This paper aims to report thus far unreported phenomena regarding the nominative/genitive alternation in modern Mongolian (Mongolian, hereafter), an Altaic language, and to discuss what they suggest for the theory of (comparative) syntax. We will report five phenomena in this paper.

First, while genitive subjects are disallowed in simple sentences, as shown in (1) (CON = conclusive, ADN = adnominal), both nominative and genitive subjects are allowed, when they appear in sentential modifiers to nouns. The examples in (1-2) indicate that what is related to the occurrence of a genitive subject is an external nominal element. Note that while genitive subjects are allowed in sentential modifiers without overt nominal heads in Mongolian, just as in Hiraiwa’s (2001) Japanese examples, those examples optionally have corresponding nominal heads, as shown in (3-4), which suggests that in the apparent head-noun-less examples, a nominal element is actually present in the structure, licensing genitive subjects in Mongolian. Second, the examples in (1-2) also indicate that what Watanabe (1996) calls the Transitivity Restriction does not apply to the distribution of genitive subjects in Mongolian, since genitive subjects may appear, whether or not they co-occur with accusative objects. Third, a genitive subject is allowed in a non-local relation with the external nominal element, as shown in (5). (5b) shows that within the sentential modifier, the subject in the matrix clause is marked nominative, and the subject in the embedded clause genitive. As shown in (6), however, there must be an external nominal element, when the embedded subject is marked genitive. Note that in (5b) the embedded predicate, COMP, and the matrix predicate do not constitute a unit, so that there is a CP boundary between the two predicates. This is evidenced by the fact that while clause internal passivization of an object is possible, as shown in (7), long distance passivization of an object across a CP boundary is impossible, as shown in (8). Fourth, in contrast to Dagur, one of its related languages, Mongolian allows complete optionality in (i) agreement between a genitive subject and the external nominal head, and (ii) agreement between a genitive possessor and the host nominal. Consider the Dagur examples in (9-10) from Hale (2002) and their corresponding Mongolian examples in (11-12), where mini = “my” and min = “mine.” Also, as is clear from the data in (5), the nominative/genitive alternation is completely optional in Mongolian, in sharp contrast to Turkish, another Altaic language, in which there is no “genuine” nominative/genitive alternation, as shown in (13) from Kornfilt (2003). Note that there is a difference in the local marker for AGR between (13a) and (13b): it is nominal in (13a) and verbal in (13b). Therefore, (13a-b) suggest that genitive subjects are licensed by a particular AGR, not an external nominal head. Fifth, there is a restriction on the occurrence of genitive subjects in Mongolian, depending on the types of the predicates. As shown in (14b) and (15b), genitive subjects are disallowed, when the predicates are characterized as “stative” predicates. We call this restriction the Stativity Restriction (SR). On the other hand, the Japanese counterparts of (14-15) with genitive subjects are perfectly grammatical. Recently, Miyagawa (2008) states that a genitive subject in Japanese is not an agent, and thus, examples such as (2a) with a genitive subject in Japanese are less acceptable than those with a nominative subject, when the subject is forced to be interpreted as an agent, and attributes this fact to the claim that a relative clause with a genitive subject in Japanese is an aspectual phrase, which does not contain v. The fact that (2a) with a genitive subject being interpreted as an agent is fully grammatical indicates that a relative clause with a genitive subject in Mongolian is not an aspectual phrase. If this is true, the SR effect in Mongolian will be expected, because a relative clause with a genitive subject is always a full clause with v, which forces a genitive subject to be interpreted as an agent, whether or not the predicate is stative, so that the genitive subjects in (14b) and (15b) would be incorrectly forced to be agents.

The above findings suggest (i) that the nominative/genitive alternation in Mongolian is completely optional, unlike that in Dagur, Japanese (if Miyagawa (2008) is correct), and Turkish, shedding light on parametric syntax in Altaic languages, and (ii) that the locality of Move and Agree is actually different, supporting Bošković’s (2007) view. Under the phase-based model in Chomsky (2000, 2001), the fact that the embedded subject is marked genitive across a CP boundary poses a serious problem. However, this apparent problem constitutes evidence for Bošković (2007), who argues, contra Chomsky (2000, 2001), that the locality of Move and Agree is radically different in the sense that Agree is free from mechanisms constraining Move, such as the Phase Impenetrability Condition and the Activation Condition.
Examples

(1) Uchuedur Batu-ø/*-iin nom hudaldun-ab-qie/*-san. (where ø = an unpronounced element.)
yesterday -nom/-gen book buy.take-past-CON/-ADN
‘Batu bought a book yesterday.’

(2) a. Uchuedur Batu-ø/*-iin hudaldun-ab-san/*-qie nom
   yesterday -nom/-gen book buy.take-past-ADN/-CON book
   ‘the book which Batu bought yesterday’
   b. Uchuedur Batu-ø/*-iin nom-ø hudaldun-ab-san/*-qie hudaldaa
   yesterday -nom/-gen book-acc buy.take-past-ADN/-CON store
   ‘the store where Batu bought a book yesterday’

(3) Batu-ø Wulan-ne onsi-gsen/*-zie (hemze) es olan nom onsi-zie/*-gsen.
    -nom -gen read.past-ADN/-CON degree than more book read.past-CON/-ADN
   ‘Batu read more books than Wulan did.’

(4) Batu-ø boron-ne zogsu-h (ui) boltal alban ger-t baila.
    -nom rain-gen stop-pres time until office-at was
   ‘Batu was at his office until (the time when) the rain stopped.’

(5) a. Uchuedur bi-ø Wulan-ø hudaldun-ab-san/*-qie gezu bodu-gsan nom
    yesterday I-nom -nom buy.take-past-ADN/-CON that think-past book
    ‘the book which I thought [that Wulan bought t] yesterday.’
   b. Uchuedur bi-ø Wulan-ne hudaldun-ab-san/*-qie gezu bodu-gsan nom
    yesterday I-nom -gen buy.take-past-ADN/-CON that think-past book
   c. Uchuedur mini Wulan-ø huladaun-ab-san/*-qie gezu bodu-gsan nom
    yesterday I-gen -nom buy.take-past-ADN/-CON that think-past book
   d. Uchuedur mini Wulan-ne hudaldun-ab-san/*-qie gezu bodu-gsan nom
    yesterday I-gen -gen buy.take-past-ADN/-CON that think-past book

(6) Uchuedur bi-ø Wulan-ø/*-ne nom-ø hudaldun-ab-san/*-qie gezu bodu-gsan.
    yesterday I-nom -nom/-gen book-acc buy.take-past-ADN/-CON that think-past
   ‘I thought [that Wulan bought a book] yesterday.’

(7) Batu-ø [Wulan-ø 1 Baator-dd t₁ uze-gde-gsen gezu] hel-be.
    -nom -nom -by see-passive-past that say-past
   ‘Batu said that Wulan was seen by Baator.’

    -nom -by -nom see-pass that say-passive-past
   ‘Wulan was said by Batu that Baator saw t₁.’

(9) [[Mini au-sen] mer²-min?] sain.
    I-gen buy-perf horse-I.gen good
    ‘The horse I bought is good.’
    b. *hashan-ne baih/te ger
    I-gen horse(-I.poss) good
    ‘My horse is good.’

(10) [Mini mer²-min?] sain.
    I-gen horse-I.gen good
    ‘My horse is good.’

(11) [[Mini hudaldun-ab-san] mor(-min)] sain.
    I-gen buy.take-past horse(-I.poss) good
    ‘The horse I bought is good.’
    b. *zoosu-ne ugui huun
    money-gen not.have person
    ‘the man who does not have money’
    (Kornfilt (2003, 69))

(12) [Mini mor(-min)] sain.
    I-gen horse(-I.poss) good
    ‘My horse is good.’
    (Kornfilt (2003, 70))

(13) a. [Ben-im aile-m-i terket-tiagnosis-im] söylebti
    I-gen family-1.SG-acc abandon-1.SG rumor-CMPM
    ‘the rumor that I abandoned my family’
    (Kornfilt (2003, 69))
   b. [Ben aile-m-i terket-ti-m] söylebti
    I-nom family-1.SG-acc abandon-past-1.SG rumor-CMPM
    ‘the rumor that I abandoned my family’
    (Kornfilt (2003, 70))

(14) a. hasha-ø baih/te ger
    garden-nom have/have house
    ‘the house which has a garden’
    b. *hashan-ne baih/te ger
    garden-gen have/have house
    ‘the house which has a garden’

(15) a. zoozu-ø ugui huun
    money-nom not.have person
    ‘the man who does not have money’
    b. *zoosu-ne ugui huun
    money-gen not.have person
    ‘the man who does not have money’