Movement

1. **Introduction**

There are various syntactic movements that occur across the world’s languages. Movement is a type of syntactic phenomenon in which a constituent is taken from its base position and shifted to a position higher in a clausal structure (to the left usually). There are two important kinds of syntactic movements to keep in mind:

1. **A-movement**: Movement into an argument position.
2. **A’-movement**: Movement into a non-argument position.

In English, A-movements are typically DP movements. The most common kind of A-movement is raising of the subject into spec, TP from little vP.

1. **Unergative vs. Unaccusative Verbs**

The structures of each of these verbal categories are different from each other. Unaccusative verbs involve a semantic change of state from an unwilling participant. Because the syntactic subject is not an entity which willingly undergoes this change, the structure of an unaccusative verb lacks a vP layer altogether.

1. [CP [C’ [TP [T’[**VP**…]]]]

Unergative verbs, on the other hand, *do* have a small vP layer because there is volition on the part of the subject of those clauses.

1. [CP [C’ [TP [T’[**vP**…]]]]
2. **Passives**

The structures for the passive voice are similar to those of unaccusative verbs because the external theta role has been deleted from the argument structure of the predicate. Because this is the case, we do not expect to generate vP into the structure,

**Interim Summary**

The structures of the three above cases all involve A-Movements because they all involve movements of the subject DP into the specifier of TP which is an argument position in English.

1. **A’-Movements**

Other kinds of phrasal movements are called A’ (A bar) movements. These are movements into non-argument positions. In English, this is largely typified by wh-movement. Wh-movement is a phenomenon in which questions involving wh-words are extracted to the left periphery of a clause.

1. [CP What booki [C’ did [TP Taylor […read *t*i]]]]?

The wh-movement of the DP *what book* showcases A’-movement quite clearly. Movement into the specifier of CP, is a movement into a position that is not associated with an argument. Other kinds of A’-movements are topicalization structures of the following type:

1. The cat, Mary saw at the shelter.
2. Whether Mary likes Paul, John would like to know.

In both (6) and (7), phrases are moved to the left periphery into spec, CP, which is again, a non-argument position.