The Morphosyntax of C and Locality of EPP in Buli

1. Goals: Buli is a language of the Gur group of the Niger-Congo family spoken in the Upper East region of Ghana, which has been hitherto little described. This paper has two main goals: First, I provide a detailed syntactic description of the morphosyntax of A-dependencies in Buli. Buli exhibits an alternation of the form of C under A-dependency — *al/ at. Second, I undertake a theoretical investigation of the condition of C alternation within the framework of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 2000, 2001ab).

2. The Morphology of C: A-dependency in Buli is formed in Wh/Focus constructions, Head-external and Head-internal relativization (HER and HIR, respectively), and Factive. It typically involves an overt movement of an element in front of C al/ at. Descriptively, the patterns of C alternation come in two varieties. In Wh/Focus, local subject extraction triggers al/ while the choice of al/ or at/ is free in non-subject extraction.

(1) a. ká wànà, al/*âtì tì tà nà:-mú? [Subject Wh-question]
   F who C have cow-D
   ‘Who owns the cow?’
b. ká bwà, âlû/âtì kpâr-u-a-wà tà tì? [Object Wh-question]
   F what C farmer-D have
   ‘What does the farmer have?’
c. kpâr-u-a-wà (*al/*âtì) tà ká bwà? [Object in-situ Wh-question]
   farmer-D C have F what

(2) a. ká kpâr-u-a-wà âl/*âtì tì tà nà:-mú. [Subject Focus]
   F farmer-D C have cow-D
   ‘It is the farmer who owns the cow.’
b. ká nà:-mú, âl/*âtì kpâr-u-a-wà tà tì. [Object Focus]
   F cow C farmer-D have
   ‘It is the cow that the farmer owns.’

In Relativization/Factive, on the other hand, the C alternation behaves unambiguously; the local subject extraction results in al/ while non-local subject extraction triggers at/.

(3) a. kpâr-u-a-wà:yí, [âl/*âtì tì tà nà:-mú] lá] [Subject HER]
   farmer-REL C have cow-D DEM
   ‘the farmer who has the cow’
b. nà-bú:yí, [*âl/*âtì kpâr-u-a-wà tà tì] lá] [Object HER]
   cow-REL C farmer-D own DEM
   ‘the cow which the farmer owns’
c. [kpâr-u-a-wà, [âl/*âtì tì tà nà-búy] lá] [Object HIR]
   farmer-D C own cow-REL DEM
   ‘the cow which the farmer owns’

(4) a. Atim, âl/*âtì tì ná:jì Amok tô Bâba pó pientik. [Subject Factive]
   Atim C hit Amok gave Bâba stomach white
   ‘The fact that Atim hit Amok pleased Bâba.’
   Amok C Atim hit gave Bâba stomach white
There are three properties that call for explanation. The first is the condition for the *ālī/ātī alternation. The second is the split between Wh/Focus and Relativization/Factive. The third is the asymmetry that in Relativization allows the subject to move to Spec, CP leaving the head in-situ (HIR in (4c)), whereas Wh/Focus does not allow this strategy; rather in Wh/Focus in-situ, nothing may move to Spec, CP as in (1c).

3. The Morphosyntax of C –EPP and Locality--: I propose that the morphology of C in Buli is determined by the locality of EPP on C; C is realized as *ālī if Cs EPP is satisfied most locally, that is, by the local subject. On the other hand, C is realized as ātī if Cs EPP is satisfied non-locally, crossing over the local subject.

(5) If C’s EPP is satisfied locally, C is realized as *ālī. Otherwise, it is realized as ātī.

I further propose that the asymmetry between Wh/Focus and Relativization/Factive is due to one crucial difference: C in the former has an Operator feature whereas the one in the latter does not. This is supported by the fact that the former exhibits an “edge” interpretive effect (see Chomsky 2001ab), but the latter does not (note that HER and HIR in (3b-3c) and the three variations of Factive in (4) have the same interpretations).

(6) a. C in Relativization/Factive: C_{EPP}
   b. C in Wh/Focus: C_{Op–EPP}

(6a) straightforwardly explains the C alternation in Relativization/Factive. The subject, but not the non-subjects, satisfies C’s EPP most locally, which leads to *ālī/ātī asymmetry. This also accounts for why Spec, CP cannot be filled by a non-operator in Wh/Focus (1c), in contrast with Relativization/Factive in (3c) and (4b)/(4c).

In Wh/Focus, on the other hand, C’s EPP is linked with Op-features. Thus while the subject extraction is local, non-subject extraction has a duality: it is non-local in terms of the pure EPP, but it is perfectly local in terms of the EPP combined with the Op-features. This contingency creates indeterminacy that leads to the optionality in non-subject Wh/Focus extraction. I also show that further confirming evidence comes from long-distance Ā-dependency, in which long-distance extraction of an embedded subject or embedded non-subjects expectedly results in *ālī for Wh/Focus and ātī for Relativization/Factive.

Possessor extraction also behaves as predicted; the relativization of the possessor results in ātī because the subject possessee is closer to C (see (7)).

(7) Ātim dā gbáŋ-kā;y *ālī/ātī kà ńañ-kà lēlē lā.
   Ātim bought book-REL C its cover is-beautiful D
   ‘Atim bought the book whose cover Amok designed.’

Furthermore, the locality theory correctly accounts for the fact that ālī changes to ātī in the presence of an intervening adverb since the adverb is closer to C than the subject relativized head is in this structure.

(8) nūr’wā(y) *ālī/ātī dēmwā *(wa) dē mángō-kū lā kpi yā.
   man-D C yesterday (he) ate mango-D DEM dead CMP
   ‘The man who ate the mango yesterday is dead.’

4. Some Consequences and Theoretical Implications: The data provides solid evidence that EPP is a general property, not limited to T or I (cf. LGB), extending EPP to C. This is of great empirical significance in the light of the proposals that C is the locus of both Ā and Ā-features (see Chomsky 2001b and others). Another implication is that the proposed analysis is a step forward dispensing with Spec-Head Agreement, which has been vigorously argued for by Chung 1998 among others for Wh-Agreement phenomena.