT
bai-n gej] khel-sen.
AUX-N.PST COMP] say-PST
'Although mermaids don't exist, Navchaa said that a mermaid is coming.'

(4) Nara **khen** ch / **khen-iig** ch iree*(-güi) gej khel-sen.
Nara who.NOM CH / who-ACC CH come.PST*(-NEG) COMP say-PST
'Nara said that nobody came.'

3. ACC is higher than NOM. Even though ACC subjects are base-generated inside the embedded clause, they occupy a higher position than NOM subjects, which are presumably in Spec-TP. The reflexive possessive *-ee* obeys Condition A. If it is contained in an embedded NOM subject, the sentence is ungrammatical. This could be explained if the embedded clause is a binding domain for the NOM subject, preventing the matrix subject from binding it. If the embedded subject is ACC, however, the result is grammatical. As in (1), the ACC subject in (5) follows an embedded adverb, suggesting that it still is in the embedded clause. If the ACC subject were occupying the same position as the NOM (Spec-TP) the former should be as bad as the latter. What position could an ACC subject occupy, so that it is inside the embedded clause, but also bound by the matrix subject? I suggest that **Spec-CP** is this position.

(5) Bat [margaash **egch*(-iig)-ee** ir-ne gej] khel-sen.
Bat [tomorrow sister*(-ACC)-REFL.POSS come-N.PST COMP] say-PST
'Bat$_i$ said that his$_{i/*j}$ sister is coming tomorrow.'

The same argument can be made based Condition B (not shown). If the embedded subject is a 3rd person NOM pronoun, it can be coindexed with the matrix subject. If it is ACC, it must not.

4. Analysis: movement to Spec-CP. Following Tanaka:2002, Takeuchi:2010, Shklovsky & Sudo:2014,

Bondarenko:2017, Zyman:2017, Wurmbrand:2017,2018, *i.a.*, I propose that ACC subjects of finite clauses in Mongolian are derived by movement to Spec-CP. Following Takeuchi:2010 and Wurmbrand:2017,2018, I also propose that this movement is triggered by ϕ-features in COMP, (6). This allows the subject to receive ACC from the matrix *v* and for it to extend its binding domain, (5). (Case assignment is not discussed here, but see e.g. Kornfilt & Preminger:2015.)

(6) $[_{matrix} \ldots v_{ACC} \ldots [_{CP}\ \mathbf{DP}_{ACC}\ [_{C'}\ \text{COMP}_{\phi}\ [_{TP}\ \sout{\text{DP}}\ [_{T'}\text{T} \ldots]]]]$

4.1. A prediction: movement into the matrix clause. ACC subjects can also be pronounced inside the matrix clause, as we can see in (7) and also in (9a), where ACC is obligatory if the DP interpreted as the embedded subject precedes a matrix adverb.

(7) {**Dulmaa-g**} Bat {**Dulmaa-g**} {**Dulmaa**} nom unsh-n gej hel-sen.
{Dulmaa-ACC} Bat {Dulmaa-ACC} {Dulmaa.NOM} book read-N.PST COMP say-PST
'Bat said that Dulmaa will read a book.'

This is hyperraising (cf. Ura:1994, Tanaka:2002, Yoon:2007, Halpert & Zeller:2015, Bondarenko:2017, Deal:2017, Zyman:2017, *i.a.*). When pronounced inside the matrix clause, ACC subjects move there from the embedded clause. This conclusion is supported by the fact that an ACC DP pronounced in the matrix clause cannot be associated with a gap inside an island like a coordinated clause, *i.a.*:

(8) *__Nokhoi-g__ Nara [muur-iig bömbög-öör toglo-dog baa *t* yas-aar toglo-dog gej] khel-sen.
dog-ACC Nara [cat-ACC ball-INSTR play-HAB CONJ *t* bone-INSTR play-HAB COMP] say-PST
Int.: 'Nara said that the cat played with a ball and the dog played with a bone.'

However, other DPs cannot long distance-scramble into the matrix clause. In (9), a NOM subject cannot precede a matrix adverb nor be the leftmost DP. The same holds of embedded arguments that are lower than the subject, like dative DPs and unmarked or differentially marked objects (not shown).

(9) a. Bat {**Dorj*(-iig)**} chang-aar [{✓**Dorj**} sain seheetin gej] khel-sen.
Bat {Dorj*(-ACC)} loud-INSTR [{✓Dorj.NOM} good noble COMP] say-PST
'Bat said loudly that Dorj is good and noble.'

b. *__Dorj__ Bat [*t* Dulmaa-d nom-oo ög-sön gej] med-n.
Dorj.NOM Bat [*t* Dulmaa-DAT book-REFL.POSS give-PST COMP] know-N.PST

The Spec-CP-based analysis in (6) helps explain why only ACC subjects can move into the matrix clause. Embedded subjects are the closest goal to the ϕ-features in COMP. They receive ACC only when they move to Spec-CP. Having moved there, they can, as a byproduct, *locally* move into the matrix clause, overriding a ban on LD-scrambling.

5. Spec-CP as an A-position. When moved to a position before the matrix subject, an embedded ACC subject can create new antecedents for binding (2b) and it does not induce a *WCO* violation:

(10) {**Dorj-iig**}$_i$ tüünii$_{i/j}$ eej margaash {**Dorj(-iig)**}$_i$ ir-ne gej khel-sen.
{Dorj-ACC} 3SG.GEN mother tomorrow {Dorj(-ACC)} come-N.PST COMP say-PST
'His/Her/Their mother said that Dorj is coming tomorrow.'

By contrast, *Wh*-movement (an instance of $\overline{\text{A}}$-movement) does induces a *WCO* violation, (11). That *Wh*-phrases in Mongolian move covertly can be inferred from the fact that they cannot be inside islands (e.g. coordinated clause (12), *i.a.*) and the fact that embedded *Wh*-phrases take matrix scope (not shown).

(11) Tüünii$_{*i/j}$ eej **khen(-iig)**$_i$ geriin daalgavar-aa khii-sen gej khel-sen be?
3SG.GEN mother who(-ACC) homework-REFL.POSS do-PST COMP say-pst Q
'Who did their mother say did the homework?' *(cf. (10))*

(12) *Nara [muur bömbög-öör toglo-dog baa nokhoi **yu-g-oor** toglo-dog gej] khel-sen.
Nara [cat.NOM ball-INSTR play-HAB CONJ dog.NOM what-EPTH-INSTR play-HAB COMP] say-PST

If* ACC *subjects move to Spec-CP, we could conclude that this can be an A-position, otherwise we would make wrong predictions about (2b) and (10). We can assume that syntactic positions are not inherently A or $\overline{\text{A}}$, but that they are defined by the features that create them (Obata & Epstein:2011, van Urk:2015). Spec-CP in Mongolian HR can be an A-position because COMP in (6) has ϕ-features that trigger the movement of the closest DP. There is empirical evidence that HR can feed A-movement (Tanaka:2002) and it has been proposed that Spec-CP can be an A-position in HR (Takeuchi:2010, Wurmbrand:2017,2018, who I follow in (6)). The relevance of the Mongolian data is that they continue this trend of research by providing unified evidence for both claims.