

# Probing for the closest DP: a reply to Branan et al. 2022

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## 1 Introduction

In their 2022 paper  *$\bar{A}$ -probing for the closest DP*, Branan and Erlewine (henceforth B&E) argue for the existence of an  $\bar{A}$ -probe that can only be satisfied if its goal is the closest DP to it. Their proposal is an extension of Aldridge’s (2004a) influential analysis of Tagalog wh-movement/Voice interactions, which is often adopted in the context of extraction restrictions in ergative languages. In B&E’s paper, they extend the analysis to the non-ergative languages Turkish and Rejang, that Aldridge’s approach should influence our theories of  $\bar{A}$ -movement in general, and not just its interactions with ergativity.

Though the source of extraction restrictions in ergative languages is a matter of lively debate, B&E motivate Aldridge’s particular analysis by presenting examples from non-ergative languages in which only the highest DP in a clause may be relativized (typically the surface subject – sometimes the highest DP within the highest DP, e.g. a possessor). Since relativization is a common kind of  $\bar{A}$ -dependency, and standard treatments of  $\bar{A}$ -dependencies predict them to always be able to operate at-a-distance, across intermediate DPs, they propose that we must update the typology of  $\bar{A}$ -probes to account for relative clauses that only target the highest DP in a clause.

While I have no objection to B&E’s description of the phenomena that show this pattern, (indeed they show this pattern very robustly in each case study), I argue that their evidence is not sufficient to justify the proposed probe  *$\bar{A}$ -probe for the closest DP*. They apply the descriptive label “relative clause” to the phenomena in question, but they do not employ diagnostics for  $\bar{A}$ -movement, which would justify the proposed analysis.

I will make the case, by looking at the three primary case studies they discuss (Tagalog, Turkish, and Rejang), that a simpler theory is available, one in which every instance of apparent  *$\bar{A}$ -probing* of the closest DP is just regular probing for the closest DP (as in most A-dependencies), with no  $\bar{A}$ -features involved. This alternative theory requires no amendment to the typology of probes. It only demands that we dissociate the descriptive label “relative clause” from the theoretical concept  *$\bar{A}$ -dependency*. The central claim of this paper, therefore, is that constructions which can be translated as relative clauses in En-

English vary enough cross-linguistically, structurally and morphologically, that their status as universal  $\bar{A}$ -constructions cannot be taken for granted.

Consider a definition of ‘relative clause’ that includes any kind of modification of an NP, which contains an extended projection of a verb root. In English, there are at least two constructions that satisfy this definition, shown in (1) and (2). The relativization strategy in (1) looks like a CP modifier with an  $\bar{A}$ -gap inside, where the gap is permitted to be either the subject or the object of the clause. The strategy in (2) has some verb phrase structure (verb+internal argument) with a gap for one of the arguments, which must be the subject of the clause.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (1) $\bar{A}$ - “Relative clause”       | (2) non- $\bar{A}$ - “Relative clause” |
| a. the bee [ that ___ stings girls]     | a. the [ ___ girl-stinging] bee        |
| b. the girls [ that the bee stings ___] | b. *the [ bee ___-stinging] girl       |

In order to relativize the object *girl* using the strategy in (2), different morphology must be used, which appears to be the same as the passive morphology found in a comparable matrix clause. Assuming that passive morphology corresponds to a clause in which the object is promoted to surface subject position, (3) conforms to the same generalization: the relativization strategy in (2) and (3) only targets surface subjects.

- (3) the [ \_\_\_ (bee-)stung] girl (cf. *The girl was **stung** (by the bee).*)

Examples (2) and (3) show the same profile as the languages that B&E describe as having  $\bar{A}$ -movement of the closest DP, since they each contain a relativization-like dependency that can only apply to the surface subject; it cannot skip the subject and target the object. However, the strategy in (2) and (3) is not (at least not obviously) an  $\bar{A}$ -construction. Indeed, whatever dependency (2) and (3) show cannot be long distance, and thus fails the most basic test for  $\bar{A}$ -movement (trying to even imagine what a long distance version of (2) would be is challenging – (4b) was my best attempt). Moreover, the controller of the gap is just a regular nominal, not a wh-element or relative pronoun, in which case the morphology also provides no evidence of an  $\bar{A}$ -feature in these cases. In sum, there is no evidence from either the syntax or the morphology that (2) is an  $\bar{A}$ -construction: it targets only the highest nominal, is clause-bound, and displays no overt wh-morphology<sup>1</sup>.

- (4) a. the bee [ that Sue said [ \_\_\_ stings girls]]  
b. \*the [ [ \_\_\_ girl-stinging] -said] bee

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<sup>1</sup>Important to note is that I do not claim that any one of these diagnostics is a foolproof test for  $\bar{A}$ -movement. For example, relative clauses like (1) don’t have any overt wh-expressions, and yet can still be called  $\bar{A}$ -constructions based on their behavior relative to other diagnostics. Additionally, languages with hyperraising show that it is possible for a single construction to show “mixed” properties, by targeting the highest nominal (A-property) but not being clause-bound ( $\bar{A}$ -property), for example. My point is therefore not to say that something which is clause bound cannot be an  $\bar{A}$ -construction, or that  $\bar{A}$ -constructions must contain overt wh-elements. I merely suggest that in order to call something an  $\bar{A}$ -construction, it must show at least *some* of the properties shared by  $\bar{A}$ -constructions elsewhere.

Relativization strategies found in other languages may likewise vary according to what kind of dependency they establish, putting aside whether these strategies look morphologically similar to those found in English. In other words, there is no requirement that what functionally is expressed in (1) in English be realized with the exact structure and derivation of (1) in other languages. To use relativization to make claims about  $\bar{A}$ -dependencies, one must show that the construction in question behaves like (1) relative to independent diagnostics. In this reply, I show that B&E’s evidence is better explained if we drop  $\bar{A}$  from the description, leaving us with just a dependency that targets the closest DP (e.g. raising or control, cf. Toosarvandani (2014), Northern Paiute *-di* nominalizations). Combining B&E’s descriptions of the phenomena with the present view of relativization dependencies yields a new picture of cross-linguistic variation: languages’  $\bar{A}$ -probes do not vary in content as much as B&E suggest; instead, languages vary in how they distribute  $\bar{A}$ -probes across constructions.

The structure of this reply is as follows: section 2 discusses the theoretical implications of B&E’s analysis for the typology of possible probing behaviors, and establishes the alternative view that not all relative clauses involve  $\bar{A}$ -probing. Section 3 introduces B&E’s proposal, situated relative to Aldridge’s analysis of Tagalog, followed by discussion of some arguments against Aldridge’s analysis from Hsieh (2020). Hsieh argues that relativization of DPs in Tagalog does not involve  $\bar{A}$ -movement. Section 4 looks at B&E’s evidence from the non-ergative languages Turkish and Rejang, and shows that both cases of proposed  $\bar{A}$ -movement of the closest DP are clause-bound, like A-dependencies usually are<sup>2</sup>. Section 5 concludes.

## 2 The logic of probes

B&E’s central claim is that  $\bar{A}$ -probes can exist in natural language which are specified to target the closest DP. This section is dedicated to exploring how this requirement might be expressed in formal terms, and to evaluating the conceptual desirableness of admitting such a probe. While B&E do not offer a specific proposal as to how the closest DP should be specified as the probe’s target, they suggest that  $\bar{A}$ -movement of the closest DP is a possible behavior associated with a probe of the form [PROBE: $\bar{A}$ +D].

### (5) Closest:

A potential goal G for probe P is closest if no other potential goal for P c-commands G.

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<sup>2</sup>In their paper, B&E discuss some other patterns in Haya and Late Archaic Chinese that they suggest might, upon additional investigation, be explained by  $\bar{A}$ -probing of the closest DP. In the present paper, I will just focus on the primary cases they discuss, for which there is the most evidence, with the goal of motivating the hypothesis that relative clauses can involve A- rather than  $\bar{A}$ -dependencies. Whether this account (or a different account entirely) extends to Haya and Late Archaic Chinese depends on further investigation (and likely fieldwork), which I leave to future research.

(6)  **$\bar{A}$ -probing for the closest DP:**

An  $\bar{A}$ -probe can be specified to target the closest accessible DP.

(7)  $\bar{A}$ -probing for the closest DP schematized:

- a. \* [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] ... [ DP<sub>1</sub> ... [ DP<sub>2</sub><sub>[ $\bar{A}$ ]</sub> ...
- b. [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] ... [ DP<sub>1</sub><sub>[ $\bar{A}$ ]</sub> ... [ DP<sub>2</sub> ...
- 

The proposal that an  $\bar{A}$ -probe can target the closest DP raises immediate questions about what it means to be an  $\bar{A}$ -probe. A naive interpretation of the proposed probe [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] is that the conjunction  $\bar{A}+D$  defines the *search space* for the probe. In other words, the probe considers every element in its domain that bears the feature bundle  $\bar{A}+D$ , and agrees with/attracts the closest one (according to Relativized Minimality). This naive interpretation, however, does not yield the pattern in (7) because DPs that are not  $\bar{A}$ -elements are not members of the set of things bearing  $\bar{A}+D$ , and therefore should not count as interveners for a probe searching for  $\bar{A}+D$ . Instead, the naive interpretation of [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] should predict the probing pattern in (8).

- (8) ✓ [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] ... [ DP<sub>1</sub> ... [ DP<sub>2</sub><sub>[ $\bar{A}$ ]</sub> ... (skipping non-members of set { $\bar{A}+D$ })
- 

Whether probes that correspond to this naive interpretation of [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] actually exist in natural language is somewhat debatable, though Coon & Bale (2014)'s approach to Mi'gmaq agreement and Scott (2021)'s approach to Ndengeleko focus positions achieve essentially what is schematized in (8) (with some elaboration reflecting the particular framework of Agree adopted in each case). In each case, only an element that bears both features specified by the probe is agreed with/moved, irrespective of its position in the clause relative to other elements bearing one or the other feature. B&E's proposal that the probe [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] can be associated with the pattern in (7) therefore requires two assumptions: 1) that the probe [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] exists, and 2) that it does not behave like (8), which is the null hypothesis associated with such a probe. To the extent that there is evidence for the probe [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ], as indicated by insights from Coon & Bale (2014) and Scott (2021), it supports the null hypothesis rather than B&E's proposal<sup>3</sup>.

Can we imagine other probes that would capture (7)? We saw that [PROBE: $\bar{A}+D$ ] has some precedent from the literature, but does not straightforwardly predict B&E's probing pattern. More commonly proposed are probes with two *unconjoined* features on a head, e.g. [PROBE: $\bar{A},D$ ], where each feature probes separately for DPs and  $\bar{A}$ -elements respectively. Such a probe should attract either one or two elements, depending on the relative positions of DPs and  $\bar{A}$ -elements in the clause, and our assumptions about the order of operations.

Suppose we have a clause with one DP that is not an  $\bar{A}$ -element, and an  $\bar{A}$ -element that is not a DP. In other words, there is no element that can satisfy both of [PROBE: $\bar{A},D$ ]'s

<sup>3</sup>See also Colley & Privoznov (2020) for an account in which intermediate DPs must be agreed with in (8), but are ultimately skipped in favor of attracting the  $\bar{A}$ -DP.

features, but there are separate elements that satisfy each one (as in (9)). In such a configuration,  $[\text{PROBE}:\bar{A},D]$  should simply attract both elements: the D feature attracts the closest DP in its domain, and the  $\bar{A}$ -feature attracts the closest  $\bar{A}$ -element in its domain, as proposed by van Urk & Richards (2015) for Dinka PP wh-extraction through EPP positions, and Bossi & Diercks (2019) for Kipsigis mixed A/ $\bar{A}$  positions.

- (9) ✓  $[\text{PROBE}:\bar{A},D] \dots [DP \dots [XP_{[\bar{A}]} \dots]$
- 

Making the XP in (9) a DP yields the configuration in (7a) (repeated in (10)), which B&E want to rule out. However, it is not clear why the category of the  $\bar{A}$ -element should matter to the probe  $[\text{PROBE}:\bar{A},D]$ . The  $\bar{A}$ -DP is indeed a less local target for movement with respect to one of the search spaces (the one specified for DPs), but it is the most local target for movement with respect to the other (the one specified for  $\bar{A}$ -elements). Whether the D feature or the  $\bar{A}$  feature probes first therefore determines which element is *closest*: if D probes first,  $DP_1$  is the first target for movement, while if  $\bar{A}$  probes first,  $DP_2$  is. The crucial question for B&E and for this reply is whether we can expect it to matter that non-locality in one domain means inaccessibility with respect to the other.

- (10)  $[\text{PROBE}:\bar{A},D] \dots [DP_1 \dots [DP_{2[\bar{A}]} \dots]$   
 $DP_1$  is the closest DP in the domain of  $[\text{PROBE}:D]$   
 $DP_2$  is the closest  $\bar{A}$ -element in the domain of  $[\text{PROBE}:\bar{A}]$

Suppose for the sake of argument that some principle of the grammar forces the D feature to probe first, making  $DP_1$  the first target for movement. Provided that multiple movements are possible, we would expect the probe to then search again for  $\bar{A}$ -elements, finding  $DP_2$ , just as in (9). To the extent that the probing pattern in (9) is allowed, so too should the pattern in (7a). Moreover, to the extent that existing theories restrict the order of operations, it is in favor of searching for  $\bar{A}$  first, given that doing so can satisfy both D and  $\bar{A}$  probes in a single operation, leading to a more economical derivation (see van Urk & Richards (2015)’s *Multitasking* condition).

Thus, the probe in (9) likewise does not capture B&E’s proposal, which is that *only* the closest DP may be attracted, and only if it is an  $\bar{A}$ -element. In short, there is a conditional statement implicit in the description “ $\bar{A}$ -probing of the closest DP” which cannot be captured by the conjunction or co-occurrence of multiple probes on a single head. That conditional can be described in either of two ways: 1) “attract the closest DP if it is an  $\bar{A}$ -element; otherwise crash” or 2) “attract the closest  $\bar{A}$ -element, if it is also the closest DP; otherwise crash”<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup>A third way of organizing features D and  $\bar{A}$  on a probe could be to adopt the machinery put forth in Deal (2015), in which separate interaction and satisfaction conditions on the probe may be specified. The interaction condition denotes the set of elements that are possible goals for the probe; the satisfaction condition determines when the probe stops searching for goals. In order to capture B&E’s pattern with this machinery, the interaction condition would have to include DPs that are not  $\bar{A}$ -elements, or else the closest DP would never be targeted by the probe. Similarly, the satisfaction condition would also have to be specified to stop after interacting with any DP, or else the probe would continue to search until it finds an  $\bar{A}$ -DP. Capturing



- b. O-no'ona-ggwe nimmi                      **ka=kutsu**      **patsa-di**-ggwe  
 3SG-LOC-LOC 1PL.EXCL.NOM DEF.ACC=cow kill.SG-NMLZ-LOC  
 mo'o.  
 walk.DUR.PL

'We walked around **the one who killed the cow.**'

- (13) Northern Paiute can use the di-form for passive subjects

- a. **Su=na-gwitama-di**                      wadzi-mia-hu.  
 DEF.NOM=PASS-lock.up-NMLZ hide-go-PFV

'**The one who should be locked up** ran away.' (Toosarvandani, 2014, p.789(7a))

Toosarvandani (2014) proposes that neither strategy employs  $\bar{A}$ -movement; he analyzes the gap in *-di* clauses as a null PRO (schematized in (14a), with evidence from the binding of reflexives), and the gap in *-na* clauses as a null resumptive pronoun (schematized in (14b), with evidence from Weak Cross-over). Even though neither dependency is of the movement kind, however, they could still be relevant to B&E if one could show that they were of an  $\bar{A}$ -nature. Since the dependency involved in *-na* clauses crosses intervening nominals, for example, it seems plausible to suggest that the resumption mechanism schematized in (14b) makes use of an  $\bar{A}$ -feature of some kind.

- (14) Two options for non- $\bar{A}$ -movement relative clauses

- a. Option 1 (control):  $NP_i$  [*rel-clause* ...  $DP_j$  ... \* $PRO_i$  ]  
 b. Option 2 (resumption):  $NP/Op_i$  [*rel-clause* ...  $DP_j$  ... *pro<sub>i</sub>* ]

Importantly, both kinds of nominalizations are compatible with an event interpretation rather than an individual interpretation, which can be seen in examples with either no arguments (15) or no gaps (16).

- (15) Zero-place predicate nominalizations with *-na* and *-di* (Toosarvandani, 2014, ex.1/2a)

- a. Nii                      **a=bbauma-wini-na**      naka.  
 1SG.NOM 4.GEN=rain-IPFV-NMLZ hear

'I hear **it raining.**'

- b. Nii                      **pauma-wini-di**      naka.  
 1SG.NOM rain-IPFV-NMLZ hear

'I hear **it raining.**'

- (16) **Su=nana**                      **ka=toogga**      **patsa-na**                      idzi'i.  
 DEF.NOM=man DEF.ACC=dog kill.SG-NMLZ yesterday

'**The man's killing the dog** happened yesterday.' (Toosarvandani, 2014, ex.45a)

Toosarvandani proposes that the different interpretations arise from essentially the same semantics: if all of the arguments are saturated inside the nominalization (as in (15) and (16)), abstraction must be over the predicate's event variable; if one of the arguments is represented as a pronoun (read: free variable), abstraction is over the set of individuals it

represents. These nominalizations in Northern Paiute therefore do not motivate  $\bar{A}$ -features in the syntax, because their interpretation and their syntax can be explained by the distribution of PRO/pro and the semantics of nominalization itself.

Abstracting away from the particular morphosyntax of (2) and (12), what these data show is that the function of a relative clause is logically distinct from  $\bar{A}$ -movement. As such, we might expect to find in other languages that the constructions to which we assign relative clause-like English translations are not necessarily  $\bar{A}$ -constructions. To justify calling something an  $\bar{A}$ -construction, we therefore need to show that the phenomena in question show some of the hallmarks of  $\bar{A}$ -constructions elsewhere. With this mindset, I now turn to Tagalog, Turkish and Rejang relative clauses, and propose that they are not  $\bar{A}$ -constructions, because no such evidence can be found.

### 3 Tagalog: from Aldridge (2004) to Hsieh (2020)

B&E take as a starting point for their paper Aldridge’s treatment of  $\bar{A}$ -phenomena in Tagalog (and other “Phillippine-type” Austronesian languages). In Tagalog, a relativized DP must be the so-called “pivot” of its clause<sup>5</sup>, where the term “pivot” refers to the nominative/absolutive-marked surface subject of the clause (identifiable by the determiner/case marker *ang*), regardless of thematic role. In (17), we see that theme relatives require the “patient Voice (PV)” (patient=pivot) while agent relatives require the “agent Voice (AV)” (agent=pivot). There is some debate about how to gloss the determiner/case markers in Tagalog – Aldridge originally analyzed *ang* as an absolutive marker and *ng* as an ergative. However, I follow Hsieh (2020) here, in glossing *ang* as nominative and *ng* as genitive, since the present discussion is not about ergativity, and this choice does not affect the argument in any way. (note: P = Personal form determiner; LK = linker)

(17) Tagalog theme relative clauses (Hsieh, 2020, (39,41))

- a. *ang kape=ng [i~inum-in ni Gina]*  
NOM coffee=LK FUT~drink-PV GEN.P Gina  
‘the coffee that Gina will drink’
- b. *\*ang (kape=ng) [i~inom si Gina]*  
NOM coffee=LK FUT~drink[AV] NOM.P Gina  
intended: ‘the one(coffee) that Gina will drink’

(18) Tagalog agent relative clauses (Hsieh, 2020, (45))

- a. *duwende=ng [nag-nakaw ng agimat]*  
dwarf=LK AV.PFV-steal GEN talisman  
‘dwarf that stole a talisman’
- b. *\*bata=ng [b<in>ili ang tela]*  
child=LK <PFV>buy[PV] NOM cloth

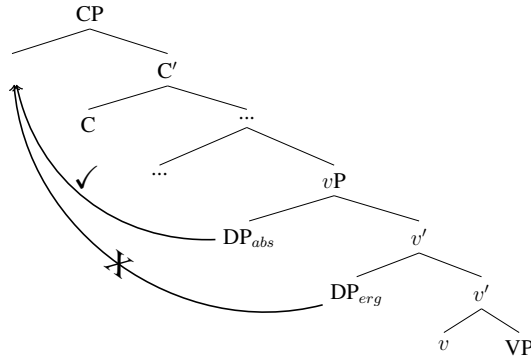
<sup>5</sup>With some exceptions – see Hsieh (2020) for discussion.



intended: ‘child who bought cloth’ (B&E example 4)

Aldridge’s approach to (17) and (18), which has roots and extensions in several works (see e.g. Campana (1992), Murasugi (1992), Ordóñez (1995), Bittner & Hale (1996), Coon et al. (2014), Levin (2018), and Coon et al. (2021)), assumes firstly that the absolutive/nominative marked argument always c-commands the ergative/genitive marked argument pre- $\bar{A}$ -movement. This structural configuration, combined with an  $\bar{A}$ -probe that can only target the closest DP, results in only the absolutive/nominative argument being accessible for extraction.

- (19) Absolutive arguments c-command ergative arguments – one DP cannot  $\bar{A}$ -move past another



The data in (17) and (18) justify half of this approach: assuming that the pivot argument in Tagalog is always the highest argument, that relativization targets the highest DP in Tagalog is an unavoidable conclusion. What remains to be shown is whether this relative probe is an  $\bar{A}$ -probe that targets the closest DP (as B&E, following Aldridge, claim), or whether it is just a probe specified to search for DPs. Thus, the examples in (17) and (18) do not by themselves support B&E’s claim that  $\bar{A}$ -movement can be sensitive to the distribution of DPs. We need to also employ tests for  $\bar{A}$ -movement.

Before applying tests for  $\bar{A}$ -movement, however, it is important to clarify the scope of B&E’s proposal. They do not claim that *every* instance of  $\bar{A}$ -movement in Tagalog shows this profile. A strong claim of that kind would be obviously false, given that Tagalog permits wh-movement of non-DPs (see (20) for an adjunct wh-question). Their claim is that the probe  $\bar{A}$ -probe for the closest DP is merely a possible property of a lexical item. Thus, only the contexts in which a lexical item bearing such a probe appears should show the profile in (17) and (18). Whatever C-head is used in the extraction of non-DPs apparently has different properties. In order to evaluate B&E’s arguments, we must look specifically at the contexts that they discuss, namely the relativization of DPs in Tagalog.

- (20) [Sa ilog /Saan] nali~ligo ang kalabaw.  
 OBL river where AV.IMPF~bathe NOM water.buffalo  
 ‘It’s in the river that the water buffalo is bathing.’  
 ‘Where is the water buffalo bathing?’ (Hsieh, 2020, p.88(19b))

Hsieh (2020) argues that DP relative clauses in Tagalog are *not* derived by  $\bar{A}$ -movement. If this is right, Tagalog does not provide an example of  $\bar{A}$ -movement of the closest DP. Here we review some of Hsieh’s arguments against an  $\bar{A}$ -movement treatment of (17) and (18).

### 3.1 Hsieh 2020

Hsieh discusses the fact that “relativization” does not have a uniform set of properties across Tagalog, but rather varies according to whether the relativized element is a DP vs. a non-DP. DP relatives involve a linker (*ng* in (17) and (18)), which attaches to the head noun, followed immediately by the relative clause. Non-DP relatives (see (21)b) have no linker, and instead include a complementizer *kung*, followed by a relative pronoun. Importantly, the relativized non-DP need not be the pivot of the relative clause: the relative clause in (21b) is in the agent voice, despite the fact that the relativized element is a location PP.

(21) Relative clauses: linker *ng* for DPs vs. *kung+wh* for non-DPs

(17a) ang kape=*ng* [i~inum-in ni Gina]

NOM coffee=LK FUT~drink-PV GEN.P Gina

‘the coffee that Gina will drink’ (Hsieh, 2020, (39))

(b) Kulay pink ang folder **kung saan** [nagsu~sulat ang estudyante ng  
color pink NOM folder COMP where AV.IMPF~write NOM student GEN  
tula].

poem

‘The folder where the student is writing a poem is pink.’ (Hsieh, 2020, (12))

A perspective on this variation that is consistent with B&E would be to argue that non-DP relativization involves  $\bar{A}$ -movement of the closest *wh*-element, while DP-relativization involves  $\bar{A}$ -movement of the closest DP. Their claim that properties of  $\bar{A}$ -movement are traceable to specific lexical items makes this move possible – the probe employed in DP relatives just needs to be lexically distinct from the probe employed in non-DP relatives. If this is right, we would expect the differences in Voice sensitivity to be the only difference between DP and non-DP relativization. However, Hsieh shows that there are other differences between these two relativization strategies, which are not explainable by a mere difference in what kind of element they attract. Two important differences include the possible positions of the relativized element and the placement of clitics.

Relativized DPs can appear internally or externally to the relative clause, and initially or finally with respect to it (Aldridge, 2004b, 2017; Law, 2015). In (22a,b), the head noun is external – preceding the relative clause in (22a) and following it in (22b). In (22c), the head noun is in situ inside the relative clause. By contrast, the word order in (21b) is the only one available to non-DP relatives. Attempting to put the non-DP to the right of the clause, or in its in situ position results in ungrammaticality (see (23)). In addition, *kung+wh* relatives cannot be headless, while linker relatives can (24). As a result, Hsieh

concludes that “relative clauses” in Tagalog actually refer to at least two different constructions, with different structures and behaviors: the linker construction, which applies to DPs, and *kung+wh* clauses, which are used to relativize non-DPs.

(22) DPs can be head internal/external/initial/final (Hsieh, 2020, p.101(51))

- a. Ma-tamís ang **kéndi=ng** b<in>ilí ng bátà.  
ADJ-sweet NOM candy=LK <PFV>buy[PV] GEN child  
‘The candy that the child bought is sweet.’
- b. Ma-tamís ang b<in>ilí ng bátà=**ng kéndi**.  
ADJ-sweet NOM <PFV>buy[PV] GEN child=LK candy  
‘The candy that the child bought is sweet.’
- c. Ma-tamís ang b<in>ilí=**ng kéndi** ng bátà.  
ADJ-sweet NOM <PFV>buy[PV]=LK candy GEN child  
‘The candy that the child bought is sweet.’

(23) Non-DPs can’t be internal/final (Hsieh, 2020, p.102-3(53-4))

- a. \*Ma-lápit lang ang **kung** saán b<in>ilí ng bátà ang kéndi  
ADJ-near only NOM if where <PFV>buy[PV] GEN child NOM candy  
**tindáhan**.  
store  
intended: ‘The store where the child bought the candy is nearby.’
- b. \*Ma-lápit lang ang **kung** saán b<in>ilí(=ng) **tindáhan** ng bátà  
ADJ-near only NOM if where <PFV>buy[PV]=LK store GEN child  
ang kéndi.  
NOM candy  
intended: ‘The store where the child bought the candy is nearby.’

(24) Headless relatives (Hsieh, 2020, (55-6))

- a. Ma-tamís ang \_\_\_ b<in>ilí ng bátà.  
ADJ-sweet NOM <PFV>buy[PV] GEN child  
‘The one that/What the child bought is sweet.’
- b. \*Ma-ápit lang ang \_\_\_ (**kung**) (**saán**) b<in>ilí ng bátà ang kéndi.  
ADJ-near only NOM if where <PFV>buy[PV] GEN child NOM candy  
intended: ‘Where the child bought the candy is nearby.’

Another diagnostic that can distinguish these structures is the placement of clitics. Tagalog clitics tend to attach themselves to whatever appears first within their clause (more or less, see Kroeger (1993) and Kaufman (2010) for more discussion). In main clauses, which are typically VSO, the clitic follows the verb (25). If a non-DP is focus-fronted, as in (26), the clitic follows the focused element.

(25) I-ha~hagis **niya** ang bola sa aso.  
CV-FUT~toss 3SG.GEN NOM ball OBL dog

‘They<sub>sg</sub> will toss the ball to the dog.’ (Hsieh, 2020, p.250(45))

*Baseline*

- (26) Kay Inday **ko** i-b<in>igay \***ko** ang pusa=ng ito.  
OBL Inday 1SG.GEN CV-PFVgive 1SG.GEN NOM cat=LK this

‘It was to Inday that I gave this cat.’ (Hsieh, 2020, p.96(40))

*Focus-fronting*

If we assume that relative clauses always involve  $\bar{A}$ -movement to the edge of the relative clause, we might expect clitic placement to detect the moved element in Tagalog, and appear preverbally instead of postverbally within a relative clause (schematized in (27)). This prediction is mostly borne out for non-DP relative clauses, where clitics may appear either pre- or post-verbally, but not for DP relative clauses, where the clitic must appear in its usual, postverbal position.

- (27)  $XP_i [Op/wh_i \text{ CL } V \dots \Theta_P \dots]$  *Predicted clitic placement in  $\bar{A}$ -relatives*

- (28) Clitic placement in **DP** vs. non-DP relative clauses

- a. Tuma~takbo ang babae=ng [(**\*ko**) k<in>a-usap (**ko**)  
AV.IMPF~run NOM woman=LK <PFV>COM-talk(PV) 1SG.GEN  
kanina].  
earlier

‘The woman [who I spoke to earlier] is running.’ (Hsieh, 2020, (39))

*DP relative*

- b. Pu~punta ang aso sa lugar [kung saan (**niya**) i-ha~hagis  
FUT~go[AV] NOM dog OBL place if where 3SG.GEN CV-FUT~toss  
(**niya**) ang bola].  
3SG.GEN NOM ball

‘The dog will go to the place where they<sub>sg</sub> will toss the ball.’ (Hsieh, 2020, p.251(48))

*Non-DP relative*

One might think that the contrast in clitic placement between (28a,b) has to do with the fact that non-DP relative clauses employ an overt relative pronoun at the edge of the clause, while DP relatives employ a covert operator. Supposing that clitics only follow *overt* material in the left edge, (28) does not convincingly show that DP relatives lack  $\bar{A}$ -movement. However, the contrast between DP and non-DP relatives with respect to clitic placement is sharpened in free relatives, which always employ overt relative pronouns: clitics *must* follow the non-DP relative pronoun, while they *cannot* follow a DP relative pronoun.

- (29) Clitic placement in Free Relatives (FR) (Hsieh, 2020, (46-47b))

- a. [Kung ano (**\*mo**) ang i-ha~hagis (**mo**) sa kanya],  
if what 2SG.GEN NOM CV-FUV~toss 2SG.GEN OBL 3SG.OBL  
iyon ang ha~habul-in ng aso.  
DIST(NOM) NOM FUT~chase-PV GEN dog

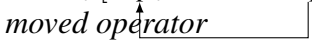

‘Whatever you toss to it, that’s what the dog will chase.’

*DP FR*

- b. [Kung saan (**mo**) ang i-ha~hagis (**\*mo**) ang bola], doon  
 if where 2SG.GEN NOM CV-FUV~toss 2SG.GEN NOM ball DIST.OBL  
 pu~punta ang aso.  
 FUT~go[AV] NOM dog  
 ‘Wherever you will toss the ball, it’s there that the dog will go.’ *non-DP FR*

The fact that DP relatives leave clitics adjacent to the verb means that the relative pronoun in (29a) must be external to the relative clause, or else the clitic should treat it as the initial element in its clause. The fact that non-DP relatives permit clitics to appear next to the relative pronoun suggests either of two differences between DP and non-DP relatives: 1) the position of the relative pronouns in (29) is different – external to the relative clause in (29a) and internal to the relative clause in (29b), or 2) relative pronouns are always external to the relative clause, and the different clitic behaviors reflect a presence or absence of operator movement within the clause. Both possibilities lead to the same conclusion: there is movement to the edge of the relative clause in non-DP relatives but not in DP relatives.

(30) Two schematics for clitic placement in non-DP relatives

- a.  $where_i [Op_i \text{ CL } V \dots \Theta_P \dots]$  *relative pronoun is external; clitic attaches to moved operator*  
  
 b.  $[where \text{ CL } V \dots where \dots]$  *relative pronoun is internal; clitic attaches to it*  


(31) Clitic placement in DP relatives

- $what_i [V \text{ CL } \dots \langle gap_i \rangle \dots]$  *relative pronoun is external; clitic attaches to verb*

In sum, relative clauses in Tagalog show two different profiles: DP relatives use a linker strategy, with flexible modifier-noun word order and clitic placement that appears insensitive to any movement to the edge of the clause; non-DPs use a relative complementizer+wh-expression, with rigid modifier-noun word order, and clitic placement that appears to detect movement to the clause edge. If any relativization strategies in Tagalog employ  $\bar{A}$ -movement, non-DP relatives are the clearest candidate for an  $\bar{A}$ -construction, with their overt wh-expression, their ability to  $\bar{A}$ -move in other contexts, and the behavior of clitics<sup>6</sup>.

Hsieh proposes that DP relatives, by contrast, are non-movement constructions, which section 2.1 suggested could look like either option in (14). Hsieh proposes that Tagalog DP

<sup>6</sup>At this point, the reader might wonder why I haven’t employed the most basic diagnostic for  $\bar{A}$ -movement to distinguish these two relativization strategies: long distance extraction. If it is true that DP relativization is not  $\bar{A}$ -movement but non-DP relativization is, we would expect DP relatives to be clause-bound but non-DP relatives to permit long distance dependencies. As discussed by Aldridge (2009); Kaufman (2011); Rackowski & Richards (2005); Richards (2009); Hsieh (2020), however, long distance extraction (of both DP and non-DPs) in Tagalog has a special property, in which the matrix verb must treat the gap-containing embedded clause as its pivot. As such, it is difficult to tell whether Tagalog has long-distance movement in the usual sense – see Rackowski & Richards (2005) vs. Kaufman (2011) and Hsieh (2020) for both movement and non-movement analyses.

relatives take the option in (14b), along the lines of McCloskey (2002) for Irish, Salanova (2011) for M̃ebengokre and Toosarvandani (2014) for Northern Paiute *-na* clauses, and suggests that there is a separate locality requirement that blocks resumption from targeting non-subject positions. Option (14a) fits more straightforwardly, given that the distribution of PRO is independently restricted this way. For Tagalog to motivate B&E’s proposal, it would have to instantiate an  $\bar{A}$ -version of Option (14b), which is not clear given the diagnostics we have, and requires additional constraints compared to Option (14a).

(14) Two options for non- $\bar{A}$ -movement relative clauses

- a. Option 1 (control):  $NP_i$  [*rel-clause* ...  $DP_j$  ... \* $PRO_i$  ]
- b. Option 2 (resumption):  $NP/Op_i$  [*rel-clause* ...  $DP_j$  ... *pro*<sub>*i*</sub> ]

A non-movement analysis of DP relatives, but an  $\bar{A}$ -movement analysis of non-DP relatives immediately raises the question of why the  $\bar{A}$ -strategy cannot be used for DPs. B&E also confront this problem – on their view, we might wonder why *only* the  $\bar{A}$ -probe specified for the closest DP may attract a DP, and the  $\bar{A}$ -probe that attracts non-DPs cannot. On Hsieh’s view, this difference falls out of the  $A/\bar{A}$  distinction.

Hsieh proposes that case cannot be pied-piped in Tagalog (along the lines of Polinsky (2016)), and so DPs are prohibited from non-case positions, such as clause-initial focus positions. As such, DPs are never allowed to  $\bar{A}$ -move, since they always need case, but non-DPs may freely front to a clause-initial position. This analysis is not straightforwardly available to B&E, since their proposal suggests that DPs *do* undergo  $\bar{A}$ -movement (presumably to an  $\bar{A}$ -position), just not in response to a canonical  $\bar{A}$ -probe. For B&E to adopt Hsieh’s proposal, they would have to add to their description of the typology of  $\bar{A}$ -probes the possibility that  $\bar{A}$ -movement can have different case properties in different contexts.

Though there are still many questions about Tagalog relative clauses to address, what we have seen so far lends itself to the following conclusion from Hsieh: there are at least two relativization strategies in Tagalog, one which involves  $\bar{A}$ -movement and applies to non-DPs, and one which does not (which applies to DPs). As such, Tagalog does not provide clear evidence for an  $\bar{A}$ -probe that targets the closest DP.

## 4 Turkish and Rejang

B&E also discuss two other languages in detail, Turkish and Rejang, as their supporting evidence for the existence of  $\bar{A}$ -probing for the closest DP. In the following sections, I discuss evidence from long-distance extraction, which shows that both patterns of probing for the closest DP behave like  $A$ -constructions more generally, rather than  $\bar{A}$ -movement.

### 4.1 Turkish

Turkish relative clauses have two different morphological forms, which are traditionally described as tracking a subject/non-subject distinction (Underhill, 1972; Hankamer & Knecht,

1976, a.o.). Following B&E, who follow Cagri (2005, 2009), these forms are glossed in (32) as ‘subject relative’ (SR) and ‘non-subject relative’ (NSR).

(32) Turkish subject vs. non-subject relatives (Branan & Erlewine, 2022, (12))

- a. kız-ı sok-an arı  
girl-ACC sting-SR bee  
‘the bee that stung the girl’ (Cagri (2005), p. 24, ex 15a)
- b. arı-nın sok-tuğ-u kız  
bee-GEN sting-NSR-POSS.3SG girl  
‘the girl that the bee stung’ (Jaklin Kornfilt, p.c.)

As B&E show with substantial evidence from Underhill (1972); Hankamer & Knecht (1976); Kornfilt (1984, 1997, 2000) and subsequent work, the SR form is not limited to the relativization of agents, but rather whatever DP is structurally highest/most prominent in the clause. For example, indefinite subjects in Turkish may surface in a lower position compared to their definite counterparts, in which case an object may be promoted to surface subject position. In this circumstance, object relatives may use the SR form, as in (33).

- (33) arı sok-an adam  
bee sting-SR man  
‘the man stung by a bee’ (Temürçü, 2001, p.147(199a);p.146(197a))

B&E provide other examples of high temporal adjunct DPs being relativized with the SR form, as well as subject possessors, which together comprise convincing evidence that the SR form is not about subject-hood, but rather proximity to the probe controlling the relative clause dependency. They conclude that Turkish relative clauses therefore have two possible probes: an  $\bar{A}$ -probe that targets the closest DP (SR), and a more neutral  $\bar{A}$ /REL probe that may skip intermediate DPs and target an object (NSR).

However, there is a subject extraction context in which the NSR form must be used instead of the SR form: long distance extraction. In (34), we see that when the relative clause contains an embedded clause with a subject gap, the embedded clause must have the NSR form rather than the SR form.

(34) Long distance relatives (Erdoğan Öztürk, p.c.)

- a. [Sevgi’nin [<sub>i</sub> kız1 sok-**tuğ**-u-nu] söylediği] arı<sub>i</sub>  
Sevgi-GEN girl-ACC sting-NSR-POSS.3SG-ACC say-NSR-POSS.3SG bee  
‘the bee that Sevgi said stung the girl’
- b. \*[Sevgi’nin [<sub>i</sub> kız1 sok-**an**-ı] söylediği] arı<sub>i</sub>  
Sevgi-GEN girl-ACC sting-SR-ACC say-NSR-POSS.3SG bee  
intended: ‘the bee that Sevgi said stung the girl’  
speaker comment: ungrammatical in any case, and would have to mean something like *the bee<sub>i</sub> to which Sevgi told who<sub>i</sub> stung the girl*

Example (34) shows two things: 1) that subject extraction is permitted within/from NSR clauses, and 2) that subject dependencies inside SR clauses are clause-bound<sup>7</sup>. If this is right, it shows that SR-dependencies are sensitive to intervening clause boundaries as well as intervening DPs, which is uncharacteristic of  $\bar{A}$ -dependencies. By contrast, NSR dependencies behave like  $\bar{A}$ -movement by targeting non-local DPs, both across intermediate DPs and intermediate clauses.

A question immediately arises, namely why can't the NSR form be used for *local* subject relatives if it can be used for long distance subject extraction? Since the SR and NSR forms appear to be in complementary distribution, B&E propose that there is a kind of lexical competition, in which the SR probe is selected first and only converts to an NSR probe if the first DP is not an  $\bar{A}$ -element<sup>8</sup>.

A version of their proposal is applicable here (amended so that the SR probe is not an  $\bar{A}$ -probe). Perhaps an A-dependency is chosen by default, with  $\bar{A}$ -dependencies established only in contexts where an A-dependency would fail. This kind of construction-level competition is puzzling, but is perhaps consistent with the fact that Turkish matrix wh-questions are usually not derived by  $\bar{A}$ -movement<sup>9</sup>.

In sum, B&E appear to be right that Turkish has two relativization strategies, one of which is used when the other is unavailable. However, only one of them seems to employ  $\bar{A}$ -movement. The SR strategy (i.e. the closest DP strategy) shows the locality profile of A-movement, like Northern Paiute *-di*-nominalizations and the English examples in (2).

## 4.2 Rejang

Rejang relative clauses employ the relative complementizer *gi*, and may only target the surface subject. In order to relativize a canonical object, the passive must be used (shown

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<sup>7</sup>One could object that (34) doesn't *prove* that SR relativization is clause-bound, since it could be that the matrix verb simply never selects SR as a possible embedded CP. If that were the case, SR forms could in principle allow  $\bar{A}$ -elements to escape, but we cannot construct any examples to test it without running into problems of selection. While this claim would make (34) consistent with B&E's proposal that SR involves  $\bar{A}$ -movement, the resulting theory would be unfalsifiable.

<sup>8</sup>Their proposed machinery for this kind of competition is slightly more involved than I have presented here. Their specific proposal involves splitting the two features on an  $\bar{A}$ -move-the-closest-DP probe, which they propose are  $\bar{A}$  and D, if the closest DP has no  $\bar{A}$ -features. In consequence, the closest DP is instead used as a  $\varphi$  goal, and the closest  $\bar{A}$ -element is used as an  $\bar{A}$ -goal. The splitting of these features causes the probe to be pronounced as the NSR form.

<sup>9</sup>Example (i) shows island insensitive wh-in-situ in Turkish.

(i) Cem [[kim-in beğen-diğ-i] ev-i] satın.al-dı?  
Cem who-GEN like-NSR-POSS house-ACC buy-PST

'Who is the x such that Cem bought the house which x likes?' (Görgülü, 2006, 5.2.1(2))

Though Turkish does not require  $\bar{A}$ -movement in matrix questions, it likely *allows* something like it, given that Turkish has very flexible word order – different elements may be scrambled to clause initial position in both wh- and non-wh-contexts. Given that scrambling may have  $\bar{A}$ -properties (see e.g. Müller & Sternefeld (2011) for discussion), Turkish likely employs  $\bar{A}$ -movement in some contexts.



in the contrast between (35a,b).

- (35) Rejang theme relatives (McGinn, 1998, p.362(5b,6))
- a. \*tun [gi pelisi o m-akep \_\_\_\_ kelem] o  
 person C<sub>gi</sub> police the ACT-catch \_\_\_\_ last.night the  
 intended: ‘the person that the police arrested last night’
  - b. tun [gi t<en>akep pelisi \_\_\_\_ kelem] o  
 person C<sub>gi</sub> PASS-catch police \_\_\_\_ last.night the  
 ‘the person that was arrested by the police last night’

The only exception to the above generalization is when the subject is a clitic pronoun. In that case, another argument may be relativized across it. In (36), for example, the object undergoes wh-movement across the clitic subject *ko*. As B&E mention, however, this interaction with clitics does not provide a genuine counterexample to the claim that only the highest DP may be relativized, because cliticization is known to obviate intervention effects in A-movement more generally (see e.g. McGinnis (1998); Anagnostopoulou (2003)).

- (36) Jano [gi ko t<em>okoa \_\_\_\_]?  
 what C<sub>gi</sub> 2SG ACT-buy  
 ‘What did you buy?’ (McGinn, 1989, p.208(1b))

The crucial question is whether the Rejang relative clauses in (35) are  $\bar{A}$ -constructions. So far, they appear to behave identically to A-movement in showing a preference for the closest nominal, which can be ameliorated by cliticizing interveners. B&E provide some examples of long distance relativization (38), which they analyze as instances of long-distance  $\bar{A}$ -movement. However, the morphology and choice of complementizers make the examples in (38) compatible with another view, one in which long-distance extraction in *gi*-relatives is generally ruled out, but some complementizers permit successive cyclic A-movement across them. First, it is important to note that the typical complementizer used for embedded clauses is *bawo*, not *gi* (see (37)).

- (37) Alui m-adea' [**bawo** Desi teko ceño']  
 Alui ACT-say C Desi come late  
 ‘Alui said that Desi came late.’ (McGinn, 1989, p.359(2a))

When attempting to form a long-distance relative clause, the choice of embedded complementizer has consequences for whether the base position of the relativized argument may be realized as a gap or a resumptive pronoun: embedded *bawo* clauses require resumption, while embedded *gi* clauses do not. Note that in either case, the matrix verb must be in the passive, because dependencies established by *gi* clauses must target the surface subject – if these clauses were in the active Voice, only the agent of *say*, namely *Alui*, would be accessible for relativization.

- (38) “Long distance extraction” in Rejang (McGinn, 1998, p.368(26,28))

- a. tun    tuey [gi \_\_\_\_ n-adea' Alui [**bawo si** teko ceño']] o  
 person old C<sub>gi</sub>    PASS-say Alui C    3sg came late    the  
 'the old person of whom it was said (by Alui) that he/she came late'
- b. tun    tuey [gi \_\_\_\_ n-adea' Alui [**gi** \_\_\_\_ teko ceño']] o  
 person old C<sub>gi</sub>    PASS-say Alui C<sub>gi</sub>    came late    the  
 'the old person of whom it was said (by Alui) that he/she came late'

Unpacking these examples, it appears that in (38a), the embedded complementizer *bawo* blocks movement of the embedded subject to a position from which it can be relativized. "Relativizing" the embedded subject therefore appears to require a silent element to be generated as the passive subject of the matrix clause, which is coindexed with an embedded resumptive pronoun. On this view, (38a) is not a case of long-distance  $\bar{A}$ -movement.

The gap in (38b) indicates that the embedded *gi* clause *does* permit the embedded subject to move to a higher position, namely the subject position of the matrix clause, from which it can be relativized. Thus *gi* clauses do appear to permit long-distance movement. However, this movement looks like *raising*: the embedded subject moves to become the passive subject of the matrix clause. To maintain the view that this is  $\bar{A}$ -movement, we would have to conclude that (38b) is a case of hyperraising (which is apparently ruled out in (38a)). Alternatively, if we treat *gi*-clauses as containing A-dependencies (rather than  $\bar{A}$ ), (38) can simply be analyzed as showing that Rejang relative clauses can only be long distance in contexts that permit successive cyclic A-movement.

(39) Proposed analogous English versions of (38)

- a. with *bawo*: 'the old person of whom it was said (by Alui) that he/she came late'
- b. with *gi*: 'the old person who was said (by Alui) to come late'

In sum, Rejang, like Turkish, Tagalog and English, appears to have a relative clause construction with no  $\bar{A}$ -movement. The dependency contained in this construction shares properties with other A-constructions by targeting the highest DP (unless the highest DP is a clitic), and being blocked from crossing certain clause boundaries. Rejang is therefore another case where B&E's proposed  $\bar{A}$ -probing for the closest DP can be reanalyzed as just probing for the closest DP.

## 5 Conclusion – what have we learned?

B&E presented a series of relative clause constructions in Tagalog, Turkish and Rejang in which only the highest DP is available for relativization. They analyzed this behavior as evidence for an  $\bar{A}$ -probe that is specified to attract the closest DP. Their proposal therefore includes an assumption that all relative clauses are derived by some  $\bar{A}$ -mechanism, and as a result, adds to the typology of probes that languages can have (and that children must be expected to learn).

In this reply, I have offered counterevidence to the claim that the relative clause behavior found in Tagalog, Turkish and Rejang stems from an  $\bar{A}$ -probe. As a result, I have suggested that there is no need to update the typology of probes. What is needed instead is a different perspective on what constitutes a “relative clause”. This updated notion of “relative clause” includes not just adjectival clauses with  $\bar{A}$ -dependencies, but also adjectival clauses with control dependencies, or non-movement dependencies characterized by semantic rather than syntactic binding. Sections 2 and 3 discussed previous work that is compatible with this worldview, with explicit discussion of Toosarvandani (2014)’s analysis of Northern Paiute nominalizations and Hsieh (2020)’s analysis of Tagalog DP relative clauses.

Many questions still remain regarding why different probing strategies are utilized this way. For example, Turkish was shown to have an  $\bar{A}$ -type relative clause that only applied in contexts where the A-type was unavailable. Why Turkish should exhibit this kind of construction-level competition is puzzling, especially given that not every language with multiple relativization strategies does so. Thus, some of the puzzles from B&E’s approach and the extraction restriction literature at large are not avoided by simply changing some  $\bar{A}$ -probes to A-probes. However, provided that those puzzles are unavoidable on any view that sources properties of movement to properties of probes, the present view has a clear advantage in that it minimizes the space of possible probes that children must learn. Moreover, it capitalizes on independent diagnostics for different types of movement, whether or not those diagnostics match our descriptive labels for relative clause constructions.

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