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## **Dialogic positioning in Khorchin Mongolian: The temporal and spatial dimensions of propositional engagement in conversations**

### **Abstract**

This paper analyses the positioning of dialogically alternative voices in Khorchin Mongolian conversations, drawing on the ENGAGEMENT system developed within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The paper shows how the analyses of dialogic positioning resources in conversation need to take into account the spatial-temporal complementarity. Along the temporal dimension, utterances retrospectively engage with prior viewpoints or prospectively anticipate dialogic alternatives. Along the spatial dimension, utterances either contract or expand the dialogic space. It is observed that the resources are used strategically by the interlocutors to negotiate information and evaluations. The paper offers a model for exploring the linguistic resources for dialogic positioning in conversational interaction.

**Keywords:** Khorchin Mongolian; conversation; dialogic positioning; appraisal; engagement; heteroglossia

### **1. Introduction**

Conversation is a dynamic process in which the interlocutors engage with what the previous speaker has said and anticipate the next speaker's response. This paper is concerned with the linguistic resources in Khorchin Mongolian that enact such engagements informed by discourse studies within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Specifically, it provides a preliminary description of the resources that speakers of Khorchin Mongolian use to engage with alternative viewpoints presented as conversations unfold and to anticipate responses towards the current proposition. The primary concern, in other words, is the way 'dialogic alternatives' (White 2003), either real or assumed, are positioned (i.e. dialogic positioning). It will be argued that the relevant resources are organised along both the temporal and the spatial dimensions of interactions.



knower. K2f and K1f are optional under all circumstances (Berry 1981a; Martin 1992).<sup>1</sup>

This kind of structural analysis is complemented by analysis of APPRAISAL, a system concerned with the expression of affect, judgement of behaviours, appreciation of things (ATTITUDE), their grading (GRADUATION), and the source of the feelings (ENGAGEMENT). Unlike the exchange structure analysis, the concern is no longer with the negotiation of information, but with negotiating bonding and affiliation through shared evaluations (Eggins & Slade 1997; Knight 2010; 2013; Martin 2000; 2019; Martin & Zappavigna 2016; Zappavigna & Martin 2018). In (1) above, for example, the Convenor facilitates the Young Person to share his remorse with the conference participants through explicit negative judgement of the Young Person's behaviour – i.e. *disappointed*.

Martin (2000) refers to the patterns in conversation from the perspective of exchange structure as 'Mood telos'. Patterns viewed from the perspective of APPRAISAL are termed 'appraisal telos'. They reflect the different goals of interactions. Mood telos is the interpersonal resource for closure, as the resolution of an exchange is predicted once it is initiated. In contrast, appraisal telos is recognised as the interpersonal resource for expansion because of the way in which evaluations proliferate as interactions unfold. Martin argues that Mood telos suits what Eggins and Slade (1997) call 'pragmatic registers' in formal and institutional settings while appraisal telos suits 'casual registers'. In pragmatic registers "hegemonic institutional pressures favour non-negotiable solidarity" while in casual registers "solidarity relations are put at risk" (Martin 2000: 38).

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<sup>1</sup> Berry (1981a, 1981b) proposed three layers of analyses for both knowledge and action exchanges – interpersonal, ideational, and textual – following Halliday (e.g. Halliday 1967a, 1967b, 1968, 1970a, 1970b). The interpersonal layer is concerned with the functional slots that assign the primary and secondary speech roles (primary knower and secondary knower for knowledge exchanges and primary actor and secondary actor for action exchanges). The textual layer is concerned with the possible options at initiating and non-initiating slots and the ideational layer with the completion of propositions (for knowledge exchanges) and of proposals (for action exchanges). Berry's interpersonal structure and the textual system are adapted as the interpersonal discourse system of NEGOTIATION in Martin (1992). For a discussion of Berry's original contribution and Martin's later developments see Zhang (2020a: Ch2).

The more structured side of exchange is called ‘Mood telos’ because in English the boundaries of an exchange are mainly established by the Mood elements – including Subject, Finite, and Modal Adjuncts (Halliday 1994). In the exchange in (2) below (cited in Martin 2000: 25), the Subject and the Finite in the initiating K2 are maintained in the K1. The exchange is compliantly resolved.

- (2) Frank: **Are you** a good ladies hairdresser Rita?  
 Rita: Yeah, **I am**.

The resolution of an exchange might be interrupted by tracking and challenging moves. They potentially initiate new exchanges that need resolving. If we recover the elided components in the tracking sequence in (1) (Convenor: **You were disappointed in yourself or you don’t care?** Young Person: **I was disappointed in myself**), we see that this interrupting exchange is resolved by maintaining the Subject and the Finite. The tracking sequence could have derailed from the original development of the exchange by negotiating whether or not the Young Person cares – as in (3). The Subject is maintained and the Finite adjusted. Move (3.3) is analysed as K2 because the tracking move arguably initiates a new exchange. (ch = challenge; rch = response to challenge; rrch = response to response to challenge)

- (3) 1 Convenor: K2 *Were you disappointed in yourself, or not, or you don’t care?*  
 2 Young Person: K1 – [nods] *Yeah*.  
 3 Convenor: tr/K2 *Yeah or **you don’t** care?* [nodding]  
 4 Young Person: rtr/K1 – **I don’t** care.  
 5 Convenor: ch – **You should**.  
 6 Young Person: rch – *Why **should** I?*  
 7 Convenor: rrch – **You must**.

The Mood elements predict that either the sequence of challenge is resolved, or a new exchange is initiated. That is, the interlocutors might continue to negotiate about the reason why the Young Person should care. In Martin’s (2000: 24) words, “Once an exchange is initiated, we know how it is expected to finish”. He thus considers Mood the grammatical resource for closure – i.e. the resolution of exchanges.

In contrast, APPRAISAL is considered the lexical resource for expansion, given that evaluations are most typically realised by lexical means in English. Evaluations proliferate as conversations unfold; and they function to encourage the interlocutors to continue talking. The stretch of conversation in (4) is from Eggins and Slade (1997: 170-171). The interlocutors David, Fay, and Nick are talking about someone absent – Allenby. In the stretch extracted in (4), the three are trying to fill Liz in about Allenby, whom she does not know. The APPRAISAL resources (ATTITUDE and GRADUATION as they are studied by Eggins and Slade) are highlighted in bold. For simplicity, the original transcription symbols have mostly been removed. The blank parentheses mean ‘untranscribable talk’; the ellipsis signs (...) mean ‘short hesitation within a turn’; and square brackets [ ] are used to give non-verbal information.

(4) over a dinner party

1. David: *This conversation needs Allenby.*
2. Fay: *Oh he’s in London. So what can we do?*
3. Nick: *We don’t want – We don’t need Allenby in the **bloody** conversation.  
‘Cause all you get is him **bloody raving on**.*
4. Fay: [to Liz] *He’s a bridge player, a **naughty** bridge player.  
He gets banned from everywhere because of his antisocial or drunken  
behaviour ( )*
5. Nick: *And he just **yap yap yaps all the time**.*
6. David: *S’ppose he gives you a **hard time** Nick?*
7. Nick: *Oh I like David a lot. Still but*
8. Fay: *He has a **very short fuse** with alcohol.*
9. Fay: *You met his sister that night we were doing the cutting and pasting up.  
Do you remember?*
10. Nick: *Oh yea. You met Jill.*
11. David: *Oh yea.*
12. Fay: *That’s David’s sister.*
13. Liz: *Oh right.*
14. Fay: *Jill.*
15. David: *Jill’s **very bright** actually. she’s **very good**.*
16. Fay: *She’s **extremely bright**.*
17. David: *Academically she’s probably **brighter** than David...  
David’s always **precocious** with his...The **only** sixteen year old **superstar**  
arrives in Sydney to ( ) and straight into the mandies*

18. Nick: *Straight into the what?*  
19. Fay: *Mandies.* [laughs]  
20. David: *He was a **good boy** but just no tolerance for the alcohol.  
I've pulled him out of **so** many fights. It's **ridiculous**.*

Unlike the Youth Justice Conferencing exchange in (1), the casual conversation in (4) keeps expanding as evaluations proliferate. The evaluations in turns (4.3) to (4.8) and then in turns (4.17) and (4.20) are targeted towards the participant (Allenby) introduced in (4.1). The evaluations in (4.15) to (4.17) are targeted towards the participant introduced in (4.9) (Jill, Allenby's sister).<sup>2</sup> The central concern of the interaction is not the negotiation of information but the negotiation of evaluations, which is the basis for enacting solidarity.

These studies focus on what the interlocutors achieve through phases of discourse (i.e. negotiating information and affiliating). In contrast, the current study focuses on the way interlocutors engage with alternative viewpoints move by move as conversations unfold. On the one hand, the resources this paper examines are related to those for realising exchange structure (Mood in English) in that they can be used to close negotiation by fending off possible alternative propositions. For example, *don't* in (4.3) above – *We **don't** need Allenby in the bloody conversation* – acknowledges an alternative viewpoint (i.e. We need Allenby in the conversation) so as to reject it. The negation could potentially close the negotiation of information. On the other hand, the resources are also related to those for realising APPRAISAL in that they enable the inclusion of diverse propositions, i.e. proliferating viewpoints as conversations unfold. For example, *probably* in (4.17) – *Academically she's **probably** brighter than David* – acknowledges the possibility of other voices, which could be further negotiated in the interaction.

This paper explores such resources for dialogic positioning in Khorchin Mongolian, a variety of Mongolian spoken in eastern Inner Mongolia, China. As far as the linguistic study of Mongolian is concerned, the current paper provides a unified discourse interpretation of the (Khorchin) Mongolian resources described under various headings by different authors, including negation (Yu 1991; Bayancogtu

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<sup>2</sup> In this conversation, there seems to be two Davids. The David present in the conversation and David Allenby, who is absent. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out for me.

2002:290–296), modality (Ujiyediin 1998), evidentiality (Xue 2013), modal particles (Caganhada 1991; Bayancogtu 2002:382–409), and so on.<sup>3</sup> These resources play an essential role in acknowledging what interlocutors have said and what the speakers anticipate the response of the addressees might be.

## 1.2 Dialogic positioning

The extant research on dialogic positioning mainly focuses on intersubjective positioning in relation to the (dis)alignment of writer-reader relationship. Dialogic positioning is systematised as ENGAGEMENT in the APPRAISAL framework (Martin & White 2005; White 1998; 2000; 2003; 2011). Inspired by Bahktin (1981) and Voloshinov (1973), utterances are treated as inherently dialogic in that “to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners” (Martin & White 2005:92).

In ENGAGEMENT the linguistic resources that are used to explicitly engage with dialogically alternative viewpoints are considered heteroglossic and those that do not enact such explicit engagement are termed monoglossic. In the conversation in (4) above, turns (4.1) and (4.2) contain monoglossic utterances while turn (4.3) includes a heteroglossic utterance. The resource realising heterogloss – negation – is highlighted in bold.

(4.1) David: *This conversation needs Allenby.*

(4.2) Fay: *Oh he’s in London. So what can we do?*

(4.3) Nick: *We don’t want – We **don’t** need Allenby in the bloody conversation.*

The utterances *The conversation needs Allenby* and *he’s in London* do not explicitly reference alternative viewpoints; hence they are monoglossic and present propositions as the only possibility. In contrast, the utterance *We don’t need Allenby in the bloody conversation* explicitly introduces the positive alternative, i.e. ‘We need Allenby in the conversation’, which has previously been presented in turn (4.1). It is therefore understood as heteroglossic.

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<sup>3</sup> The transliteration scheme used for Modern Written Mongolian (e.g. Mongolian names in the translation of examples and the references) follows Nasunbayar et al.(1982:37).

Heteroglossic utterances can be generalised into two broad categories – contracting and expanding – based on what they do with the alternative viewpoints introduced into the discourse. In the above heteroglossic utterance *We don't need Allenby in the bloody conversation*, the positive alternative is introduced and denied. Such rejection contracts the scope of dialogically alternative positions. The relevant resource (in our case negation) is considered a contracting resource.

Contracting resources may also be used to show counter-expectancy as in turns (4.15) and (4.20).

(4.15) David: *Jill's very bright **actually**. she's very good.*

(4.20) David: *He was a good boy **but** just no tolerance for the alcohol.  
I've pulled him out of so many fights. It's ridiculous.*

The positive evaluation of Jill as *very bright* in turn (4.15) is contrary to expectation because she is Allenby's sister. This counter expectancy is realised by the adverb *actually*. The assumed alternative seems to be based on the assumption that since Allenby is a “naughty bridge player”, who “has very short fuse with alcohol”, his sister Jill should have similar qualities.

After the interlocutors further comment on Jill for a few turns (see turns (4.16) to (4.19) above), David returns to the evaluation of Allenby. Allenby is evaluated as *a good boy* in turn (4.20), which in this context sets the expectation that Allenby would have good control of his temper. This expectation is countered by the conjunction *but*. The negation in the ensuing clause *just **no** tolerance for the alcohol* makes explicit reference to the expected alternative that ‘Allenby should have tolerance for the alcohol if he is a good boy, as David evaluates’.

Contraction of the dialogic space may involve the restriction of the scope for alternative viewpoints not previously presented in the interaction but anticipated by the speaker. This is the case in David's evaluation of David (Allenby) in turn (4.17).

(4.17) David: *Academically she's probably brighter than David...*

*David's **always** precocious with his...The only sixteen year old superstar arrives in Sydney to ( ) and straight into the mandies*

According to Martin and White (2005: 142), this highest value of usuality “often operates hyperbolically to convey strong writer/speaker investment in the proposition, rather than any ‘literal’ sense of constancy or uninterrupted repetition”. In turn (4.17), the speaker affirms the validity of the proposition that ‘David’s precocious’, hence restricting the scope for possible alternatives.

In contrast to the dialogically contractive resources exemplified above, dialogically expansive resources entertain alternative positions and voices. The utterances that involve expanding resources in (4) are repeated below.

(4.6) David: **S’ppose** *he gives you a hard time Nick?*

(4.17) David: *Academically she’s **probably** brighter than David...*

In turn (4.6), the projecting clause *s’ppose* grounds the proposition in the speaker’s own subjectivity. In terms of Halliday’s (1994) metaphorical realisation of modality, this is a case of subjective explicit realisation of probability.<sup>4</sup> The modal adverb *probably* in (4.17) serves a similar discourse function; that Jill is academically brighter than David is but one of the possibilities. The propositions in (4.6) and (4.17) thus explicitly allow for alternative viewpoints – hence expanding the dialogic space.

It is not the purpose of the current paper to provide a complete overview of the ENGAGEMENT system in English. A more comprehensive account of the system can be found in Martin and White (2005: Ch.3) and White (2003). The resources in English for enacting heterogloss as they are described by Martin and White are summarised in Table 1; the examples are from Martin and White (2005:134). Note that Martin and White’s study of ENGAGEMENT in English is mainly based on monologues in journalism, history textbooks, and student writing. Instead, this paper intends to focus on conversations.

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<sup>4</sup> The tests for the metaphorical realisation of modality include: 1) The tag question reverses the order of the Subject and the Finite in the projected clause, i.e. *I suppose he gives you a hard time, doesn’t he?* 2) The possibility of transferring the negative to the projecting clause, i.e. *I don’t suppose he gives you a hard time.*

Table 1 The heteroglossic resources in English

heteroglossic resources			examples	
contract	disclaim	deny	<i>no, didn't, never</i>	
		counter	<i>yet, although, amazingly, but</i>	
	proclaim	concur	affirm	<i>naturally, of course, obviously</i>
			concede	<i>admittedly... [but]; sure...[however]</i>
		pronounce		<i>I contend, the facts of the matter are... indeed</i>
		endorse		<i>the report demonstrates/ shows/proves that...</i>
expand	entertain		<i>perhaps, it's probable that, this may be, must, it seems to me, apparently, expository questions</i>	
	attribute	acknowledge	<i>Halliday argues that, many Australians believe that... it's said that, the report states</i>	
		distance	<i>Chomsky claimed to have shown that...</i>	

The ENGAGEMENT system has provided a unified account of a number of linguistic resources in English variously described under the headings of modality, polarity, evidentiality, hedging, attribution and so on. These resources, seen from the perspective of discourse, are considered to be closely related to the way the textual voice engages with the backdrop of dialogically alternative viewpoints.

Dedicated studies on dialogic positioning (or ENGAGEMENT) in languages other than English are rare. An exception to this is Shibata (2018) on Japanese. He finds that Japanese and English are similar in the more general distinctions they make and more diverse with respect to their more delicate distinctions. He recognises the distinction between monogloss and heterogloss, and within heterogloss contracting and expanding resources.<sup>5</sup> Although Shibata (2018) deals with interactional data (i.e. political debates), the data are analysed to explore the way politicians align and dis-align with a given viewpoint using the ENGAGEMENT system. The ENGAGEMENT system he describes, on the other hand, is based primarily on non-interactional

<sup>5</sup> Shibata (2018) also deals with intra-vocalisation and extra-vocalisation, which distinguish between heteroglossic diversity construed inside and outside the text respectively. Intra-vocalisation and extra-vocalisation are identified as independently variable from contract and expand in English in White (1998). Intra-vocalisation is related to the way dialogic alternative is integrated in the text as part of the author's utterance, e.g. negation; and extra-vocalisation is concerned with the introduction of external voices into the discourse through resources such as projection, e.g. *Blair said...*

data (i.e. academic reviews and editorials), reflecting the original design of the ENGAGEMENT system as part of APPRAISAL (e.g. Martin & White 2005). It is not the main concern in Shibata (2018) to describe the Japanese dialogic positioning resources as they are used in conversational interactions.

Most studies concerning ENGAGEMENT are conducted along this line, focusing on the resources used by the speaker/writer to align and dis-align with a given value position and potentially win over the audience/overhearer (e.g. Huan 2016; Simon-Vandenberg, White & Aijmer 2007; Svetanant & Okuizumi 2019).<sup>6</sup> Some of these studies nonetheless provide insights into the comparable resources for engaging with dialogic alternatives in languages other than English. For example, Simon-Vandenberg et al.(2007) shows the comparable resources in (Flemish) Dutch and Swedish to the English monoglossic and heteroglossic resources that construe a proposition as ‘taken-for-granted’ (monoglossic presupposition and the heteroglossic concurrence through items such as *of course* in English, *natuurlijk* in Dutch, and *ju* in Swedish). The studies also suggest that the selection of certain registers as data affects the identification of the relevant resources. For example, Huan (2016) shows that in his hard news reporting data, an additional category ‘attest’ is needed to describe instances that are related to direct evidence from either the reporter (e.g. *the reporter saw...*) or other sources (e.g. *Mr. Blake smelt...*). This category is said to be marginal in registers of other kinds.

Extending the study of ENGAGEMENT in the extant literature, this study focuses on understanding how interlocutors engage with dialogically alternative propositions in conversational interactions in Khorchin Mongolian. The conversational data under examination do not necessarily concern value positions. When value positions are at stake, interlocutors typically negotiate these value positions interactively. They are not pre-planned as in written texts or political debates. In addition, the conversational nature of the data highlights the necessity of considering the temporal dimension of dialogic positioning along with the spatial articulation of contraction and expansion, i.e. engaging with viewpoints previously presented in the interaction such as the negation in (4.3) vs. with those anticipated by the speaker such as the expression of high usuality in (4.17). To avoid reference

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<sup>6</sup> A bibliography of studies up until 2017 using the APPRAISAL framework (including ENGAGEMENT) can be found in Su & Bednarek (2017).

to the evaluative orientation of the existing work on ENGAGEMENT, this study uses the more general term ‘dialogic positioning’ to refer to the way propositions are engaged with in conversations.

The use of conversational data in such a study is of general interest because many minority languages or dialects such as Khorchin Mongolian have not developed elaborate institutional registers used in the contexts of politics, journalism, commercials and the like. These ‘pragmatic’ registers, in Eggins & Slade’s terms (1997:19–20),<sup>7</sup> are more comprehensively studied than those belonging to the ‘casual’ category. This study thus presents a model for investigating dialogic positioning in the latter varieties of language use.

## **2. Method**

This study provides a qualitative analysis of two interactions selected from a corpus of Khorchin Mongolian conversations collected during a field trip to Jalaid Banner in Hinggan League, Inner Mongolia between December 2017 to February 2018. The two stretches of conversations used in this paper were collected from a local Mongolian school in a village and from a family in the same village. For the data from the school, the linguist stayed in the Mongolian teachers’ office for a week, recording their conversations. For the second data set, the linguist is part of the family and was permitted to record the after-dinner conversations between members of the family. Approval has been granted from the Ethics Committee in the linguist’s institution to collect data. Consents from the informants have been obtained orally before and during the field trip. The informants were instructed that their conversations would be used to describe how Khorchin Mongolian works and were asked to talk to one another as they would do without the linguist’s presence.

The data are transcribed using the IPA phonemic symbols (following Tiemei 2015). In the transcription line, instead of the traditional treatment of ‘case markings’ as suffixes (e.g. Bayancogtu 2002), they are transcribed as postpositions following the

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<sup>7</sup> Standard Mongolian is used in the Inner Mongolian institutional contexts. The variety is considerably different from Khorchin Mongolian as far as the interpersonal resources are concerned – the kind of resources studied in this paper.

arguments provided in Wang (1983). The interactions are presented move by move, with moves numbered consecutively.<sup>8</sup>

Interaction 1 – as presented in (5) below – is between two teachers in a Mongolian primary school. The two teachers are sitting in their office doing their own work when T1 initiates this interaction. In (5.1), T1 confirms the relationship between the third person he is going to talk about (Secin) and T2, namely Secin’s son is in T2’s class. T1 then presents a piece of information about Secin in (5.3), which is confirmed and then evaluated by T2 in (5.4) to (5.7). The interlocutors then negotiate the validity of a further piece of information shared by T1 in the rest of the interaction. The contentious proposition has to do with the mode of transport Secin used to use to take her daughter to school. This is a continuation of the prior evaluation targeted towards the current mode of transport Secin uses to take her son to school. Their conversation is interrupted by another teacher coming back from teaching and is not continued. The linguistic resources that will be described in terms of dialogic positioning in the subsequent sections are highlighted in bold.<sup>9</sup> The glossing of the modal particles has been provided in square brackets in the translation lines. For detailed investigations of the modal particles in Khorchin Mongolian from the perspective of discourse semantics in SFL, see Zhang (2020a, 2020b).

(5) T = teacher

1. T1: *sətʰin nɛ xu tʰini ɐŋki nɛ ʃi*  
Secin GEN son 2SG.POSS class GEN TAG  
‘Secin’s son is in your class, eh?’

2. T2: *m:*  
yes  
‘Yes.’

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<sup>8</sup> A move is realised by a clause selecting independently for MOOD (Martin 1992:Ch.2). A turn thus possibly comprises more than one move.

<sup>9</sup> The glossing convention used in this paper by and large follows the Leipzig Glossing Rules (2015) (<https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>). The abbreviations that are not listed therein are: CONC = concessive; EMP = emphatic; INT = intensive; INTJ = interjection; IP = interrogative particle; MP = modal particle; OPT = optative.

3. T1: *səʃʰin ni:təm mətʰo kər jəp-tʃ ɛ:-n xwi*  
 Secin **always** motorbike INS commute-PROG COP-NPST **MP**  
 '[I know; you may or may not know] Secin is **always** commuting by motorbike.'
4. T2: *mətʰo kər xur-kə-tʃ ɛ:-n kə-tʃ u: xu: kən*  
 motorbike INS reach-CAUS-PROG COP-NPST mean-PST IP son ACC.POSS  
 'Do (you) mean she is taking her son (to school) by motorbike?'
5. T1: *ə:*  
 INTJ  
 'Yes.'
- 6a. T2: *xə:t kər mu ɛl kər t ən xən-ul-tʰəx i:*  
 back home or which home DAT 3POSS stay-CAUS-OPT WISH  
 'She should let (her son) stay at the back home (=his grandparents' home) or any home (near school),
- 6β. T2: *nək pək tʃɔ:s uk-ət*  
 one small money give-PFV.CVB  
 '(by) giving a small amount of money.'
7. T2: *ən b xytʰən t tʰr ən*  
 PROX INT cold DAT 3SG ACC.POSS  
 '(She should not take) her son (to school by motorbike) in this very cold weather.'
8. T1: *tʰr ixin ən ɔrtʰe sənɔ kər jəp-tʃ ɛ:-tʃ fɛ*  
 DIST daughter 3POSS before trike INS commute- COP- **MP**  
 PROG PST  
 '[I know; you may know] her daughter was commuting (to school) by motorised trike before.'
9. T1: *tʰr sənɔ nəetʰ-x uɛ lɛ pɔl-tʃ pɛ*  
 DIST trike start-NPST NEG RES become-PST **MP**  
 '[It seems] that motorised trike has become unable to start.'

10. T2: *ukue*      *sətʰin*      *ni:təm*      *motʰv*  
 NEG      Secin      **always**      motorbike  
 'No, Secin **always** (takes her children to school by) motorbike.'
11. T1: *xə?*  
 eh  
 'Eh?'
12. T2: *sətʰin*      *ni:təm*      *motʰv*  
 Secin      **always**      motorbike  
 'Secin **always** (takes her children to school by) motorbike.'
13. T1: *ukue*    *sənlo*    *kər*    *pəs*    *jəp-tʃ*      *ɛ:-tʃ*      *fə*  
 NEG    trike    INS    **also**    commute-PROG      COP-PST      **MP**  
 'No, [I know; you don't know] (she) was **also** commuting by motorised trike.'
14. T2: *ɔ:*  
 oh  
 'Oh.'

Unlike Interaction 1, which is a two-party discourse between colleagues, Interaction 2 – as presented in (6) below – is a multi-party discourse between family members (the mother, the father, the adopted daughter, and the son-in-law). The interlocutors are evaluating the different dialects in the region. The daughter and the son-in-law are teachers at the local Mongolian school (the school where Interaction 1 was collected). The mother is retired from a job at the local government and the father from farming and raising livestock. The daughter and the son-in-law received tertiary education in Hohhot, the capital city of Inner Mongolia; so they are familiar with the different dialects spoken in different parts of Inner Mongolia. The mother and the father, however, have never lived outside their hometown. The topic centres around the dialects in the region because this interaction occurred not long after they are informed that the linguist is working on the dialect spoken in their hometown.

The target of negotiation in Interaction 2 is also different from that in Interaction 1. In Interaction 1, the interlocutors shift from the negotiation of evaluation to the negotiation of the validity of a piece of information. In Interaction 2, on the other hand, the interlocutors are mainly negotiating their evaluations towards the

dialects in Hinggan League in Inner Mongolia. Three banners from this league are mentioned: Jalaid Banner (the interlocutors' hometown), Middle Banner, and South Banner.<sup>10</sup> The dialects in this region borrow heavily from Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects spoken in the neighbouring north-eastern provinces in China. The interlocutors are arguing about whether the variety spoken in their hometown – Jalaid Banner – is the most 'contaminated' one. After Interaction 2, the interlocutors continue to talk about the differences between the dialect spoken in their banner and the dialects spoken in other banners. The daughter and the son-in-law give amusing examples and everyone has a good laugh. As with Interaction 1 above, the relevant linguistic resources are highlighted in bold. In move (6.11), the number 4 is used to indicate a falling-rising intonation contour (following Halliday & Greaves 2008), which shows that the speaker disagrees with the proposition presented in the previous move. Technically speaking, phonological resources also enact the positioning of dialogic alternatives; their contribution will be set aside here, pending further research.

(6) D = daughter; F = father; M = mother; S = son in law

1. D: *tʃɛlət pəl xəmək ɛ:mər ɜ:*  
 Jalaid TOP most serious EMP  
 'Jalaid is the most serious.'
  
2. F: *tʃɛlət xofʊ nɛ u:*  
 Jalaid banner GEN IP  
 '(The dialect) of Jalaid Banner?'
  
3. D: *m:*  
 INTJ  
 'Yes.'
  
4. M: ***pi utʃ<sup>h</sup>-ul*** *fɪŋgənmeŋ nɛ xəni mit<sup>h</sup>m ə:*  
**1sg see-COND** Hinggan.League GEN all like.that EMP  
**'I think** (dialects in) Hinggan League are all like that.'

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<sup>10</sup> League and banner are administrative divisions within the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in China (Chinese: 盟 and 旗).

5. F: *tʰəʀ tʰiɛntʰi tʰuŋtʰi xə mitʰim pɛ:-n tɔ ɔtɔ*  
 DIST South.Banner Middle.Banner all like.that COP-NPST **MP** **CONC**  
 ‘**But [obviously]** South Banner and Middle Banner are all like that.’

6. M: *ə:*  
 INTJ  
 ‘Yes.’

7. S: *kə:ku ŋə-t tʰɛk ɛ:*  
 mild **like.this-PFV.CVB** **CONC** EMP  
 ‘**Even though** they are like this, (they are) mild.’

8. D: *jɛk tʰukəʀ ɛtɔl*  
**seem** better **like**  
 ‘(They) **seem** better.’

9. S: *tʰiu mən nɛ mən tʰɛtʰi nɛ*  
 FOC 1PL GEN PROX Jalaid.Banner GEN  
 ‘It is our Jalaid Banner’s (dialect that is the worst).’

10. F: *əntʰ-xi kəs nsk tʰiən tə:r ukɛ pɛ*  
 here-LOC ABL one small better **NEG** **MP**  
 ‘**[It seems]** (they) are **not** a bit better than here.’

11. D: *//4 m://*  
 INTJ  
 ‘They are.’

These interactions are analysed move by move using the following procedure. First, it is determined whether an utterance is explicitly interacting with other propositions – i.e. is the proposition monoglossic or heteroglossic in Martin and White’s (2005) terms? The move in (6.1) above, for example, does not involve explicit reference to other viewpoints. It is a ‘bare assertion’, and hence monoglossic. In contrast, the move in (6.4) is engaging with alternative viewpoints through *pi utʰ-ul* ‘1SG see-COND I think’ – i.e. the proposition is presented as the speaker’s subjective view towards the issue and there are possible alternative viewpoints. It is always possible to remove the dialogically positioning elements in a

heteroglossic utterance. The monoglossic adaptation of (6.4) is provided in (7) below.

- (7) *ʃiŋɣənɲəŋ            nɛ    xɔni    mitʰm    ə:*  
Hinggan.League    GEN    all    like.that    EMP  
'(Dialects in) Hinggan League are all like that.'

This does not mean that monoglossic utterances are not dialogic. As Martin and White put it, “categorical or bare assertions are just as intersubjectively loaded and hence ‘stanced’ as utterances including more overt markers of point of view or attitude.” (2005:94). The utterance in (6.1), for example, expresses a viewpoint which is positioned against a backdrop of viewpoints concerning people’s attitude towards dialectal differences in Inner Mongolia. Their contrast with heteroglossic utterances is that they construe the proposition as if the addressees do not need to be won over.

Second, heteroglossic utterances are considered from two complementary perspectives. Firstly, the utterance is considered in relation to the unfolding of the interaction – a temporal dimension. The relevant question is whether the heteroglossic utterance is engaging with a viewpoint/position presented by a previous speaker or is anticipating some alternative from the next speaker. Secondly, the utterance is considered in relation to its tolerance for alternative viewpoints in the dialogic space – a spatial dimension. The relevant question is whether the heteroglossic utterance acknowledges an alternative viewpoint so as to disclaim it (i.e. closing down the dialogic space) or whether the utterance presents the proposition as if it is one of many possibilities and that there is a chance that the addressee may disagree (i.e. opening up the dialogic space).

The temporal dimension used in the analysis has not been previously identified in the ENGAGEMENT literature. This, however, plays a significant role in conversational data since cooperative interlocutors constantly engage with prior statements and anticipate responses from their addressees. In the remainder of this paper, the two interactions are analysed along these two complementary dimensions.

### 3. Temporal and spatial complementarity in dialogic positioning

This section describes the dialogic positioning resources in Khorchin Mongolian along the temporal and spatial dimensions mentioned previously. Temporally, the resources are considered in relation to the unfolding of the interactions. An utterance either dialogically positions (or engages with) a proposition that has been presented earlier in the interaction – hence retrospective; or it positions the anticipated alternative viewpoints from the addressee in the dialogic space – hence prospective. Spatially, the resources are considered against the particular way alternative viewpoints are positioned in the dialogic space. This has to be understood in relation to the temporal dimension of interactions. Retrospectively, the alternative viewpoint may be positioned in such a way that it is either disclaimed – hence contractive – or subsumed as one of the possibilities – hence expansive. Prospectively, an utterance may close down the dialogic space for possible alternatives and does not anticipate disagreement from the addressee – hence contractive – or it may open up the dialogic space for such possibilities and anticipate disagreement from the addressee – hence expansive. The temporal-spatial complementarity in the dialogic positioning in conversations is laid out in Table 2.

Table 2 Temporal-spatial complementarity in dialogic positioning in conversations

		TEMPORALITY	
		retrospective	prospective
SPATIALITY	contractive	disclaiming an alternative	do not anticipate disagreement
	expansive	subsuming an alternative	anticipate disagreement

#### 3.1 Dialogic positioning in Interaction 1

In Interaction 1, after confirming that Secin’s son is in T2’s class, T1 provides a piece of information about Secin’s mode of transport in (5.3) (repeated below). The proposition is presented as the speaker’s knowledge through the modal particle *xwi*, which could be glossed as ‘I know; you may or may not know’. The particle *xwi* is typically associated with witnessed experience. The particle is normally used when the speaker considers the information worth sharing. The utterance in (5.3) thus

prospectively contracts the dialogic space; it does not anticipate disagreement from the addressee. This is coupled with and enhanced by another resource with similar discourse function, i.e. high usuality realised by *ni:təm*. The speaker invests high degree of commitment to the validity of the proposition. This resource thus contributes to the prospective contraction of the dialogic space. Prospective positioning of possible alternatives is indicated by a rightward facing arrow on the right side of the relevant items in the examples.

- (5.3) T1: *sətʰin ni:təm → mətʰo kər jəp-tʃ ɛ:-n xwi →*  
 Secin **always** motorbike INS commute-PROG COP-NPST **MP**  
 ‘[I know; you may or may not know] Secin is **always** commuting by motorbike.’

The information shared in (5.3) is negatively evaluated by T2 in (5.6) to (5.7) before T1 presents a relevant piece of information in (5.8) (repeated below) about the mode of transport Secin used to use to take her daughter to school. The utterance explicitly anticipates possible disagreement from the addressee and acknowledges the possibility of alternative propositions. This is achieved through the modal particle *fɛ*. This particle indicates that the speaker knows the information. At the same time, the speaker is assessing that the addressee may know the information. The addressee is thus positioned as potentially sharing the information presented. This is different from the particle *xwi* in (5.3) above, which does not present the information as shared. The utterance entertains the possibility of disagreement from the addressee; but if the addressee does disagree, the disagreement will be refuted. The modal particle *fɛ* in (5.8) is thus a prospective expanding resource.

- (5.8) T1: *tʰsr iɕin ən ɔrtʰe sənɔ kər jəp-tʃ ɛ:-tʃ fɛ*  
 →  
 DIST daughter 3POSS before trike INS commute- COP- **MP**  
 PROG PST  
 ‘[I know; you may know] her daughter was commuting (to school) by motorised trike before.’

The assumed shared knowledge in (5.8) is in service of another proposition in (5.9) (repeated below). In this move, the speaker presents the proposition as a possibility, which is realised through the modal particle *pə*. The utterance

prospectively expands the space for dialogical alternatives.<sup>11</sup>

(5.9) T1: *tʰɔr sɛnɫɔ nɔɛtʰ-x uɛ lɛ pɔl-tʃ pɐ →*  
 DIST trike start-NPST NEG RES become-PST **MP**  
 ‘**[It seems]** that motorised trike has become unable to start.’

Instead of engaging with the proposition in (5.9), T2 refutes the proposition in (5.8) through negation (*ukue*) in (5.10) repeated below. The negation rejects a prior proposition. It is in this sense retrospectively contractive. T2 then proposes an alternative information. The item *ni:təm* in (5.10) expressing high usuality fends off possible alternatives from the addressee, indicating that the speaker does not anticipate disagreement – we might gloss this as ‘this has always been Secin’s way of taking her children to school; I do not expect you to disagree with me with the information you know.’ Retrospective positioning of the alternative proposition is indicated by the leftward facing arrow on the left side of the relevant items.

(5.10) T2: ← *ukue sɛtʰin ni:təm → mɔtʰv*  
 NEG Secin **always** motorbike  
 ‘**No**, Secin **always** (took her children to school by) motorbike.’

The proposition in (5.10) is similarly denied by T1 through negation (*ukue*) in (5.13) (repeated below) after confirming what T2 said in (5.11) and (5.12). T1 then repeats the information he presented in (5.3) along with some additional features. Firstly, the utterance retrospectively engages with the proposition in (5.10) by subsuming it as one of the other possibilities. This is realised by the item *pɛs* ‘also’. This item thus expands the dialogic space. Secondly, the utterance prospectively engages with possible alternatives through the modal particle *fɔ*. This particle indicates that the speaker knows the information and that the speaker asserts that the addressee does not know the information. The particle thus indicates that the speaker does not wish to continue negotiating the proposition. The interpersonal cost of challenging this proposition is very high, i.e. a series of back-and-forth challenges may be triggered.

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<sup>11</sup> The underlying logic in T1’s utterances is: Secin used to take her daughter to school by motorised trike; and now she is taking her son to school by motorbike. Maybe her motorised trike is not working any more.

(5.13) T1: ← **ukue** *senlv* *kər* ← **pəs** *jəp-tf* *ε:-tf* *fʊ* →  
**NEG** trike INS **also** commute-PROG COP-PST **MP**  
 ‘No, [I know; you don’t know] (she) was **also** commuting by motorised trike.’

In Interaction 1, dialogic alternatives are thus i) prospectively anticipated – as in (5.8) and (5.9) – or fended off – as in (5.3), (5.10), and (5.13) – and ii) retrospectively rejected – as in (5.10) and (5.13) – or subsumed (5.13). The resources for dialogic positioning used in Interaction 1 are summarised below.

retrospective & contractive:	<i>ukue</i> ‘no’
retrospective & expansive:	<i>pəs</i> ‘also’
prospective & contractive:	<i>ni:təm</i> ‘always’, <i>xvi</i> ‘I know; you may or may not know’, <i>fʊ</i> ‘I know; you don’t know’
prospective & expansive:	<i>fε</i> ‘I know; you may know’, <i>pε</i> ‘it seems’

From a more general perspective, Interaction 1 can be divided into two parts. Part 1 comprises moves (5.1) to (5.7). In this part, T1 shares a piece of information that is worth commenting on. Compliantly, T2 provides her evaluation of the information. Evaluations of this kind are crucial for the negotiation of affiliation in casual conversations (Eggins & Slade 1997; Knight 2020, 2013). The function of move (5.3), in which the target of evaluation is provided, is thus similar to what Eggins and Slade (1997: Ch.6) call ‘chunk’ in a conversation. Chunk refers to a stretch of discourse in a conversation where the speaker “takes the floor and is allowed to dominate the conversation for an extended period” (Eggins & Slade 1997: 231). Chunk is typically filled by generically structured storytelling that provides the context for negotiating affiliation.

In contrast, Part 2 of Interaction 1 – moves (5.8) to (5.14) – shifts to the negotiation of information. What is at stake in this piece of discourse is not the negotiation of affiliation, but rather the negotiation of knower roles. Moves (5.8) and (5.9) could potentially be analysed as realising K1 in the exchange structure. That is, T1 indicates primary knower authority over the information. This, however, is not achieved through a monoglossic assertive statement. Instead, T1 presents the

information as shared between the interlocutors through the modal particle *ǰe* in (5.8), which could invite further evaluation from the addressee (like the pattern of interaction in Part 1). However, the primary knower authority is challenged by T2, which is realised by a combination of retrospective and prospective closure of the dialogic space (the negation and high usuality in (5.10)). This is further challenged by T1, making use of retrospective contractive resource of negation in (5.13) to deny the previous proposition –hence challenging the primary knower authority adopted by T2. T1 further enhances his primary knower authority by subsuming T2’s proposition as one of the possibilities through the retrospectively expanding resource *pes* ‘also’ and the prospectively contracting resource *ǰu*, preventing the addressee from further challenging his primary knower status. The rhetorical effect of the interaction between the retrospective expanding resource and the prospective contracting resource in this response to challenge (move (5.13)) is both to acknowledge the addressee’s knowledge of the information at stake and to validate the speaker’s own knowledge of the information. T1’s primary knower authority is accepted by T2 in move (5.14) as indicated through the interjection *ɔ:*.

### 3.2 Dialogic positioning in Interaction 2

Interaction 2 is a multi-party interaction concerned with the negotiation of evaluation. The four speakers take stance on two opposing sides. The daughter and the son-in-law believe that the dialect they speak is the one most severely affected by Chinese. The mother and the father, on the other hand, hold that the neighbouring dialects are just as badly affected.

Interaction 2 starts with the daughter’s evaluation of the dialect spoken in the interlocutors’ hometown as the Mongolian dialect most seriously affected by Chinese. After the daughter’s evaluation has been clarified in (6.2) and (6.3), in (6.4) (repeated below) the mother presents a competing proposition, i.e. that all the dialects of Hinggan League (including that from their hometown) are equally affected. This challenges the daughter’s proposition. Instead of directly negating what the daughter has said (e.g. through negation), the mother grounds her proposition in her own subjectivity through *pi ut<sup>h</sup>ul* ‘I think’, which anticipates possible alternatives. This item thus realises a prospective expansive positioning.

(6.4) M: **pi utʰ-ul** → *fɪŋɐnməŋ ne xoni mitʰm ə:*  
**1SG see-COND** Hinggan.League GEN all like.that EMP  
**I think** (dialects in) Hinggan League are all like that.’

The father endorses the mother’s claim in (6.5) (repeated below) by specifying that the neighbouring dialects are the same as their own dialect. Two strategies of dialogic positioning have been adopted towards the end of the utterance. The modal particle *tɐ* is used to affirm that the presented proposition is beyond doubt. The speaker does not anticipate disagreement from the addressee. This modal particle thus realises prospective contractive positioning. The other strategy is the use of the countering item *ɔtɔ* to engage with the daughter’s proposition presented in (6.1). This move disqualifies the proposition by retrospectively contracting the dialogic space.

(6.5) F: *tʰɔr tʰiɛntʰi tʰuŋtʰi xɔ mitʰim pɛ:-n tɐ* → ← *ɔtɔ*  
 DIST South.Banner Middle.Banner all like.that COP-NPST **MP** **CONC**  
**But [obviously]** South Banner and Middle Banner are all like that.’

A similar tactic is adopted by the son-in-law and the daughter when challenging the father’s proposition in (6.7) and (6.8) (repeated below). The concessive item used by the son, *ŋət tʰɛk* ‘even so’ in (6.7), retrospectively acknowledges the father’s point of view in order to refute it. It thus contracts the dialogic space. The utterance from the daughter in (6.8), in contrast, prospectively entertains possible alternatives. The item *ʝɛk ɛtɔl* ‘seem like’ presents the proposition as less certain and hence allows the possibility of alternative viewpoints.

(6.7) S: *kɛ.ku* ← **ŋət-t** **tʰɛk** *ɐ:*  
 mild **like.this-PFV.CVB** **CONC** EMP  
**Even though** they are like this, (they are) mild.’

(6.8) D: **ʝɛk** *tʰukəɾ ɛtɔl* →  
**seem** better **like**  
 ‘(They) **seem** better.’

In response to the challenges in (6.7) and (6.8), the father softens his challenge in (6.10) (repeated below). The first dialogic positioning resource he uses is the negation *ukue*, realised along with the other elements in the nominal component –

*nə:k tʃi:ən tə:r* ‘a bit better’. This negation is retrospectively engaging with the son-in-law’s evaluation of the degree to which the neighbouring dialects have been affected as *kə:ku* ‘mild’. In other words, the proposition in (6.7) is brought into the current utterance so that it can be rejected. The challenge is softened by the modal particle *pə* at the end of the utterance. The modal particle signals a low degree of certainty on the part of the speaker, hence entertaining the possibility of alternative viewpoints. It is thus prospectively expanding.

(6.10) F: *əntʰ-xi kəs nək tʃi:ən tə:r ← ukue pə →*  
 here-LOC ABL one small better **NEG MP**  
 ‘[It seems] (they) are **not** a bit better than here.’

In Interaction 2, dialogic alternatives are i) prospectively allowed – as in (6.4), (6.8), and (6.10) – and fended off – as in (6.5) – and ii) retrospectively countered – as in (6.5) and (6.7) – and contradicted – as in (6.10). The dialogic positioning resources used in Interaction 2 are listed below.

retrospective & contractive:	<i>ətə</i> ‘but’, <i>ŋət tʃʰək</i> ‘even though’, <i>ukue</i> ‘no’
prospective & contractive:	<i>tə</i> ‘obviously’
prospective & expansive:	<i>pi utʰul</i> ‘I think’, <i>jək ɛtəl</i> ‘seem like’, <i>pə</i> ‘it seems’

Interaction 2 shows a number of interesting patterns of strategic positioning. The dialogic positioning strategies used by the mother and the son-in-law are relatively consistent. As far as the utterances that involve dialogic positioning are concerned, the mother and the son-in-law both make a one-off contribution to the interaction.<sup>12</sup> The mother’s strategy is expansive and the son-in-law’s contractive.

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<sup>12</sup> The mother and the son-in-law each makes another contribution to the interaction in move (6.6) and (6.9) respectively. They are not examined in this paper because these two moves do not involve any explicit engagement with dialogically alternative viewpoints. Their contribution to the overall negotiation can be accounted for in terms of their contribution to exchange structure; they both provide support to preceding propositions – move (6.6) to

The mother's move – (6.4) – is the first challenge to the daughter's proposition that the dialect they speak is the one that is most severely affected by Chinese. This challenge is grounded in the subjectivity of the speaker through a prospective expansive resource *pi utʰul* 'I think'. This grounding makes it possible for the addressee to challenge the proposition without direct confrontation. The mother's proposition (and its subsequent support from the father) is challenged by the son-in-law in move (6.7). He uses the concessive item *ŋət tʰək* 'even so' – a retrospective contractive resource – to acknowledge the viewpoint that is being challenged.

The strategies the father and the daughter used, on the other hand, have changed in the process of the interaction. The father starts his challenge to the daughter's proposition with two contractive resources in move (6.5) – the retrospective countering resource *ɔt* 'CONC' and the prospective affirming one *tʰ* 'MP'. When his proposition is challenged by the son-in-law and the daughter, he encloses his rejection of the challenge with a prospectively expansive resource *pʰ* 'MP' in move (6.10). Similarly, the daughter initiates the interaction with a monoglossic utterance in move (6.1), which assumes that the addressees are 'on the same page'. After being challenged, her utterance predicts possible alternatives prospectively by opening up the dialogic space through the entertaining resource *jək ɛtʰl* 'seem like' in move (6.8) and potentially to contraction of the dialogic space through the falling-rising intonation contour in (6.11) when her evaluation is challenged again by the father in (6.10).

#### 4. Conclusions

This paper has explored the dialogic positioning resources in Khorchin Mongolian conversations. The relevant resources are organised along two complementary dimensions – temporal and spatial. The study offers a model for exploring conversational resources that position dialogic alternatives, particularly in language varieties that have not developed the kind of elaborate institutional registers found in English.

The resources used for positioning dialogic alternatives in Interaction 1 & 2 have

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(6.5) and move (6.9) to (6.7). At the level of exchange, moves (6.6) and (6.9) respectively 'elaborates' the proposition in (6.5) and (6.7) (Ventola 1988).

been summarised in relation to the temporal and spatial dimensions in Table 3 below. Tentative sub-categories have been added to Table 3 so that the Khorchin Mongolian resources could be compared with the English resources summarised in Table 1. However, further studies are needed to justify the more delicate categories. It is important to note that the instances listed in each category do not stand in a one-to-one relationship with the categories. They should be interpreted against the temporal and spatial dimensions in their specific context of use.

Table 3 The resources of dialogic positioning in Interaction 1 & 2

TEMPORALITY	SPATIALITY	more delicate options	instances
retrospective	contractive	deny	<i>ukue</i> 'NEG'
		counter	<i>ɔto</i> 'CONC'
		concede	<i>ηət tʰək</i> 'even so'
	expansive	subsume	<i>pəs</i> 'also'
prospective	contractive	affirm	<i>ni:təm</i> 'always', <i>xwi, fū, tɐ</i> 'MP'
	expansive	entertain	<i>jɛk ɛtsɨl</i> 'seem like', <i>pi utʰul</i> 'I think', <i>fɛ, pɛ</i> 'MP'

The description of the resources for positioning dialogic alternatives in terms of the temporal-spatial complementarity enables us to analyse the way alternative viewpoints are engaged with in conversational interactions. The temporal dimension allows us to see the relationship between utterances in terms of response and anticipation. The spatial dimension, on the other hand, shows how interlocutors adjust the dialogic space when disagreement arises. At the same time, the description provided in this paper allows consideration of the unified discourse function of various grammatical resources in Khorchin Mongolian. These include the diverse categories of negation, conjunctions, adverbs, projections (broadly 'quotations'), and various kinds of modal particles.

Since the description presented in this paper is based on only two pieces of conversational data, it does not provide a comprehensive overview of the dialogic positioning resources in Khorchin Mongolian. Nonetheless, it directs attention to points of cross-linguistic and cross-registerial comparison that deserve further research. First, with respect to cross-linguistic comparison, the Khorchin

Mongolian resources of dialogic positioning are similar to those in English and Japanese as far as the more general categories are concerned (Shibata 2018; White 2000, 2003). The resources are either contractive or expansive. They differ mainly in terms of the grammatical categories that realise these meanings. For example, the discourse functions of what have been described as the metaphorical realisations of modality in English (e.g. *it seems*) are commensurable to the meanings realised through modal particles in Khorchin Mongolian (e.g. *pe*). This difference indicates a need for future studies on the tension between (discourse) semantics and grammar across languages with respect to the realisation of dialogic positioning.

Second, the study demonstrates the importance of reconsidering established description when faced with registers different from those that are used to form the original description (Huan 2016). The current description based on conversational interaction has shown the necessity of accounting for the ‘temporal dimension’ of dialogic positioning (retrospective vs. prospective). Had temporal dimension not been included in the description, instances such as *pes* ‘also’, which subsumes a dialogic alternative presented previously in the interaction as in Interaction 1, would have been excluded since this is not prominent in written data examined in previous studies. The temporal dimension provides further criteria for sub-categorising the instances grouped under the headings ‘contract’ and ‘expand’. In Table 3, for example, the categories of deny, counter, and concede can be examined against the category of affirm. The former ones retrospectively engage with previous propositions and the latter prospectively anticipate alternative voices. Table 3 above seems to suggest that modal particles in Khorchin Mongolian are more likely to be used prospectively than retrospectively.

The linguistic resources used in the two interactions also suggest a correlation between the typical use of certain resources and what interlocutors negotiate in a conversation. For example, the modal particles *xvi*, *fe*, and *fo* used in Interaction 1 all involve the indication of the speaker’s knowledge and the assessment of the addressee’s knowledge. Similar resources are not observed in Interaction 2. However, this point has to be set aside for future studies that examine larger date sets.

The way the interactions have been analysed in this paper also extends the extant

studies on conversational interaction in SFL. The linguistic resources described in this paper are related to both the negotiation of information featured in the studies of speech function and exchange structure (Halliday 1984; 1985; 1994; Martin 1992; 2018; Ventola 1987) and with bonding and affiliation around shared feelings (Eggins & Slade 1997; Martin 2019; Knight 2010; 2013; Zappavigna & Martin 2018). The study contributes to these lines of research by foregrounding the nuances in the way the interlocutors engage with one another's utterances on a move by move basis.

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