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A-Movement in English

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to: My God, Allah, who always beside me, listens to me, takes care of me and gives me the best thing ever. To my mother and father who always pray, guide, and motivate me to become a better person.

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Abstract

This paper aims to conduct a theoretic study on A-movement in English.

The research paper consists of three chapters. The first chapter consists of the introduction, Chapter Two deals with the theoretical background of A-movement and types of movement in English, and Chapter Three concludes the finding of the study.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The problem

In linguistics, Movement is an operation that was introduced by transformational theories of generative grammar to characterize so-called displacement phenomena. Argument Movement (henceforth, A-Movement) is a syntactic movement from one A-position to another (typically, from a subject or complement position into another subject position (Radford 2004). The study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1- Does English exhibit A-movement?
- 2- What are the types of A-movement in English?
- 3-What is the derivation of this movement?

1.2 The Aim

The study aims to:

1. Discussing A-movement in English.
2. Shedding light on the types of A-movements in English.

1.3 The hypothesis of the study

The hypotheses of the study are:

1. English exhibits A-movement.
2. There are more than one type of this movement in English.

1.4 The limit of the study

This study is limited to presenting and discussing A-movement and its types in English.

1.5 The Value

It is hoped that this study will be of value to students who are interested in linguistics in general and syntax, in particular.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Background

2.1 Definitions of Movement

In syntax, movement refers to the phenomenon of a constituent (such as a word, phrase, or clause) appearing in one position in a sentence and then moving to a different position either within the same sentence or to a related sentence.

Movement is an important concept in generative grammar, which aims to explain how the rules of a language generate the infinite number of possible sentences in that language. Radford (2016) states that A -movement is a movement from one A –position to another (typically, from a subject or complement position into another subject position. Movement structure is a kind of linguistic structure in which a syntactic unit occurs in a place that is different from its expected "base" or "logical" place.

2.2 Types of Movement

Chomsky (1995) states that an important distinction is the one between head movement and phrasal movement, with the latter type being further subdivided into A-movement and A-bar movement. Copy movement is another more general type of movement.

2.2.1 A-movement vs. A-bar movement

Movement refers to the process by which a constituent moves from one position in a sentence to another. This movement is typically triggered by the need to satisfy some grammatical constraint, such as agreement or government, or to achieve a particular communicative effect.

In syntax, A "bar movement" typically refers to movement of a constituent across a vertical or "bar" line in a phrase structure tree. This type of movement is often associated with transformational grammar, which describes how sentences can be transformed from one form to another through a series of operations. In particular, A bar movement is often used to describe movement of a constituent from inside a phrase to a position outside the phrase, such as movement of a verb or auxiliary from inside a verb phrase to the beginning of the sentence e.g. "John has been eating" to "Has John been eating?") or movement of a wh-phrase from inside a subordinate clause to the beginning of the sentence (e.g. "I know where he went" to "Where did he go?").

The wh-movement involves moving a wh-phrase (such as "who" or "what") from its base generated position in a sentence to a higher position, typically to the beginning of the sentence. This movement is used to form questions or relative clauses e.g.:

(1) John saw the dog that chased the cat.

In the above sentence the wh-phrase "that chased the cat" can be moved to form the question:

(2) What did John see?

2.2.2 Phrasal movement vs. head movement

A different partition among types of movement is phrasal vs. head movement. Phrasal movement occurs when the head of a phrase moves together with all its dependents in such a manner that the entire phrase moves. Most of the examples above involve phrasal movement. Head movement, in contrast, occurs when just the head of a phrase moves, and the head leaves behind its dependents. Subject-auxiliary inversion is a canonical instance of head movement:

(3) a. Someone has read the article.

b. Has someone ___ read the article? - Head movement of the auxiliary verb *has*

(4) a. She will read the second article.

b. Will she ___ read the second article? - Head movement of the auxiliary verb *will*

On the assumption that the auxiliaries *has* and *will* are the heads of phrases, such as of IPs (inflection phrases), the b-sentences are the result of head movement, and the auxiliary verbs *has* and *will* move leftward without taking with them the rest of the phrase that they head.

2.2.3 Subject Movement

In syntax, movement refers to the process by which a constituent in a sentence is displaced from its base position to a different position in the sentence. This is often referred to as "movement of subject" when the subject of a sentence is moved to a different position for various reasons, such as to form a question, to emphasize a particular word or phrase, or to satisfy certain grammatical constraints.

One common example of subject movement is in forming questions in English. In a declarative sentence like "John is eating pizza," the subject "John" appears before the verb "is eating." To form a question, however, the subject and auxiliary verb switch places, resulting in "Is John eating pizza?" This movement of the subject to a different position in the sentence is necessary to form a grammatically correct question.

Another example of subject movement occurs in sentences with "wh-" questions, such as "What did John eat?" Here, the subject "John" is moved to a different position in the sentence to make room for the "wh-" word "what" to appear at the beginning of the sentence. In both of these examples, the movement of the subject is necessary to form a grammatically correct sentence that adheres to the rules of English syntax.

According to Poole (2012), subject movement is a fundamental process in syntax that allows speakers to produce a wide range of sentences with different meanings and structures. He argues that subject movement is motivated by the need to satisfy certain grammatical constraints, such as the requirement for the subject to appear before the verb in declarative sentences.

One of Poole's key contributions to the study of subject movement was his analysis of the syntax of wh-questions. He proposed that wh-questions involve movement of the wh-phrase to a higher syntactic position, which creates a gap or "trace" in the position where the wh-phrase originally appeared. This gap is then filled by the moved subject, which appears in a position that satisfies the grammatical constraints of the sentence. Poole also discussed the role of subject movement in generating sentences with multiple clauses or embedded structures. He points out that the movement of the subject to a higher position allows speakers to create sentences with complex structures and multiple levels of embedding, which contributes to the richness and diversity of human language.

Overall, Poole's work on subject movement in syntax highlights the importance of this process in generating sentences and creating meaning in language. His insights have contributed to our understanding of the rules and principles that govern human language and continue to influence research in the field of linguistics today.

2.2.4 Object Movement

The movement of objects is typically analyzed using the concept of "movement transformations." These transformations involve moving syntactic constituents from their base position to a new position in the sentence, often to satisfy grammatical constraints or to convey a particular meaning.

One common type of object movement is known as "object extraction" or "object fronting." This involves moving the object of a verb to the front of the sentence, often to emphasize it or to create a particular syntactic structure. For example, in the sentence "I saw the movie last night," the object "the movie" could be fronted to create the sentence "The movie, I saw last night."

Another type of object movement is known as "object shift." This involves moving the object of a verb to a different position within the sentence, often to satisfy grammatical constraints or to convey a particular meaning. For example, in the sentence "I gave the book to her," the object "the book" could be shifted to create the sentence "I gave her the book."

Object movement can also occur in the context of passivization, where the object of a transitive verb becomes the subject of a passive sentence. For example, in the sentence "John ate the pizza," the object "the pizza" becomes the subject of the passive sentence "The pizza was eaten by John."

In Chomsky's theory of syntax, the movement of objects is accounted for by a process called "movement" or "displacement". According to Chomsky, the basic structure of a sentence is generated in a base position, and then certain elements can be moved to other positions in the sentence to create different grammatical structures. Specifically, in Chomsky's theory, the movement of objects is accounted for by a transformational rule called "Move α ". This rule allows a constituent (such as an object) to be moved from one position in a sentence to another position, while maintaining its original thematic role. For example, in the sentence "John gave Mary the book", the object "the book" can be moved from its original position after the verb to a position before the verb by applying the Move α rule, resulting in the sentence "The book John gave Mary". Chomsky's theory also includes the idea of "trace" elements, which are placeholders that mark the original position of a moved constituent. In the previous example, the original position of "the book" is marked by a trace element in the original position after the verb. Overall, Chomsky's theory of syntax provides a way to account for the movement of objects and other constituents in a sentence, and has been influential in the development of modern generative grammar.

2.2.5 Passive Movement

One familiar case of A-movement from traditional grammar instruction is that of passivization. The passive movement in syntax involves A-movement, of the object of a sentence to the subject position and introducing a passive auxiliary verb e.g.:

(5) The cat chased the mouse.

Corresponding with an active sentence like (5), there is a passive counterpart (6):

(6) The mouse was chased by the cat.

In the sentence (5) the object "the mouse" can be moved to form the passive sentence (6). Consider another example:

(7) Big Business killed music.

(8) Music was killed by Big Business.

Sentences (7) and (8) are essentially synonymous. The active verb *kill* is replaced by its passive counterpart *be killed*, the direct object of the active verb appears as the subject of the passive, and the former subject of the active version appears in a PP i.e. *by Big Business*.

The question is: what is the relation between an active sentence and its passive counterpart? There are in principle two options. It could be that passive sentences are directly base-generated by phrase-structure rules. The alternative is that sentences like (6) are derived by transformation from an underlying D-Structure. In order to decide between these two options, let's take a closer look at some of the less obvious properties of passive sentences. English has two expletives, *it* and *there*, depending on whether the associate of the expletive is a CP or a DP. Either one can appear in Spec-IP when the verb has been passivized, e.g.:

(9) There was a man killed.

(10) It is believed that John is a fugitive from justice.

From the grammaticality of (9) and (10), we conclude that Spec IP is not a position in passives. That is, the subject of a passive verb is not a position to which zero -role is assigned.

A seemingly natural way to explain this is to say that, in addition to not assigning a theta-role to their subjects, passive verbs also don't assign Accusative Case to their objects. In this way, the following picture of passives emerges: the direct object, is base generated in a position that receives a zero-role, but not Case, needs to move to a position to which Case is assigned. By the zero-criterion, this Case position can't be a theta-position, since the objects already got its one zero-role. Fortunately, the subject position in passives provides just such a position (Case, but no zero role), and so the direct object moves there. In addition to passive verbs, there's another class of verbs (and adjectives, actually) which also have properties which seem to be best explained by a transformational analysis. These predicates are called raising predicates, e.g.:

(11) Which picture of himself does John like it?

At S-Structure, John, the antecedent of the reflexive *himself*, fails to c-command it (The first branching node dominating John is the matrix IP, which does not dominate Spec CP.) It is only at 0-Structure that the relevant c-command relationship exists between *John* and *himself*. It must therefore be the case that Principle A of the Binding Theory applies at D-Structure. Theta-marking is another process which must take place at D-Structure rather than S-Structure. Passive and raising move elements into positions which are not assigned a Theta-role, as evidenced by the fact that these positions allow expletive *it* and *there*:

(12) There were three men killed.

(13) It is likely that John is here.

If theta-marking took place at S-Structure, we would expect sentences like (14) and (15) to violate the theta -criterion:

(14) Three men were killed.

(15) John is likely to be here.

At S-Structure, *three men* and *John* are not in positions which are assigned a theta-role and would be predicted to be ungrammatical. We therefore conclude that theta-marking must take place at D-Structure.

2.2.6 Wh_movement

In syntax, "wh-movement" refers to the movement of a wh-word (such as "who," "what," "where," "when," "why," etc.) from its original position within a sentence to a higher position. This movement is often associated with questions, where the wh-word appears at the beginning of the sentence, as in "Who did you see?" or "Where is the library?"

Wh-movement is also sometimes called "wh-fronting" or "wh-questions." The movement of the wh-word is thought to be triggered by a feature on a higher element in the sentence, such as the complementizer "that" or the question particle "do." In many languages, including English, the wh-word moves to the beginning of the clause, but in some languages it may move to a different position.

Wh-movement is an important aspect of syntax because it allows speakers to ask questions and to express curiosity about the world around them. It also plays a role in many other constructions, such as relative clauses and cleft sentences.

A type of movement operation whereby a wh-expression is moved to the front of a particular type of structure (e.g. to the front of the overall sentence in ‘Where has he gone?’) (Radford 2004, 562). In some languages Wh-movement is often an option for certain matrix clauses such as in French. Examples of languages with expressions without required wh movement are Chinese and Slavic. The most commonly used languages as examples are Mandarin and Russian. The name wh-movement comes from an analysis adopted in early versions of Generative grammar. In this analysis, the Wh expression appears in the standard position of the deep structure, moving to the left from that position, and the sentence / clause with the surface structure. Many theories of syntax do not use the mechanism of motion in a variant sense, but even in theories that do not model long-distance dependencies as motion, Movements often lead to discontinuities. Of the various types of discontinuities, movement is best studied. It has been observed in many languages of the world and plays an important role in the theory of long-distance dependence (Aarts 1992:98).

2.3 The significance of A-movement

1-A-movement involves copying, that scope is defined in terms of c-command (so that a scope-bearing constituent has scope over constituents which it c-commands), and that the scope of a universally quantified expression like *everyone* in negative structures:

(16) Everyone hasn't finished the assignment yet.

2-A-movement ends up in a position in which it c-commands (and so has scope over) not. The scope ambiguity therefore reflects the two different positions

occupied by everyone in the course of the derivation.

3-A-movement comes from scope properties in relation to sentences, which will have the syntactic structure shown in simplified form, if *everyone* originates as the subject of the verb finished and is then raised up (by A-movement) to become the subject of the present tense auxiliary *have*.

4-A-Movement (A- position) which can generally only be occupied by argument expressions), the operation by which subjects move into spec-T is traditionally known as A-movement.

5-Since operations which move a noun or pronoun expression into spec-T are instances of A-movement, long-distance passivisation involves a series of applications of the familiar A-movement operation: thus, each of the two arrowed movement is a particular instance of A-movement.

Chapter Three

Conclusion

Movement is typically described as a transformation or operation within the theory of generative grammar. In natural language there is a syntactic movement to the specifier of IP, an A-position. One familiar case of A-movement from traditional grammar instruction is that of passivization. This kind of movement is called A-movement. Passivization involves moving the object of a sentence to the beginning and making it the subject, as in "The apple was eaten by John".

Generative grammar posits that these movements are created by underlying structures within the language, such as phrase structure and deep structure, and that they are governed by specific rules and constraints. By analyzing these movements and the rules that govern them, generative linguists attempt to uncover the fundamental structure of language and the processes by which it is generated.

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