# “Non-local A-movement” is predicted to exist, and it does

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I put together two ingredients: (i) a featural approach to the A/Ā-distinction (van Urk 2015); (ii) featurally relativized probes (Béjar 2003 et seq.). These two, combined, predict that we should find movement phenomena that are non-local, and yet show no other Ā-type properties (i.e. “non-local A-movement”). I show that this exists: in Äiwoo, a less local argument can move to spec,TP if it has the right features.

**Background** Äiwoo (Oceanic; Solomon Islands) is a strict V2 language, with three slots where arguments can be. Sentence (1) shows all three, occupied by different DPs; I adopt the labels CP, TP and *v*P for these three positions (Roversi 2024). I assume the TAM particles (*=to=waa* here) are in T, and *Anna* is thus in spec,TP. I also assume the verb undergoes long head-movement to C. Äiwoo has an Austronesian voice system, comprising Actor Voice, Undergoer Voice (UV), and Circumstantial Voice, shown in (1).

(1) [$_{CP}$ ***täpilo enge*** *i-ngä* [$_{TP}$ ***Anna****=to=waa=kä* [$_{vP}$ ***sii*** **bowl this** ASP-eat **Anna**=PRF=FUT=CV **fish**
‘Anna will have eaten (the) fish in this bowl’

**Word order alternations** Transitive UV clauses may have one of three word orders, all shown in (2). These patterns are mutually exclusive, not optional alternatives: only one of them will be grammatical for any given sentence. This talk will exclusively focus on what argument occupies spec,TP (boxed in (2)); I will ignore the spec,CP and *v*P-internal positions (respectively, before the verb and after the TAM markers). Which pattern is chosen depends on whether the subject and the object are lexical DPs or pronouns. The generalization is that **the highest pronominal argument raises to spec,TP**. The crucial case of non-local movement is (2c), where the lower pronominal object is moved, skipping the lexical DP subject. A lexical DP only ever raises if there are no pronominal arguments in the clause (2a).

(2) a. ***John*** *ku-potaa* [***Mary***]*=kaa* $t_S$ $t_O$
**John** IPFV-search.UV **Mary**=FUT
‘Mary will look for John’ O V S=T

b. ***John*** *ku-potaa-*[***de***]*=ngaa* $t_S$ $t_O$
**John** IPFV-search.UV-**1PL**=FUT
‘We will look for John’ O V S=T

c. ***iude*** *ku-potaa-gu-*[***de***]*=ngaa* ***Mary*** $t_O$
**1PL** IPFV-search.UV-OBJ-**1PL**=FUT **Mary**
‘Mary will look for us’ O V O=T S

d. ***ijii*** *ku-potaa-*[***i***]*=laa* $t_S$ ***iude***
**3PL** IPFV-search.UV-**3PL**=FUT **1PL**
‘They will look for us’ S V S=T O

**The suffixal markers are real arguments** I argue that the pronominal morphemes boxed in (2b–d), despite being phonologically affixal, don’t reflect agreement, but they spell out an actual pronoun occupying spec,TP. **First**, we know that the position between the verb and the TAM particles must be a syntactically defined specifier position, because it can clearly host what’s uncontroversially a whole DP (*Mary* in (2a)). A DP in this position can be arbitrarily large, even containing a relative clause (not shown here for space). **Second**, the pronominal morphemes in (2b–d) cannot co-occur with an overt argument in that same position. For example, a DP like *mikilitei* ‘fishermen’ (3a) or the pronominal morphemes *-i* 3PL (3c) can occupy this position, but crucially not both at once (3b). This complementary distribution follows if *-i* isn’t a subject agreement marker, but it is itself the actual subject.

(3) a. ***John*** *ku-potaa* ***mikilitei****=kaa*
**John** IPFV-search.UV **fishermen**=FUT
‘The fishermen will look for John’

b. ****John*** *ku-potaa-*[***i*** ***mikilitei***]*=kaa*
**John** IPFV-search.UV-**3PL** **fishermen**=FUT

c. ***John*** *ku-potaa-****i****=laa*
**John** IPFV-search.UV-**3PL**=FUT
‘They will look for John’

We only ever see these suffixal morphemes co-occurring with an overt argument when the latter is in a higher position (2c,d). I analyze these cases as involving obligatory spell-out of a lower copy of the argument (the one in spec,TP). The difference between the “full” pronominal forms (e.g., *iude* 1PL in (2d)) and the shorter suffixal ones (*-de* 1PL in (2b,c)) is thus only morphophonological, not syntactic. Under this analysis, pronouns in Äiwoo have two forms: a longer, default one and a shorter, contextually conditioned allomorph. This is modelled in the Vocabulary Insertion rules in (4). These correctly capture that the full pronominal forms are impossible in spec,TP, as the shorter allomorph is chosen instead. I assume that the suffix *-gu* (2c) spells out the case features of a pronominal object in spec,TP, since it only ever appears

(4) a. [1PL] ⇔ *-de* / V __ (or “/ __T”)
b. [1PL] ⇔ *iude* (elsewhere)

when objects are in this position. Bringing support to the allomorphy approach, we also see the same pattern when a pronoun is the complement of a preposition. (5a) is a baseline example of a PP. When this preposition takes a pronominal complement, however, only the suffixal form *-i* is possible (5b), and not the full form *ijii* (5c).

(5) a. *ngâgo John* — to John — 'To John'
b. *ngâgo-**i*** — to-**3PL** — 'To them'
c. **ngâgo **ijii*** — to **3PL** — 'To them'

**T prefers to move pronouns** Having established that the boxed suffixal markers in (2b–d) are actual pronouns (albeit phonologically reduced), let's again consider the distribution of the different word order patterns. This is summarized in (6), highlighting the argument occupying spec,TP (boxed) in the resulting surface word order ("π" abbreviates "pronoun"; I don't also cover movement to spec,CP here).

(6) a. $\boxed{\pi}$ > DP: ⇒ O V $\boxed{\text{S}}$=T $t_S$ $t_O$ (= 2b)
b. DP > $\boxed{\pi}$: ⇒ O V $\boxed{\text{O}}$=T S $t_O$ (= 2c)
c. $\boxed{\pi}$ > π: ⇒ S V $\boxed{\text{S}}$=T $t_S$ O (= 2d)
d. $\boxed{\text{DP}}$ > DP: ⇒ O V $\boxed{\text{S}}$=T $t_S$ $t_O$ (= 2a)

The descriptive generalization is that **movement to spec,TP favors pronouns over lexical DPs**. If a sentence contains a lexical DP argument and a pronominal one (6a,b), the latter will raise to spec,TP, regardless of its original position. As a consequence, this movement can be non-local: in (6b) a pronominal object is raised to spec,TP, skipping the closer DP subject. If both arguments are pronouns (6c), predictably the highest one will raise. If neither argument is a pronoun (6d), then again the highest argument will raise. Note that movement to spec,TP is not tied to case (since either argument can raise), nor to nominal licensing in any obvious way: whichever argument doesn't raise simply remains *in situ* without consequences (later movements may obscure this, but it's visible in (6b,c)).

**Implementation** I assume that both lexical DPs and pronouns share a feature [D], but only pronouns have an additional feature [π] (Sichel and Toosarvandani 2024, a.o.). I propose that T hosts two ordered probes: a primary probe specifically trying to agree with and move pronouns ([*u*π]), and a secondary probe that tries to move anything with a [D] feature ([*u*D]). First, the π-probe scans its c-command domain and moves the highest pronominal argument it finds – even if this means skipping a non-pronominal subject (7b). Following the logic of Multitasking (van Urk and Richards 2015, Bossi and Diercks 2019, Scott 2021), as long as the π-probe finds a suitable goal, the secondary D-probe will also automatically be deactivated (as pronouns also have a [D] feature). Therefore, the D-probe will only kick in as a "plan B" if the π-probe couldn't find any goal to move, i.e., if both arguments are DPs (7d).

(7) a. $[_{TP}\ \text{S}_{\pi}\ \ \text{T}_{[\cancel{u\pi}]\succ[\cancel{uD}]}\ \ [_{vP}\ t_S \ldots \text{O}_{DP}]]$
b. $[_{TP}\ \text{O}_{\pi}\ \ \text{T}_{[\cancel{u\pi}]\succ[\cancel{uD}]}\ \ [_{vP}\ \text{S}_{DP} \ldots t_O]]$
c. $[_{TP}\ \text{S}_{\pi}\ \ \text{T}_{[\cancel{u\pi}]\succ[\cancel{uD}]}\ \ [_{vP}\ t_S \ldots \text{O}_{\pi}]]$
d. $[_{TP}\ \text{S}_{DP}\ \ \text{T}_{[u\pi]\succ[\cancel{uD}]}\ \ [_{vP}\ t_S \ldots \text{O}_{DP}]]$

**We should have expected this** The movement pattern just described only targets nominals (a property of A-movement), but can operate long-distance (a property of Ā-movement). There is no connection whatsoever to any typical Ā-features (topic, focus, *wh*-, etc.). Unfortunately, because of the very close proximity of the positions involved, the fact that the moving arguments (often) are pronouns, and other independent facts about the language, no other properties of A/Ā-movement are testable (binding-theoretical properties, crossover effects, etc.). What we are left with, then, could be called a "mixed A/Ā movement", but this would be somewhat uninformative or misleading. Given a featural approach to the A/Ā-distinction, canonical A-movement has the properties it has *because* it moves nominals (van Urk 2015). The strict locality profile of typical A-movement is a consequence of probes looking for features shared by *all* nominals (e.g., [D] or [φ]), so that per Relativized Minimality, *any* nominal will be an intervener. However, we also know that probes can be relativized to specific features (Béjar 2003 et seq.). Then, if a probe is relativized to features that only *some* nominals have (like the probe on T in Äiwoo), we predict this specific kind of "non-local A-movement", with no additional mechanisms.

**Implications** The Äiwoo pattern of movement to spec,TP fills an as-yet-unattested cell in the typology that our theory implicitly predicted to be possible. This supports the idea that the specific locality profile of any movement pattern is solely determined by the probe triggering the movement, and not fixed *a priori* based on the A/Ā-distinction (Deal 2024, Lohninger 2024). Moreover, Äiwoo offers a system where arguments move purely to address the needs of a probe, without any apparent licensing motivations (Sichel 2001, et seq.): if an argument isn't targeted for movement, there are no consequences.

**References** ► Béjar, S. 2003. *Phi-syntax: A theory of agreement.* ► Bossi, M. & M. Diercks. 2019. V1 in Kipsigis: Head movement and discourse-based scrambling. ► Deal, A. R. 2024. Probe-specific locality. ► Lohninger, M. 2024. The A'/A signature: Systematic patterns in composite A'/A probing. ► Roversi, G. 2024. Exceptional Ā-extraction in Austronesian informs theories of voice systems. ► Scott, T. 2021. Formalizing two types of mixed A/A' movement. ► Sichel, I. 2001. *Studies in the Syntax of Pronouns and Features with Particular Reference to Hebrew.* ► Sichel, I. & M. Toosarvandani. 2024. The Featural Life of Nominals. ► van Urk, C. 2015. *A uniform syntax for phrasal movement: A case study for Dinka Bor.* ► van Urk, C. & N. Richards. 2015. Two Components of Long-Distance Extraction: Successive Cyclicity in Dinka.