

Core proposal. It is increasingly thought that overly local movement in syntax is ruled out via anti-locality constraints: Comp(lement)-to-Spec(ifier) Anti-Locality (CSAL) (Abels 2003; Grohmann 2003) bans Comp,XP to Spec,XP movement, while Spec-to-Spec Anti-Locality (SSAL) (Erlewine 2016) bans Spec,XP to Spec,YP movement if YP immediately contains XP. I propose unifying both under a single constraint, the Closest Head Condition (CHC), which I show also readily derives (exceptions to) the Condition on Extraction Domain (CED) (Huang 1982) and successive-cyclic movement (SCM)/escape hatches:

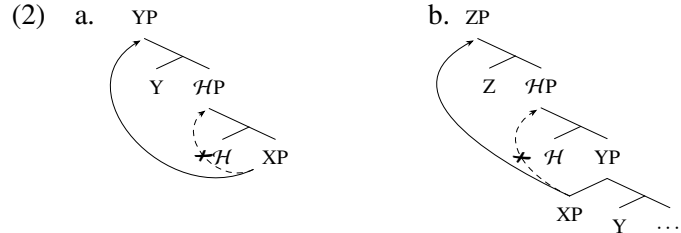
(1) *Closest Head Condition*

Let $\mathcal{H}$ be the closest head that c-commands a phrase XP.

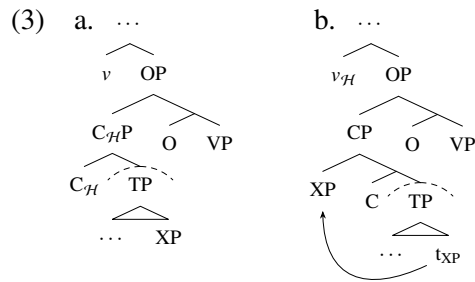
Any searching movement probe P can see XP iff P c-commands $\mathcal{HP}$ and $\mathcal{HP}$ is a complement.

CSAL and SSAL are hence unified under the CHC by constraining search spaces in lieu of limiting the distance an XP can move, in the spirit of Branan & Erlewine (in press). Since the closest c-commanding head $\mathcal{H}$ is used to grant access to higher probes, a moving element must necessarily cross $\mathcal{HP}$. But the formulation in (1) also straightforwardly yields distinct movement conditions for Specs and Comps (see also Newman 2020). For a movable Comp, its $\mathcal{H}$ is always its selecting sister (Comp-to-Spec, 2a); for a movable Spec, it is the sister of some YP dominating it (Spec-to-Spec, 2b). The further provision that $\mathcal{HP}$ be a complement derives different movement possibilities for elements contained within specifiers.

Escape-hatches. Under the CHC, if $\mathcal{HP}$ is a specifier, any XP for which $\mathcal{H}$ is the closest head is invisible to higher probes. Consequently, Comps-of-Specs are opaque, deriving a CED-like effect. Conversely, a specifier and its own specifier share a closest c-commanding head $\mathcal{H}$. If their $\mathcal{HP}$ is a comple-



ment, Specs-of-Specs are visible under the CHC. Following Adger (2025), if one assumes that object CPs and DPs are specifiers of a functional projection OP (see also Brody 2000 and Ramchand 2008, a.m.o.), this asymmetry naturally derives SCM. For example, the Comp of a specifier CP (i.e. TP) is invisible because its closest c-commanding head (C, marked with $\mathcal{H}$) belongs to a specifier (3a). However, moving an XP within TP to Spec,CP shifts its closest c-commanding head to v (3b). Since vP is a complement, Spec,CP is visible under the CHC. Thus, the CHC derives both anti-locality and locality effects via a single mechanism. Building on these core mechanics, I illustrate the CHC's broader predictive power using novel subextraction data from two languages, alongside additional evidence from multiple cross-clausal movement.



Nested edges. Malayalam exhibits a cleft construction where elements move over a copula for focus (Jayaseelan & Amritavalli 2005; Aravind 2018) (4a). I provide new data showing that a possessor within a DP may also be clefted, even out of specifier subjects (4b). The CHC straightforwardly predicts this transparency: as a Spec-of-Spec, the possessor shares a closest c-commanding head with its containing DP (e.g. Asp or T for *in-situ* external arguments). For the same reason, the CHC also predicts that Specs-of-Specs-

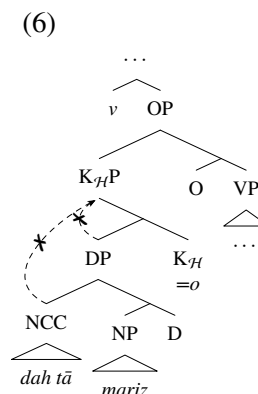
of-Specs are visible, which is also borne out: the possessor of a possessor may be moved for focus (4c).

- (4) a. [Sitayute ammayute sahōdari]_i=yāññũ — _i avane vivāham kalicc-atũ
Sita's mother's sister=is him marriage finish-NMLZ
'It is Sita's mother's sister [and not someone else] who married him.'
- b. [Sitayute ammayute]_i=yāññũ [— _i sahōdari] avane vivāham kalicc-atũ
Sita's mother's=is sister him marriage finish-NMLZ
'It is Sita's mother's sister [and not someone else's sister] who married him.'
- c. Sitayute_i=yāññũ [— _i ammayute sahōdari] avane vivāham kalicc-atũ
Sita's=is mother's sister him marriage finish-NMLZ
'It is Sita's mother's sister [and not someone else's mother's sister] who married him.'

Anti-locality bleeds SCM. New data show that Colloquial Persian allows the left-branch extraction (LBE) of a numeral classifier complex (NCC) from the left edge of a DP (5a), broadly similar to Tumbalá Ch’ol (Little 2020). But LBE is only allowed when there are no higher heads on the nominal above the NCC. If, for example, the differential object marker (*r*)*o* — which I treat as a K head, following Ghomeshi (1997) — merges above the DP (e.g. because the object is human), the nominal becomes an island (5b) (cf. Karimi 1999, who only considers supposed LF *wh*-movement from (*r*)*o*-marked specific nominals).

- (5) a. *(dah tā) ye oqāb dar tul=e ruz (dah tā) muš šekār mikone*
 ten CL an eagle in course=EZ day ten CL mouse hunt does
 'An eagle, over the course of a day, hunts ten mice.'
 b. (**dah tā) ye pezešk dar tul=e ruz (dah tā) mariz=o mo'āyene mikone*
 ten CL a doctor in course=EZ day ten CL patient=DOM examine does
 'A doctor, over the course of a day, examines ten patients.'

As the Comp of a specifier KP, DP is opaque per the CHC. Moreover, the CHC also blocks any additional movement that could otherwise make the NCC visible. Because K is the closest head for both the NCC and DP, the CHC precludes Spec-to-Spec movement of the NCC and Comp-to-Spec movement of the DP to Spec, KP (6), operations that would bring the NCC to a nested-specifier escape hatch (cf. 4b–c). This effectively generalizes Abels’ (2003) intuitions about the blocking of P-stranding, in that both subextraction and relocation of the NCC to the Spec(-of-Spec) of KP are blocked by the (anti-)locality profile of the CHC.



Stacked edges. On some approaches to phases/escape hatches, multiple specifiers of C can move independently (Chomsky 2001; McGinnis 2004; Müller 2010, i.a.), whereas on others, only one specifier can (Bošković 2016; Holmberg et al. 2019; Adger 2025, i.a.). For the second group of approaches, operations like hyperraising and *wh*-movement may be expected to conflict (cf. Zyman 2017), if there is only one escape hatch and if A-movement precedes $\bar{A}$ -movement (*modulo* tucking-in). But data from languages like Brazilian Portuguese contradict this, suggesting that multiple escape hatches can indeed be at play (see also Fong 2019 and Zyman 2023 for discussion):

- (7) [Quais livros]_i elas_j parecem [CP —_i —_j que [_{HP} [_{TP} —_j leram —_i]]]
 which books they seem that read

‘Which books do they seem to have read?’

(Kobayashi 2020:18)

Recall that recursively nested specifiers sharing a closest head are visible under the CHC (4). For the same reason, multiple specifiers of the same phrase are equally visible to outside probes. Brazilian Portuguese is able to avoid SSAL in (7) through some means (e.g. by placing some head $\mathcal{H}$ between T and C, cf. Rizzi 1997). Assuming some such strategy, the CHC correctly rules in these multiple movements through CP (7).

Discussion. By reducing (anti-)locality to a configurational constraint on search spaces, the CHC achieves broad empirical coverage independent of stipulations regarding phasal categories (Chomsky 2000, cf. Bošković 2014), Transfer (Privoznov 2021), linearization (Fox & Pesetsky 2005), labelling (Bošković 2018), or features (Halpert & Zeijlstra, submitted). It contrasts favourably with, e.g., Müller’s (2010, 2011) derivation of the CED via phases, which rules out subextraction from solitary specifiers (as in 4) without further stipulation. Furthermore, the CHC improves upon Adger’s (2025) *mereological syntax* by preserving minimality, capturing SSAL, and permitting multiple escape hatches per specifier (as in 7). Of course, without further elaboration, any apparent cyclic movement through ν P cannot be attributed to the CHC, but explanations compatible with the CHC have been proposed for such phenomena (e.g., Keine & Zeijlstra 2025). Why the CHC should strictly require $\mathcal{HP}$ to be a complement remains an open question. Interestingly, the idea that $\mathcal{H}$ is only active if $\mathcal{HP}$ is a complement parallels the configurational restriction of the Head Movement Constraint (Travis 1984): on the CHC, only heads that are in head movement configurations can make XPs in their c-command domain visible. Though not discussed here, this structural parallel also suggests a promising avenue for ultimately unifying the locality behaviours of phrasal and head movement.