



Provocative Syntax (Linguistic Inquiry Monographs)

By Phil Branigan

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Chomsky showed that no description of natural language syntax would be adequate without some notion of movement operations in a syntactic derivation. It now seems likely that such movement transformations are formally simple operations, in which a single phrase is displaced from its original position within a phrase marker, but after more than fifty years of generative theorizing, the mechanics of syntactic movement are still murky and controversial.

In *Provocative Syntax*, Phil Branigan examines the forces that drive syntactic movement and offers a new synthetic model of the basic movement operation by reassembling in a novel way isolated ideas that have been suggested elsewhere in the literature. The unifying concept is the operation of provocation, which occurs in the course of feature valuation when certain probes seek a value for their unvalued features by identifying a goal. Provocation forces the generation of a copy of the goal; the copy originates outside the original phrase marker and must then be introduced into it. In this approach, movement is not forced by the need for extra positions; extra positions are generated because movement is taking place.

After presenting the central proposal and showing its implementation in the analyses of various familiar cases of syntactic movement, Branigan demonstrates the effects of provocation in a variety of inversion constructions, examines interactions between head and phrasal provocation within the "left periphery" of Germanic embedded clauses, and describes the details of chain formation and successive cyclic movement in a provocation model.

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Editorial Review

Review

Provocative Syntax is a desperately needed breath of fresh air for Minimalist syntax's model of movement. 'Provocation' is an exciting alternative to the EPP that is still well grounded in Chomskyan tradition. This book is a must-read for anyone dissatisfied with motivating movement via uninterpretable features.

(Daniel Siddiqi, School of Linguistics and Language Studies, Carleton University)

Provocative Syntax sparkles with originality and erudition. Branigan brilliantly connects seemingly unrelated theoretical strands to weave a tight and elegant model of syntactic movement and provides theoretically unified solutions to many outstanding problems in the syntax of Germanic and Romance. Among the numerous books and papers spawned by Chomsky's Minimalist program, this book is one of the most profound I've read.

(Ur Shlonsky, Professor of Linguistics, University of Geneva)

About the Author

Phil Branigan is Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Memorial University in Newfoundland.

Users Review

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