# No logic in conflicting requirements: Reply to Branan 2022

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**Abstract.** Branan (2022) proposes that locality constraints on A-movement may be obviated if movement of the closest goal would violate antilocality, a condition which prohibits movement from being too short. This reply argues that the account is not sufficiently supported by the data, raises a number of theoretical concerns and is incompatible with the broader literature on antilocality. The inefficacy of antilocality as an explanation for the patterns discussed in the paper and the number of ancillary assumptions it requires raise concerns for the validity of antilocality constraints more generally.

## 1 Introduction

Branan (2022) (henceforth: B22) provides an account for apparently symmetrical A-movement configurations wherein a c-commanding element does not behave as an intervener for a lower element, in violation of standard locality constraints like *Shortest* (1).

(1) *Shortest*

If a head H attracts an element of category X, move the element of category X that H c-commands and that is not c-commanded or dominated by another element of category X that is also c-commanded by H. (B22:1)

An example of such a symmetrical configuration is the passive in many Bantu languages, where either the applied argument (2a) or the theme (2b) may move to subject position.

(2)  a.  Omusawo y-a-kwat-ir-w-a        __ eddagala.
        1.doctor   1-PST-hold-APPL-PASS-FV    5.medicine
        'The doctor had the medicine held for him.'

    b.  Eddagala   ly-a-kwat-ir-w-a        omusawo __.
        5.medicine 5-PST-hold-APPL-PASS-FV 1.doctor
        'The medicine was held for the doctor.'
        (Luganda; Pak 2008:362 *via* B22:4)

B22 proposes that while (2a) is well-behaved in regards to locality, (2b) involves a licit violation of *Shortest* because movement of the structurally higher applied object would violate Spec-to-Spec Antilocality, building on Erlewine (2016) and Deal (2019) (3). This locality violation is made possible by the Principle of Conflicting Requirements (4) (both

definitions are copied directly from B22:2).

(3)  *Generalized Spec-to-Spec Antilocality*

     a.  Movement of a phrase from Spec,XP must cross a maximal projection other than XP.

     b.  Movement from position A to position B crosses C if and only if C dominates A but not B.

(4)  *Principle of Conflicting Requirements*
    Elements do not count for Shortest if their movement would violate (3).

Evidence for the proposal comes from patterns of "noniterable symmetry": "an element may cross no more than one other internal argument when it is promoted to subject in the passive" or a possible site for A-scrambling (B22:2). Under this analysis only the highest element is inaccessible for movement due to Spec-to-Spec Antilocality and all other elements intervene for A-movement as predicted by standard locality constraints.

In this reply I argue that the proposal faces challenges both empirically and conceptually. B22 relies on three case studies to support the analysis: passives in Luganda and Haya, scrambling in Tongan, and scrambling in Japanese. Focusing on the first two case studies, I demonstrate that the data do not provide sufficient empirical support for the analysis, requiring additional stipulations which raise questions about the broader syntactic theory and typology. This casts doubt on their status as evidence for antilocality or the Principle of Conflicting Requirements. The proposed syntactic derivations are also difficult to reconcile with the broader cross-linguistic landscape and—most importantly—other phenomena which have been used as evidence for Spec-to-Spec Antilocality.

This paper does not aim to provide an alternative analysis for the phenomena discussed in B22; frankly, the data is too limited to make such an attempt with any confidence. The main goal of this reply is to argue against the efficacy of Spec-to-Spec Antilocality and the Principle of Conflicting Requirements as explanations for the observed patterns. While I do not aim to argue against antilocality constraints in general, or Spec-to-Spec Antilocality more specifically, the inadequacy of this type of explanation for the data at hand and the types of ancillary assumptions it requires raise doubts about its explanatory power more generally; I return to this issue in section 5.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents a brief synopsis of the analysis in B22; section 3 discusses B22's analysis of passives in Luganda and Haya;

section 4 focuses on B22's analysis of scrambling in Tongan; section 5 discusses cross-linguistic and broader theoretical concerns, and section 6 concludes.

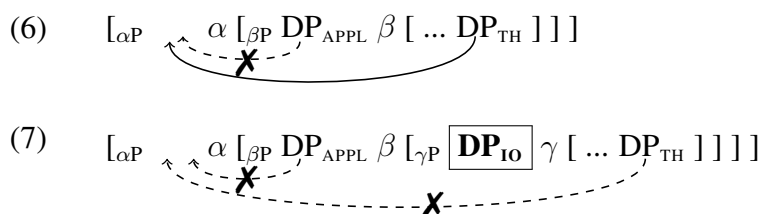## 2   Noniterable symmetry and Spec-to-Spec Antilocality

B22 discusses several cases of noniterable symmetry, and it is argued that each case involves the movement of a lower element across a higher element that is "too close". Under this account, symmetry is an illusion: purportedly symmetrical derivations in fact involve underlyingly different structures. The appeal of this account is that it (i) dispenses of the difficulty symmetrical patterns pose for theories of locality and (ii) explains why the symmetry no longer holds if there is more than three potential goals in the c-command domain of a probe. In this sense, the account in B22 is superior to other analyses of symmetrical patters: none of them straightforwardly predict an asymmetry to arise with the presence of an additional intervener. As I will argue below, however, the proposed analysis likewise does not capture the patterns without additional nontrivial stipulations.

An illustrative example of the noniterable symmetry under discussion is promotion to passive subject in Luganda. In an apparently symmetrical pattern, either the applied object (2a) or the theme (2b) may be promoted to subject. However, if there are three internal arguments, as with an applicative of a ditransitive, only the higher two arguments—the applied argument (5a) or the indirect object (5b)—may be promoted to subject, but the lowest argument—the theme (5c)—may not.

(5)   a.   Omuggo gw-a-lag-is-ibw-a         __ omusomesa abaana.
           3.stick   3-PST-show-APPL-PASS-FV   1.teacher   2.child
           'A stick was used to show the children the teacher.'

      b.   Omusomesa y-a-lag-is-ibw-a         omuggo __ abaana.
           1.teacher     1-PST-show-APPL-PASS-FV 3.stick       2.child
           'The teacher was shown the children using a stick.'

      c.   * Abaana ba-a-lag-is-ibw-a         omuggo omusomesa __.
           2.child  2-PST-show-APPL-PASS-FV 3.stick   1.teacher
           Intended: 'The children were shown to the teacher using a stick.'
           (Luganda; Pak 2008:363 *via* B22:4-5)

For B22, the crucial contrast is between the grammatical promotion of the theme over the applied argument in (2b) and the ungrammatical promotion of the theme over the indirect object and applied argument in (5c). The structure below is abstract, without specific labels—as I will discuss in section 3, the actual derivations are more complex and require

several ancillary assumptions. The important aspect of this structure is that the applied argument in both (2b) and (5c) is in the specifier of the complement of the attracting head, which makes its movement to the higher position antilocal. In (2b) this frees up the lower theme to move instead, in violation of Shortest (6). In contrast, the theme in (5c) remains inaccessible due to the second intervening argument: the indirect object (7).

(6)  $[_{\alpha P} \quad \alpha [_{\beta P} \text{DP}_{\text{APPL}} \beta [ \ ... \ \text{DP}_{\text{TH}} ] ] ]$

(7)  $[_{\alpha P} \quad \alpha [_{\beta P} \text{DP}_{\text{APPL}} \beta [_{\gamma P} \boxed{\text{DP}_{\text{IO}}} \gamma [ \ ... \ \text{DP}_{\text{TH}} ] ] ] ]$

Two alternative analyses for symmetrical passives are mentioned in B22 and dismissed as inadequate: leapfrogging (McGinnis 1998, 2000, 2001; Doggett 2004; Pak 2008) and optionality of case licensing (Holmberg et al. 2019). Assuming that the structure containing three internal arguments as in (5) involves a recursive addition of a second ApplP projection to the baseline ditransitive structure of (2), these accounts predict that the symmetry observed in (2) should apply recursively. For example, under a leapfrogging account, the theme may be promoted to subject position by moving to the outer specifier of ApplP—from this position it is then closer than, or at least equidistant with, the applied argument to a higher probe. If (5) involves two recursive ApplP phrases, the analysis then predicts that the theme should be able to first move to the lower Spec,ApplP and subsequently to the higher Spec,ApplP (8), erroneously predicting the ungrammatical (5c).

(8)  $[_{\text{ApplP}} \textbf{DP}_{\textbf{TH}} \text{DP}_{\text{INSTR}} \text{Appl} [_{\text{ApplP}} \textbf{DP}_{\textbf{TH}} \text{DP}_{\text{IO}} \text{Appl} [_{\text{VP}} \text{V} \textbf{DP}_{\textbf{TH}} ] ] ]$

While I do not intend to argue in favor of either of these alternatives, it is worth pointing out that both approaches may be amenable to the data if we abandon the assumption that recursive embedding of an ApplP has no effect on its internal syntax. For example, Pak (2008:364-365) suggests that a structure with three internal arguments as in (5) involves a low applicative embedded under a high applicative, due to an independent impossibility of combining more than one high applicative in Luganda. Only the high applicative allows for leapfrogging movement; the theme thus remains trapped in-situ, correctly predicting (5c). Conversely, under the case licensing approach (Holmberg et al. 2019), it would be sufficient to assume that the case licensing properties of Appl depend on whether it is selected for by v or another Appl. In order to meaningfully adjudicate between the alternatives, one

would need to provide evidence in favor of the two Appl heads displaying identical—or, conversely, different—syntactic properties.

Setting aside the adjudication between alternative analyses, the antilocality approach faces a number of other, more serious difficulties. The following section discusses two of the case studies in more detail: passives in Luganda and Haya and scrambling in Tongan.

## 3 Passives in Luganda and Haya

This section lays out the questions raised by the first case study: promotion to passive subject in Luganda and Haya. In a nutshell, B22's proposed analysis relies on positing covert structure where necessary and the absence of structure where antilocality needs to be invoked, with neither assumption sufficiently motivated. Additionally, the analysis raises a number of questions about the syntactic status of the passive agent.

### 3.1 Confound #1: Where structure is and isn't

Under the antilocality approach, a lower argument such as the theme in (2b) may move because the applied argument may not. This raises the obvious question: how can the applied argument be promoted to subject, as in (2a)? B22 proposes that the two sentences involve different derivations, with (2a) containing enough additional structure to allow for the movement of the applied argument without violating antilocality. The account relies on several additional assumptions about the clause structure in Luganda and Haya. Firstly, passives involve $v_{PASS}$, which has an EPP feature; this feature is satisfied either by movement or by external merge of the agent. Secondly, vP is directly selected by T and movement from Spec,vP to Spec,TP is antilocal. In contrast, ApplP is not selected directly by v—there is at least one projection between them, which B22 suggests to be Asp.

With this set of assumptions, the raising of a theme to passive subject is derived as follows: the applied argument moves to Spec,vP to satisfy EPP on $v_{PASS}$—this movement is not antilocal because of AspP between ApplP and vP (9). Given that vP is the complement of T, movement of the applied argument to Spec,TP would violate Spec-to-Spec Antilocality. Since the applied argument cannot move, the lower theme moves instead.

(9)    $[_{TP}$ DP$_{TH}$ T $[_{vP}$ DP$_{APPL}$ $[_{AspP}$ Asp $[_{ApplP}$ DP$_{APPL}$ Appl $[_{VP}$ V DP$_{TH}$ $]$ $]$ $]$ $]$ $]$

Before we turn to derivations involving the promotion of the applied argument as in (2a), two aspects of this structure are typologically unusual: the absence of any structure between vP and TP and the presence of AspP between ApplP and vP. On the first count,

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an obvious question concerns subject movement to Spec,TP in active sentences: the proposed structure predicts it to be ungrammatical. B22 includes some discussion on this point, which I return to in section 5. More pressingly, most accounts of the verbal extended projection include at least one, if not several projections between T and v: e.g. aspect (Cinque 1999; Iatridou et al. 2002; Svenonius 2004; Gribanova 2013; Harwood 2005) and voice (Collins 2005; Merchant 2013; Alexiadou 2014; Ramchand 2017; Roberts 2019; Angelopoulos et al. 2020). Newman (2020), for example, argues that active and passive (but not middle) clauses include Voice between vP and TP, which is responsible for facilitating the raising of the subject from Spec,vP to Spec,TP, which would otherwise have been antilocal; see also Erlewine (2020:fn.1) on the same point. If Luganda and Haya (as well as Tongan and Japanese, which are also discussed in the paper) are typologically different in the way B22 assumes, this raises interesting predictions for the clause structure of these languages, which needs to be corroborated with evidence.

On the second count—the presence of intervening structure between ApplP and vP—there is reason to doubt the validity of this claim. B22 suggests that the additional projection between ApplP and vP may correspond to aspect, since when expressed overtly, the aspectual suffix appears closer to the verbal root than the passive suffix (10).

(10)   Y-a-fuumb-ir-idd-[w]-a.
       1-PST-cook-APPL-ASP-PASS-FV
       'Something was cooked for her.'
       (Luganda; McPherson and Paster 2009:61 *via* B22:12)

However, McPherson and Paster (2009), where the example is cited from, argue that the passive suffix has a fixed position which regularly violates the Mirror Principle: both applicative and causative suffixes, even when they semantically outscope the passive, must appear closer to the root than the passive suffix. It is likely that the affix ordering in (10) is conditioned by the same constraint that requires the passive suffix to follow other verbal morphology and thus cannot be taken as indicative of underlying syntactic structure. There might also be vP-internal aspectual structure: inner aspect, which denotes telicity and Aktionsart, is widely taken to be introduced below the external argument (MacDonald 2008; Travis 2010, *inter alia*). However, it is unclear why this aspectual head would be introduced above ApplP and not below it—this could be evaluated based on the interactions between the theme, the applied object, and the semantics of the low aspectual head.

To summarize, the movement of the theme over the applied argument depends on two controversial assumptions: the absence of additional structure between v and T and the

presence of additional structure between Appl and v. B22 entertains and discards the simpler alternative of positing Spec,vP as the position of the derived passive subject, with v selecting directly for ApplP: movement of the applied argument from Spec,ApplP would then be too local, deriving the same basic pattern (fn.6). This option is not a viable alternative due to the symmetrical nature of the passive: the applied argument may in fact be promoted to passive subject (2a). This derivation is discussed in the following subsection.

## 3.2   Confound #2: Covert versus absent agent

To derive (2a) with the raising of the higher applied argument, B22 proposes that $v_{PASS}$ in Haya and Luganda may optionally host an agent in its specifier: in cases of theme raising to subject, the agent is fully absent, while in cases where the applied argument raises, the agent is phonologically null, but present. The derivation then proceeds as follows: since Spec,vP is already filled by the covert agent, the applied argument remains in-situ in Spec,ApplP. It is then no longer in an antilocal configuration with Spec,TP, allowing for its promotion to subject position (11).

(11)     $[_{TP}$ DP$_{APPL}$ T $[_{vP}$ **Ø**$_{AGENT}$ v ... $[_{ApplP}$ DP$_{APPL}$ Appl $[_{VP}$ V DP$_{TH}$ ] ] ] ]

The nature of this covert agent has theoretical implications which are not fully elaborated. B22 suggests that the agent may be phonologically null because the languages under discussion generally allow for pro-drop. On the other hand, if the agent is syntactically unexpressed, it is existentially bound, rendering the typical existential interpretation associated with passives (fn.10). There are thus two almost string-equivalent constructions: one with a referential pronominal agent that is covert and one which lacks a syntactically expressed agent altogether. The former results in the promotion of the applied argument to subject position (11) and the latter in the promotion of the theme (9).

The evidence for this contrast between passives involving promotion of the applied argument versus promotion of the theme is shown in (12): only the former is compatible with "agent-oriented adverbs".

(12)   a.   Akamyu ka-a-lis-ibw-a        __ kasooli n'obwegendereza.
             12.rabbit 12-PST-feed-PASS-FV     1.corn  with.care
             'The rabbit was fed corn with care.'

      b.   * Kasooli y-a-lis-ibw-a           akamyu   __ n'obwegendereza.
             1.corn   1-PST-feed-PASS-FV 12.rabbit     with.care
             Intended: 'Corn was fed to the rabbits with care.' (Luganda; B22:14)

The implications of the contrast in (12) are not straightforward. If, as B22 suggests, a syntactically unexpressed agent is existentially bound, (12b) should be grammatical, since the agent theta-role and the functional structure associated with it (the passive vP) are still present in the derivation. By extension, the grammaticality of (12a) cannot be used as evidence for the presence of a null pronominal agent. One would need to run additional tests to establish whether (12b) lacks an agentive interpretation altogether or lacks the functional structure necessary to host this type of adverbial, or perhaps this adverbial involves PRO which needs to be controlled by a syntactically active argument. If (12a) involves a pro-dropped argument in the position of the agent, one would expect it to have a referential interpretation and to behave like a pronominal in respect to binding conditions and crossover effects (see discussion in Legate 2012, 2014). Compatibility with agent-oriented adverbs is thus not sufficient evidence for a covert syntactically active agent.

From a typological perspective, the syntactic status of the implicit agent in passives is highly contested (see Wanner 2009; Bhatt and Pancheva 2017 and references therein). For example, while the implicit agent of a passive in English is able to bind PRO in a purpose clause (13a), analogous to its active counterpart (13b), it cannot bind PRO in complement clauses (14a), in contrast to the agent of an active sentence (14b).

(13)  a.  The books were sold Ø$_i$ [PRO$_i$ to make money]

     b.  They$_i$ sold the books [PRO$_i$ to make profit] (Wanner 2009:116)

(14)  a.  * John was promised Ø$_i$ [PRO$_i$ to wash the car]

     b.  I$_i$ promised John [PRO$_i$ to wash the car] (*ibid.*: 118)

Whatever the explanation for these patterns, the inability of an implicit agent to bind PRO in a complement clause (14a) necessitates an analysis which distinguishes it from the agent of an active clause. However, the structure proposed in B22 places the agent of both passive and active clauses in the same position—Spec,vP—predicting that they should behave the same way. This brings us to the last issue of the proposed structure for the passive: the position of the overtly expressed agent.
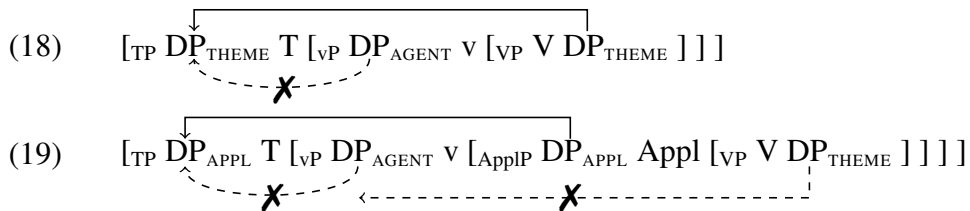
### 3.3   Confound #3: The position of the passive agent

B22 argues that v$_{PASS}$ in Luganda and Haya may optionally introduce the agent as its specifier. The previous subsection explains how this facilitates the promotion of the applied argument to Spec,TP: in the absence of the external argument, the applied argument is too local and the theme is promoted instead. On the assumption that the passive agent is indeed in Spec,vP, the analysis correctly explains another case of "noniterable symmetry" in the

passive: if the agent is overtly expressed, only the highest of the internal arguments may be promoted to subject position. Thus, the theme of a two-place transitive predicate may be promoted (15), as may the applied argument of a ditransitive (16). However, the theme of a ditransitive is once again unable to move (17), analogous to (5c).

(15)  Ekinnyanja ky-a-fuumb-ib-w-a        Nakato __.
      7.fish       7-PST-cook-PST-PASS-FV Nakato
      'The fish was cooked by Nakato.' (Luganda; Pak 2008:366 *via* Branan 2022:12)

(16)  ? Omusawo y-a-wandiik-ir-wa        Mukasa    __ ebbaluwa.
        1.doctor   1-PST-write-APPL-PASS 1.Mukasa     9.letter
        'The doctor was written a letter by Mukasa.' (Luganda; Pak 2007:9 *via ibid.*)

(17)  * Ekitabo ky-a-w-ebw'       omusajja abaana __.
        7.book  7-PST-give-PASS 1.man     2.child
        Intended: 'The book was given to the children by the man.' (Luganda; Pak 2008:367 *via ibid.*)

Under B22's analysis, (15)-(16) are derived in a similar fashion: in both configurations, the agent in Spec,vP is too local to Spec,TP and thus cannot move, allowing the theme (18) and the applied argument (19) to move instead. However, if the applied argument is present, the lower theme may not move because the applied argument intervenes, as predicted by the analysis (19).

(18)      [$_{TP}$ DP$_{THEME}$ T [$_{vP}$ DP$_{AGENT}$ v [$_{VP}$ V DP$_{THEME}$ ] ] ]

(19)      [$_{TP}$ DP$_{APPL}$ T [$_{vP}$ DP$_{AGENT}$ v [$_{ApplP}$ DP$_{APPL}$ Appl [$_{VP}$ V DP$_{THEME}$ ] ] ] ]

The main issue with the proposed structure is the position of the overt agent in Spec,vP— the same position where the agent of an active clause is introduced. This predicts that the agent should display similar properties in active and passive clauses, but evidence for this is lacking. B22 follows Pak (2008) in assuming this position for the passive agent; but the original paper, which in turn takes this assumption from Doggett (2004), only provides evidence that the agent forms a constituent with the predicate, not that the agent specifically occupies Spec,vP. The evidence includes required adjacency to the verb and the application of phrase-internal phonological rules.

Considerations of adjacency and constituency, however, are not evidence of an element having argument status or occupying a specific syntactic position. Cases similar to the Luganda passive have been observed in other languages, with c-command diagnostics employed to identify the syntactic status of the agent. For example, passive agents in Standard Indonesian are subject to similar adjacency requirements when they appear without a preposition (Chung 1975; Arka and Manning 1998; Cole et al. 2008; Kroeger 2014, a.o.): the bare agent of a passive must appear verb-adjacent (20a); if anything intervenes between the verb and the agent, a preposition must be used (20b).

(20)  a.  Saya di-beli-kan       Amir baju.
          I    PASS-buy-APPL Amir shirt

      b.  Saya di-beli-kan       baju *(oleh) Amir.
          I    PASS-buy-APPL shirt *(by)   Amir
          'I was bought a shirt by Amir.' (Indonesian; Arka and Manning 1998:11)

However, a bare passive agent cannot bind an anaphor in the theme position, in contrast to the agent of an active clause and, most crucially, in contrast to the agent of so-called object voice—a construction which involves promotion of the theme without demotion of the agent.[1] Thus, a verb-adjacent agent may not be an antecedent to the anaphor in the theme DP (21), unlike the agent of an active clause (22) or an object voice clause (23).

(21)  Amir$_i$ di-perlihatkan       Ayah$_j$ foto    dirinya$_{i/*j}$.
      Amir  PASS-show-APPL father picture self.3
      'Amir$_i$ was shown a picture of himself$_{i/*j}$ by father$_j$.' (Indonesian; *ibid.*)

(22)  Saya$_i$ menyerahkan diri saya$_i$ ke polisi.
      I       AV.surrender  self 1SG   to police
      'I surrendered myself to the police.' (Indonesian; *ibid.*:3)

(23)  Dirinya$_i$ mesti dia$_i$ serahkan  ke polisi.
      self.3     must  s/he surrender to police
      'S/he$_i$ must surrender himself/herself$_i$ to the police.' (Indonesian; *ibid.*:7)

This constellation of properties suggests that the verb-adjacent agent in Indonesian passives is neither a typical adjunct, nor a typical argument. While the precise nature of this element is unclear, the contrast with agents in active and object voice clauses strongly

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[1]See Legate (2021) on the typology of passive-like constructions and Legate (2014) for a comprehensive comparison between object voice and canonical passive voice.
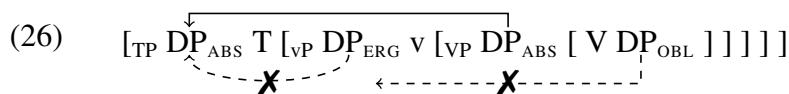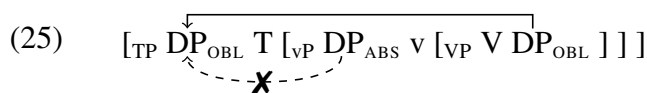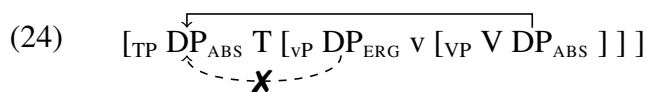
suggests that the passive agent does not occupy the same Spec,vP position as its active counterpart. Extending this to Luganda and Haya, in the absence of c-command diagnostics, constituency and adjacency requirements are not sufficient evidence for the passive agent occupying Spec,vP. However, if this assumption is discarded, the reasoning behind the patterns in (15)-(17) cannot be maintained.

## 3.4  Passives in Luganda and Haya: Summary

To summarize this section, B22's analysis of passives in Luganda and Haya relies on a number of assumptions which lack sufficient motivation given the evidence provided: (i) there are no additional projections between vP and TP; (ii) there *is* an additional projection between vP and ApplP; (iii) if there is no overt agent, it is either fully absent or covert; and (iv) overt passive agents are merged in Spec,vP. If any of these assumptions are discarded, the proposed analysis cannot be maintained. The next section discusses the problems associated with the second case study: scrambling in Tongan.

## 4  Scrambling in Tongan

The second case study concerns what B22 analyzes as A-scrambling in Tongan. The main pattern, schematically represented, is as follows. An absolutive object may A-scramble over an ergative subject (24) and an oblique case-marked object may scramble over an absolutive subject (25): for both configurations, A-movement of the lower argument is possible because the higher argument in Spec,vP is too close to the target position in Spec,TP. However, in a ditransitive clause with an ergative DP subject, only the higher absolutive object may be scrambled and the lower oblique may not: Under B22's account this is because the higher absolutive object may move without violating antilocality and correspondingly intervenes for the scrambling of the oblique (26).

(24)    $[_{TP}$ DP$_{ABS}$ T $[_{vP}$ DP$_{ERG}$ v $[_{VP}$ V DP$_{ABS}$ ] ] ]

(25)    $[_{TP}$ DP$_{OBL}$ T $[_{vP}$ DP$_{ABS}$ v $[_{VP}$ V DP$_{OBL}$ ] ] ]

(26)    $[_{TP}$ DP$_{ABS}$ T $[_{vP}$ DP$_{ERG}$ v $[_{VP}$ DP$_{ABS}$ [ V DP$_{OBL}$ ] ] ] ] ]

The proposal crucially relies on four assumptions: (i) all word order permutations in Tongan are achieved through A-scrambling, (ii) A-scrambling may be triggered by any head which does not host an overt specifier, (iii) the absolutive case-marked object uni-

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formly c-commands the oblique case-marked object; and (iv) A-scrambling is triggered by a probe which is relativized for animacy, but may be satisfied by an inanimate nominal.

The remainder of this section lays out B22's theory of scrambling in Tongan, focusing on the problems each of the above assumptions raises.

### 4.1 Problem #1: Defining A-scrambling

B22, citing Otsuka (2005), defines the basic word order in Tongan as VSO (27), but VOS is also possible (28).

(27) Na'e fili     ['e   Sione] ['a   Pila].
     PST  choose ERG Sione  ABS Pila
     'Sione chose Pila.' (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:246 *via* B22:15)

(28) Na'e fili     ['a   Pila] ['e   Sione] __.
     PST  choose ABS Pila   ERG Sione
     'Sione chose Pila.' (Tongan; *ibid.*)

These types of word order permutations are also possible for oblique case-marked arguments: for example, a locative phrase may surface after the absolutive subject (29a) or before it (29b).

(29)   a. Na'e 'alu ['a   Sione] [ki Tonga].
          PST  go  ABS Sione  to  Tonga
          'Sione went to Tonga.'

       b. Na'e 'alu [ki Tonga] ['a   Sione] __.
          PST  go  to  Tonga  ABS Sione
          'Sione went to Tonga.' (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:253 *via* B22:16)

B22's analysis relies on the assumption that these word order permutations all involve movement of a lower argument over a higher argument, and that this is A-movement rather than Ā-scrambling, since only the former is subject to strict locality which requires the highest nominal to move, regardless of any other features it may possess. However, Otsuka (2005), who B22 cites for this analytical assumption, does not conclusively argue in favor of an A-movement analysis for all scrambling configurations. Firstly, Otsuka focuses on A-properties of a fronted absolutive object as in (28); oblique case-marked arguments are not discussed in this respect. Contrasts between similar scrambling configurations in Samoan, another Polynesian language, suggest that extending the generalizations regarding absolutive scrambling to other types of arguments is premature: in Samoan, scrambling of

an absolutive object ameliorates Condition C violations (30), but scrambling of an oblique case-marked object over an absolutive subject does not (31), suggesting that only the former involves A-movement.

(30) a. Na fafaga e    ia$_{i/*j}$ [le fānau   a    le fafine$_j$].
        PST feed   ERG s/he the children GEN the woman
        'She$_{i/*j}$ fed the woman's$_j$ children.'
        *Speaker's comment: She is feeding another woman's children, not her own.*

   b. Na fafaga [le fānau   a    le fafine$_j$] e    ia$_{i/j}$ __.
        PST feed    the children GEN the woman ERG s/he
        'She$_{i/j}$ fed the woman's$_j$ children.'
        *Speaker's comment: This could mean that the same woman fed her own children. (Samoan; my field data)*

(31) a. E     alofa ia$_{i/j}$ [i   le tama teine a    le fafine$_j$].
        GENR loves s/he OBL the child girl  GEN the woman

   b. E     alofa [i   le tama teine a    le fafine$_j$] ia$_{i/*j}$.
        GENR love  OBL the child girl   GEN the woman s/he
        'S/he$_{i/*j}$ loves the woman's$_j$ daughter.'
        *Speaker's comment: This cannot mean that the woman loves her own daughter. (Samoan; my field data)*

The Samoan data suggests that reordering of arguments is not necessarily derived the same way across the board, which means that one cannot take the possibility of a particular word order permutation to be indicative of the possibility of A-movement—the surface word order might be derived through Ā-movement instead.[2]

Furthermore, leftward movement of the object is not the only possible derivation for the alternation between VSO and VOS word order. For example, Polinsky and Potsdam (2021) identify a number of issues with Otsuka's (2005) A-scrambling analysis and derive the same word order permutations through the right dislocation of the subject, rather than scrambling of the object.

Finally, the A-movement diagnostics discussed by Otsuka (2005) provide mixed results: while scrambling of the absolutive argument is strictly clausebound, does not trigger Weak

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[2]B22 acknowledges this point for the last case study, which focuses in A-scrambling in Japanese (not discussed here). In Japanese, arguments may be reordered both through A- and Ā-movement, and the two derivations may only be distinguished through their effect on reconstruction possibilities.

Crossover effects (32) and bleeds reflexive binding (33), as expected for A-movement, it does not *feed* reflexive binding—a scrambled absolutive argument cannot bind an ergative reflexive pronoun (34).[3] Polinsky and Potsdam (2021:75-76) also observe that the Weak Crossover data are more complicated than shown and do not provide conclusive evidence for object A-movement.

(32)    Na'e fili      ['a   e    taha kotoa$_i$] ['e   he'ene$_i$ tamai] t$_i$.
       PST   choose ABS DEF one every   ERG his      father
       'His$_i$ father chose everyone$_i$.' (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:250)

(33)    a.   Na'e fili      'e    Sione$_i$ 'a    ia$_{i/j}$ pē.
           PST   choose ERG Sione   ABS s/he only
           'Sione chose him/himself.' (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:251)

       b.   Na'e fili      'a    ia$_{i/*j}$ pē    'e    Sione$_j$ t$_i$.
           PST   choose ABS s/he only ERG Sione
           'Sione chose him/*himself.' (Tongan; *ibid.*:252)

(34)    a.   Na'e fili      'e    ia$_{i/*j}$ pē    'a    Sione$_j$.
           PST   choose ERG s/he only ABS Sione

       b.   Na'e fili      'a    Sione$_j$ 'e    ia$_{i/*j}$ pē    t$_j$.
           PST   choose ABS Sione ERG s/he only
           'He/*himself chose Sione.' (Tongan; *ibid.*:251-252)

The contradictory results of the A-movement diagnostics require closer scrutiny; there may be independent reasons why scrambling cannot feed reflexive binding in (34).[4] However, in the absence of an explanation for the pattern in (34), one should be cautious in adopting an A-movement analysis of the configurations at hand.

Even if we are to accept the stipulation that all word order permutations are achieved through A-movement, the analysis faces issues with the implementation of this movement, as discussed in the following subsection.

### 4.2   Problem #2: What drives A-scrambling and covert specifiers

The analysis of Tongan scrambling proposed in B22 relies on several stipulations which appear to be at odds with each other. Firstly, in departure from Otsuka (2005), who proposes

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[3]The glosses and notations with referential indexes are slightly altered from the source for exposition.

[4]Otsuka (2005:252) suggests that there is a language-specific constraint requiring the reflexive antecedent to be ergative case-marked. This predicts that an absolutive case-marked subject should not be able to bind a reflexive pronoun, a prediction not discussed by Otsuka.

that A-scrambling in Tongan always targets Spec,TP, B22 assumes that scrambling "must target the specifier position of a phrase with no overt specifier" (B22:18). This means that, depending on the syntactic configuration, A-scrambling may be triggered by a variety of functional heads—in B22, these are at least T and v. A head may lack an 'overt specifier' either because no specifier has been merged, as in the case of T, or because its specifier is unpronounced due to being a trace of movement or a null pronoun, as B22 suggests may be the case with v. This is meant to explain why an oblique argument of a ditransitive may not be scrambled if the ergative argument is expressed as a full DP (35), but may be scrambled if the ergative argument is expressed as a preverbal clitic (36).

(35)  a.  Na'e tuku ['e  Sione] ['a  e     tohi] ['i he   loki].
          PST  leave ERG Sione  ABS DEF book in DEF room

     b.  * Na'e tuku ['i he   loki] ['e  Sione] ['a  e     tohi] __.
            PST  leave in DEF room ERG Sione  ABS DEF book
         'Sione left the book in the room.' (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:263 *via* B22:17)

(36)  a.  Na'a ⎡ne⎤ tuku ['a  e     tohi] ['i he   loki].
          PST  3SG leave ABS DEF book in  DEF room

     b.  Na'a ⎡ne⎤ tuku ['i he   loki] ['a  e     tohi] __.
          PST  3SG leave in DEF room ABS DEF book
         'He/she left the book in the room.' (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:263 *via* B22:16-17)

In (35), since v has an overt specifier, scrambling is triggered by T. The ergative DP in Spec,vP is antilocal to Spec,TP, so the absolutive object may scramble instead; the oblique argument, however, may not move because of the intervening absolutive DP (26). In (36), on the other hand, v lacks an overt specifier—the ergative argument "either undergoes movement to some higher position or is linked to a null element in Spec,vP" (Branan 2022:19)—and is thus able to trigger scrambling. In this case, the absolutive argument is antilocal to Spec,vP, so the oblique argument may move instead (37).

(37)      [$_{vP}$ DP$_{OBL}$ Ø$_{ERG}$ v [$_{VP}$ DP$_{ABS}$ [ V DP$_{OBL}$ ] ] ]
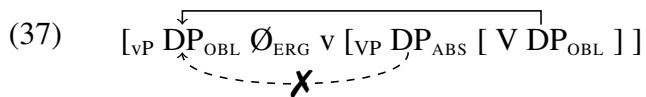
The proposed condition on scrambling is incompatible with probe-driven movement in the narrow syntax: if feature-driven movement proceeds cyclically, how can the probe on v be sensitive to whether the ergative argument undergoes subsequent movement?[5] Unfortunately, the remaining assumptions about constraints on scrambling depend on it being

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[5]There are approaches which connect EPP properties to phonological or prosodic constraints a given

driven by a syntactic feature on the probe, resulting in a clash in assumptions; this is discussed in the following subsection.

There is another issue with the derivation in (37): it relies on the absence of any additional structure between VP and v. If there were at least one other projection above VP, the oblique argument would, presumably, not be able to move to Spec,vP because the higher absolutive argument would always intervene by virtue of no longer being antilocal. Additionally, the absence of any other heads between V and v explains why an oblique argument cannot be scrambled to a position between the ergative agent and the absolutive theme (38): there is simply no possible landing site for this movement.

(38)  * Na'e tuku ['e  Sione] ['i he  loki] ['a  e     tohi].
        PST  leave ERG Sione  in  DEF room ABS DEF book
        Intended: 'Sione left the book in the room.'  (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:262 *via*
        B22:19)

However, the first case study, which focused on passives in Luganda and Haya, hinged on the assumption that there *is* an additional projection between v and ApplP (and by extension, between v and VP). In both cases, the presence or absence of additional projections remain unmotivated: for Luganda and Haya, the only evidence comes from suffix ordering (see subsection 3.1) and for Tongan, the proposed structure is assumed without further discussion. And yet, these assumptions are fundamental to successfully arguing for the applicability of antilocality constraints. The reliance of antilocality-based approaches on these types of assumptions about covert structure calls into question their explanatory efficacy; I return to this point in section 5.

### 4.3 Problem #3: Argument structure and the features that drive scrambling

An important assumption for B22 is that scrambling is driven by a feature on the probe. This is encoded both in the definition of Shortest (1) and in the nature of the elements which participate in scrambling. In particular, B22 proposes that scrambling in Tongan is triggered by a probe which is relativized for [HUM] (the feature associated with animate nouns). This is meant to explain why the oblique case-marked argument in (39) may scramble to the left of the ergative DP, in contrast with the ungrammatical (35).

(39)  Na'e 'oange [kia     Sione] ['e  Mele] ['a  e     ika].
        PST  give    to.PERS Sione  ERG Mele  ABS DEF fish

head may be subject to, e.g. Richards's (2016) Contiguity Theory. However, such theories do not assume sensitivity to the surface PF of a given derivation and are thus compatible with cyclic syntactic derivation.

'Mele gave a fish to Sione.' (Tongan; Otsuka 2005:352 *via* B22:20)

Note that examples (35) and (39) do not form a minimal pair, since the lexical verb differs between the two: *tuku* 'leave' in (35) and *'oange* 'give' in (39). While both verbs may be ditransitive, there is no guarantee that their argument structure frames are identical. A verb like *leave* is likely to subcategorize for a theme c-commanding a locative phrase,[6] whereas the goal argument of *give* typically c-commands the theme (Larson 1988; Pylkkänen 2008; Citko et al. 2017, among many others). This raises doubts about the relevance of the constraint proposed by B22 to explain this pattern: *Multitasking* (40).

(40)  *Multitasking*

If two operations A and B are possible (independent of Shortest), and the features checked by A are a superset of those checked by B, the grammar prefers A. (van Urk 2015:353 *via* Branan 2022:20)

For Tongan scrambling, this constraint means that the probe triggering scrambling will attract the lower animate argument despite this being a violation of Shortest, as e.g. in (39). In the absence of an animate internal argument, the highest inanimate argument must move in accordance with Shortest, as in (35).

The discussion around the features which trigger scrambling and the interaction between Shortest and Multitasking faces unresolved problems. Firstly, as discussed above, this sort of probe-driven movement is difficult to reconcile with the assumption that scrambling targets the specifier of any head which lacks an overt specifier. Secondly, if the feature triggering scrambling is sensitive to animacy, why does it attract inanimate nominals at all? Within a framework of competing constraints, wouldn't a derivation without any scrambling be preferable to one where the feature which triggers scrambling remains unsatisfied? Finally, if Shortest can be violated in favor of Multitasking, what are the assumptions about the nature of probing and a probe's search domain? Does a probe interact with all potential goals in its c-command domain and subsequently determine which goal optimally satisfies syntactic constraints like Shortest, Multitasking and antilocality?

### 4.4   Scrambling in Tongan: summary

To summarize, the antilocality-based analysis of scrambling in Tongan relies on the following assumptions: (i) all scrambling is derived through A-movement; (ii) scrambling is triggered by any head without an overt specifier, and (iii) scrambling is driven by a feature

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[6]Polinsky and Potsdam (2021:71-75) treat the locative phrase of this verb as a "peripheral XP" which is an adjunct to VP and is thus not c-commanded by the theme.

which is sensitive to animacy ([HUM]), but which may be satisfied by an inanimate nominal if no suitable goal is available. The first assumption is not sufficiently supported by the data and the latter two are incompatible with each other.

The last two sections have laid out the issues with the data that B22 relies on. The following section argues that the proposed analysis is also incompatible with the broader literature on antilocality.

## 5    The broader outlook: Antilocality and its repairs cross-linguistically

The previous sections argue how the case studies discussed in B22—passives in Luganda and Haya and scrambling in Tongan—fall short in providing support for the proposed analysis: that Spec-to-Spec Antilocality may obviate Shortest. The proposal also faces conceptual challenges when evaluated against the broader literature.

B22 cites Bošković (1997, 2016b)[7], Erlewine (2016), and Deal (2019) as precursors to the version of antilocality employed in the paper. Setting aside Bošković (1997), which only rules out phrase-internal specifier-to-adjunct movement, Bošković (2016b) and Erlewine (2016) employ Spec-to-Spec Antilocality to account for constraints on subject Ā-movement—more specifically, to rule out movement from Spec,TP to Spec,CP. In addition to the papers cited in B22, a growing body of work has taken up Erlewine's (2016) definition of antilocality (Brillman and Hirsch 2016; Amaechi and Georgi 2019; Erlewine 2020; Davis 2020, to appear; Bondarenko and Davis to appear). In line with the original paper, they are predominantly concerned with subject Ā-movement from Spec,TP to Spec,CP. For example, Bošković (2016b); Brillman and Hirsch (2016); Erlewine (2020) argue that the *that*-trace effect in English is the result of a ban on subject movement from Spec,TP to Spec,CP (41a); in this case, antilocality may be obviated by inserting additional structure such as an adverbial phrase (41b).

(41)    a.    * Who does John think [$_{CP}$ __ that [$_{TP}$ __ served as president?]]

      b.    Who does John think [$_{CP}$ __ that   [$_{AdvP}$ **for all intents and purposes**
          [$_{TP}$ __ served as president?]]] (Brillman and Hirsch 2016:78)

The account in B22, while relying on prior literature as precedent for a constraint on Spec-to-Spec movement, is incompatible with this literature. Firstly, if a potential antilocality violation may be obviated by moving a lower goal instead, this should be possible in other potentially antilocal configurations as well, for example, to repair a *that*-trace ef-

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[7]The actual reference in the paper is to Bošković (2016a), which, I presume, is an error, since it does not discuss antilocality at all.

fect: the proposal erroneously predicts that (42a) should be better than (42b), contrary to fact. This concern is also applicable to Deal (2019), who likewise employs Spec-to-Spec Antilocality to explain an apparent locality violation in A-movement.

(42)    a.    * What do you think [$_{CP}$ __ that [$_{TP}$ **who** brought __ ?]]

       b.    * **Who** do you think [$_{CP}$ __ that [$_{TP}$ __ brought what?]]

Secondly, a critical aspect of the analysis in B22 is the absence of additional structure between vP and TP, which means that, all things being equal, the agent of an active clause cannot raise to Spec,TP. For the languages B22 discusses (Haya, Luganda, Tongan, and Japanese), the author proposes that an active subject either remains in Spec,vP or moves to a higher position in Spec,CP. For a language like English, where the position of the subject in Spec,TP has been extensively substantiated in prior literature, B22 suggests that it simply lacks antilocality effects, "at least for A-movement" (Branan 2022:32). Such a supposition leads to major difficulties, given that, modulo the paper under discussion, Spec-to-Spec Antilocality has been overwhelmingly employed to rule out subject movement from Spec,TP to Spec,CP, meaning that the vast majority of evidence for the existence of such a constraint comes precisely from languages which have productive subject raising to Spec,TP. The proposal that antilocality constraints are subject to cross-linguistic variation or may be parametrized to a particular type of movement (A- versus Ā-) raises questions about the universality of movement constraints: how could such a fundamental constraint on the nature of movement be meaningfully parametrized, and does that mean that other fundamental constraints like Shortest may likewise be language-specific?

Finally, as pointed out by Baier (2017:376), the antilocality constraint employed by B22—Spec-to-Spec Antilocality—is "very sensitive to minor differences in clause structure", meaning that the addition of a single projection can render a derivation grammatical which would have been ungrammatical otherwise. This additional structure, however, is frequently unpronounced, meaning that its presence or absence is difficult to ascertain. This indeterminacy makes Spec-to-Spec Antilocality unfalsifiable. A vivid example of this can be seen in the discussion of covert versus absent structure in Luganda and Haya (subsection 3.1): there must be a covert projection between ApplP and vP because applied arguments are able to move to Spec,vP, whereas there must *not* be any additional structure between vP and TP because applied arguments cannot then move from Spec,vP to Spec,TP. The current state of syntactic theory does not provide us with an objective way to limit the amount and type of covert projections a given structure may employ. Both semantic and syntactic information may be bundled on one head or dispersed across several, and there

is no consensus on how to determine whether a particular projection is truly optional and thus absent when not overtly pronounced, or whether it is obligatory and always present, even if covert. In the absence of such a framework, it is impossible to identify a linguistic token which is *not predicted* by Spec-to-Spec Antilocality: in the absence of overt intervening structure, covert structure may always be assumed to salvage potential violations of the constraint. This raises questions both about the learnability and the utility of such a constraint in the first place.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has argued that the Principle of Conflicting Requirements proposed in B22, which ranks Spec-to-Spec Antilocality above Shortest, cannot adequately explain the data discussed in the original paper. For both passives in Luganda and Haya and scrambling configurations in Tongan, the analysis requires numerous additional stipulations which are typologically unorthodox and unsupported by the data. I have also highlighted conceptual inconsistencies in the resulting syntactic model and the incompatibility of B22's proposal with other work on antilocality.

I have mainly focused on the inability of antilocality and the Principle of Conflicting Requirements to explain the data in B22. However, even if the theory was able to adequately capture the empirical facts, it would be a problematic addition to Universal Grammar. As discussed in the previous section, Spec-to-Spec Antilocality is unfalsifiable, and thus theoretically ineffectual, unless it is paired with a theory which can systematically distinguish between covert and absent structure independently of purported antilocality effects. The proposed interaction between antilocality and locality is also problematic: it is unclear why an eligible goal would not intervene even if it cannot itself move. As discussed in the previous section, this makes undesirable predictions for other purported antilocality effects cross-linguistically. It also makes false predictions for other cases where a goal matches the features of the probe but is independently unable to move, e.g. with defective intervention by dative subjects (Preminger 2014) or in theories which connect the opacity of phases to their status as potential goals (Rackowski and Richards 2005; van Urk and Richards 2015; Halpert 2019; Ershova 2024). This casts doubt on the explanatory utility and theoretical appeal of the Principle of Conflicting Requirements.

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