Scrambling through the Looking Glass: Two Types of Movement across Weak Islands

Introduction. Long-distance scrambling (LDS) exhibits paradoxical properties that challenge a unified theory of A′-movement. While many argue that LDS is exceptional and not driven by A′-features (Saito 1989), others argue that it should be subsumed under A′-movement (Miyagawa 2006). I propose that these seemingly incompatible views point to two distinct types of LDS that may co-exist internal to a single language. By analyzing LDS in Khalkha Mongolian through the lens of weak islands, I identify two varieties: (i) **ordinary LDS**, driven by a scrambling feature Σ (Grewendorf & Sabel 1997) and targeting the matrix AspP, and (ii) ***wh*-LDS**, driven by A′-features and targeting a higher functional projection FP associated with an A′-probe. Due to their distinct syntactic triggers, *wh*-LDS exhibits Relativized Minimality (RM) effects when launching from weak islands, similar to English *wh*-movement, whereas ordinary LDS shows no such sensitivity. These findings (i) suggests LDS is both cross-linguistically and intra-linguistically heterogeneous and (ii) supports the emerging view that all instances of phrasal movement involve Agree and Merge, with differences in movement type arising from the specific features involved in Agree (van Urk 2015).

Background. <Two Types of LDS: Weak Island Effects> Much cross-linguistic research has shown that LDS does not seem sensitive to weak islands (Saito 1985, Miyagawa 2005, Kim 2003, Zemskaja 1973, Bailyn 2020). In Khalkha, LDS out of a *wh*-island appears acceptable and does not show argument (1) vs. non-argument (3) asymmetry, in contrast to typical A′-movement such as relativization (2)/(4).

LDS out of wh-island

(1) **Ter nom-ig**$_1$ Bat [khen $\_\_1$ awsan be gej] asuusan
that book-ACC Bat [who bought Q C] asked
'that book$_1$ Bat asked [who bought $\_\_1$]'

(3) **Irekh jil**$_1$ Bat [khen $\_\_1$ tögsökh we gej] asuusan
next year Bat [who graduate Q C] asked
'Next year$_1$, Bat asked [who will graduate $\_\_1$]'

Relativization out of wh-island

(2) (?) [minii [Dorj-iig yaagaad $\_\_1$ awsan be gej] asuusan] nom$_1$
[1S.GEN [Dorj-ACC why buy-PST Q C] asked] book
'the book$_1$ [which I asked [why Dorj bought $\_\_1$]]'

(4) *[bagšiin [ter nom-ig $\_\_1$ khen awsan be gej] asuusan] ödör$_1$
[teacher.GEN [that book-ACC who bought Q C] asked] day
Int. 'the day$_1$ [when the teacher asked [who bought that book $\_\_1$]]'

Some studies (e.g., Kim 2003) interpret the lack of weak island effect in LDS as evidence that LDS is not driven by A′-features, allowing it to bypass A′-interveners under Relativized Minimality (RM; Rizzi, 1990, 2004). In contrast, others (e.g., Miyagawa 2006) argue that LDS should be subsumed under A′-movement, and the lack of *wh*-island effects in (1) and (3) should receive alternative explanations. To systematically investigate these competing claims, original data in Khalkha Mongolian was collected to analyze six subcases of LDS. These subcases vary along two dimensions: (i) the type of item undergoing long-distance extraction—whether it involves ordinary LDS (a non-*wh* phrase) or *wh*-LDS (a *wh*-phrase), and (ii) the domain from which LDS proceeds— a [-Q] CP, a *wh*-island, or a strong island (including complex NPs and adjuncts). The results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1:

			A	**B**	**C**
			out of [-Q] CP	out of *wh*-island	out of strong islands
1	ordinary LDS	arguments	✓	✓	*
2		non-arguments	✓	✓	*
3	*wh*-LDS	arguments	✓	✓	*
4		non-arguments	✓	*	*

For space reasons and for maximum clarity, in this abstract I will focus on the facts concerning LDS out of *wh*-island (column **B**). Khalkha is a *wh*-in-situ language. We have seen from (1) and (3) that there is no argument/non-argument asymmetry in ordinary LDS (cell **B1** and cell **B2** in Table 1). However, *wh*-LDS in Khalkha shows the signature weak island effect paralleling that in relativization (2)/(4):

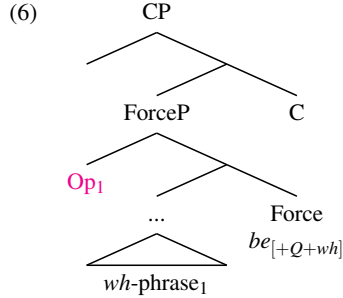(5) a. *wh*-LDS of argument DP out of *wh*-island (cell **B3** in Table 1)

Yamar nom-ig Bold [Zaya-g $\_\_1$ aw-san **be** gej] asuul-san
what book-ACC Bold.NOM [Zaya-ACC buy-PST **Q** C] ask-PST

'What book$_1$, Bat asked [Q Zaya bought $\_\_1$]'

b. *wh*-LDS of non-argument DP out of *wh*-island (cell **B4** in Table 1)

* **Khezee**$_1$ suragčid [Činghis khaan-ig $\_\_1$ tör-sön be gej] bagš-aas asuu-san
when students [Chingghis Khan-ACC born-PST Q C] teacher-ABL ask-PST
Int. 'When$_1$, the students asked the teacher [Q Chingghis Khan was born $\_\_1$]'

<Ordinary vs. *Wh*-LDS: No Asymmetry in Strong Islands> As reported in column **C** of Table 1, unlike weak islands, strong islands block ordinary and *wh*-LDS alike, with no argument/non-argument asymmetry. **Analysis.** I assume that *wh*-island effect in a *wh*-in-situ language like Khalkha is induced by a phonologically null A′-operator Op (6) in the specifier position of the Q-particle (hosted on Force) in narrow syntax (Watanabe 1992). Assuming a featural version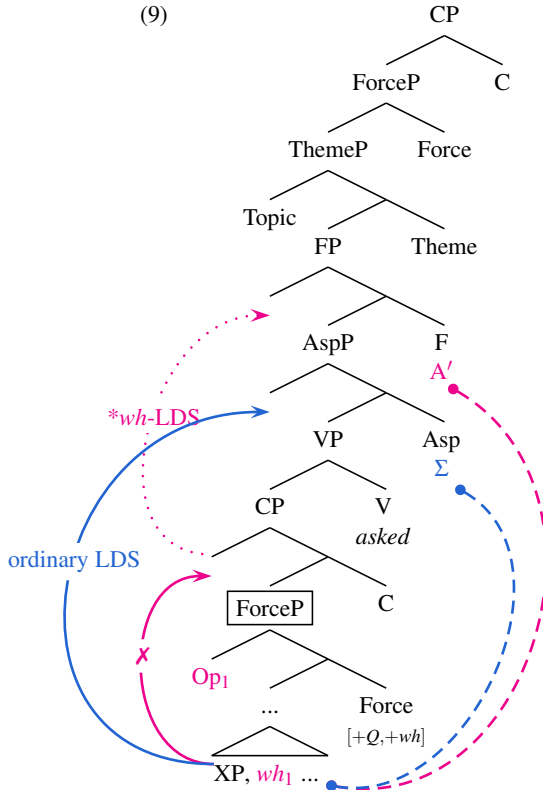 of Relativized Minmality (Rizzi 2004), I propose that *wh*-LDS parallels relativization in exhibiting weak island effects because both are driven by A′-features. In contrast, ordinary LDS is driven by [Σ], a non-A′ feature (Bailyn 2020). The derivations of A′-movement (*wh*-LDS, relativization) and ordinary LDS out of *wh*-islands are as follows:

(6)

```
          CP
         /  \
     ForceP   C
     /    \
   Op_1    \
        /      \
      ...      Force
              be_[+Q+wh]
        /
  wh-phrase_1
```

(7) A′-movement (*wh*-LDS, relativization):

$$\text{Probe}_{A'} \; [\text{Op}_1 \; ... \; \text{XP}_{[wh, \text{Rel}]} \; ... \;] \qquad \text{A}' \; ✗$$

(8) Ordinary LDS:

$$\text{Probe}_{\Sigma} \; [\text{Op}_1 \; ... \; \text{XP} \; ... \;] \qquad \Sigma \; ✓$$

<Locations of Probes in the Extended Clausal Periphery> I further argue that the A′-Probe which drives *wh*-LDS and the Σ-Probe which drives ordinary LDS are situated at distinct functional heads, F and Asp, within the extended clausal periphery (Rizzi 1997, 2013; Cinque and Rizzi 2008). The positions of these probes are diagnosed through their interactions with relativization and thematic topicalization.

(9)

```
                    CP
                   /  \
               ForceP   C
               /    \
           ThemeP   Force
           /    \
        Topic    \
               FP   Theme
              /  \
          AspP    F
                  A′
          /   \
        VP     Asp
                Σ
       /  \
     CP    V
          asked
     /  \
  [ForceP]  C
    /  \
  Op_1   \
      /      \
    ...      Force
           [+Q,+wh]
      /
  XP, wh_1 ...

  *wh-LDS
  ordinary LDS
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<Relativization> Ordinary LDS may occur within relative clauses (RCs), but *wh*-LDS is impossible within RCs. I argue that this asymmetry arises because *wh*-LDS targets an A′-position higher in the periphery, where the RC operator also occupy. In contrast, ordinary LDS lands lower, at Spec AspP. In the presentation, I provide extensive independent evidence showing i) the landing site of ordinary LDS is indeed Spec AspP; and crucially ii) there is an additional FP in the left periphery, whose specifier hosts the RC operator. Since FP provides a single designated Spec, the incompatibility of *wh*-LDS with relativization follows immediately if the A′-probe driving *wh*-LDS is located at F. **<Topicalization>** Thematic topicalization in Khalkha targets a fixed position, ThemeP, below matrix ForceP. Neither *wh*-LDS nor ordinary LDS may precede thematic topics. I propose that this is because both *wh*-LDS and ordinary LDS land below ThemeP, as indicated in (9). **<Derivation>** The derivations of *wh*-LDS and ordinary LDS out of a *wh*-island are schematized in (9). The *wh*-island is the embedded ForceP, which is +Q and has an A′-Op at its Spec. In the case of *wh*-LDS, the A′-probe at F Agrees with the extracted XP. However, the A′-dependency is interrupted by the Op_1 at Spec ForceP. In contrast, ordinary LDS freely proceeds out of the island because it is driven by Σ, and does not interact with A′-interveners under RM.

Conclusion. The main proposal is summarized in Table 2. Under my analysis, (5) is a typical RM effect because *wh*-LDS is driven by an A′-probe. Thus, *wh*-LDS parallels relativization (2)/(4) in terms of the features driving the movement. In contrast, the lack of RM effect in (1)/(3) is because it's driven by a non A′-feature Σ, and thus does not interact with A′-interveners.

	ordinary LDS	*wh*-LDS
driven by	Σ on Asp	A′ on F
landing site	Spec AspP	Spec FP
type	not A nor A′	A′

Table 2

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