[A'/A] PROBES & THE MOVEMENT THEY INVOKE

Magdalena Lohninger • University of Salzburg

• **Synopsis:** I present a syntactic-comparative investigation of composite A'/A probes, the movement chains they invoke and how they relate to the classical A'/A distinction. I show that cross-linguistically, the mixture of A'/A properties in composite probing is highly systematic, and becomes predictable when replacing the binary A'/A distinction with a more fine-grained, tripartite system. I suggest that the "classical" A'/A properties (table (1)) tie to three different factors: i) the actual movement chain (A' or A), ii) the features of the probing head ([A'], [A] or [A'/A]), and iii) the location of the probe in the functional spine. Different combinations of i)-iii) render language- and construction-specific mixtures of A'/A properties, labeled the *A'/A signature*. Wile on the one hand allowing for a more flexible understanding of the A'/A distinction, i-iii) simultaneously predict (im)possible clusters and correlations of A'/A properties, thus a finite set of A'/A signatures in natural language; a prediction that is borne out in the empirical landscape of composite A'/A- (as well as bare A'- and A-) configurations.

• **The A'/A distinction and composite probes:** Recently, the A'/A distinction has re-entered the center of syntactic discussion; particularly the introduction of a featural implementation thereof (a.o. van Urk 2015; [ϕ/D] trigger A-movement, [foc/top/wh/rel] trigger A'-movement) allowed for **composite A'/A probes** to enter the field, yielding constructions that exhibit "mixed" A'/A properties in a single movement step.

TABLE 1 **A-movement**	**A'-movement**
case-related, restricted to nominals, cannot cross CP, no WCO, new antecedents for anaphors, no reconstruction effects, no parasitic gaps (PG), feeds further A-movement (BIM), no information-structural effects	not case-related, not restricted to nominals, can cross CP, WCO, no new antecedents for anaphors, obligatory reconstruction effects, parasitic gap (PG) licensing, does not feed further A-movement (BIM), information-structural effects

Composite A'/A probes are used extensively as explanatory tool whenever a derivation does not strictly classify as either A or A' and A'/A probes have been strongly criticised for generating a seemingly anything-goes syntax. I show that, when perceived from a comparative perspective, composite A'/A configurations follow highly systematic, predictable patterns.

• **A syntax for A'/A probes:** I present a unified syntactic approach to A'/A probing, consisting of the following ingredients: i) **A'/A probes search for a fully fitting goal and are not sensitive to intervening, partly fitting goals** (a par to *Multitaksing*; van Urk & Richards 2015 and *Conjunctive Probing*; Scott 2021). Instances of defective intervention in A'/A probing (Coon, et al 2021, Branan & Erlewine 2022) are primarily found in what is referred to *A'-movement restricted to the highest DP*, a mere locality restriction on A'-movement. That properly mixed A'/A derivations are lack of defective intervention becomes best visible when investigating A'/A probes on Voice, allowing to skip partially fitting DPs in favor of a lower, fully fitting goal (e.g. ditransitive, long-distance extraction). ii) the movement chain itself is of type A (abstracting over individuals) or type A' (abstracting over choice functions; cf. Sauerland 1998, Ruys 2000, Bhatt & Keine 2019), **"composite A'/A movement" does not exist.** An A'/A probe can trigger either A'- or A-movement, depending on whether its [A] or [A'] feature is merged strong. iii) **A'/A probes can be located on phasal C and/or Voice heads**. Their distribution (only on Voice, only on C, on both) varies depending on the language, the specific construction and the origin of the A'/A probe. iv) **A'/A probes can enter the structure in different ways** (e.g. via parametric (under)inheritance, language change or derivational processes). The analysis suggests that not all properties listed in table (1) track the type of movement chain per se; instead, they tie to three different syntactic factors **(movement chain,**

probing head, location of the probe), which can, to some degree, be modified independently from each other.

i. movement chain: A' or A	⇒ *case-marking, WCO, PGs, feeding A-mvt, condition C connectivity*
ii. probing head: [A'], [A], [A'/A]	⇒ *restr. to ϕ-goals, minimality, info.-struct. effects, ϕ-agreement*
iii. location of probe: C, Voice	⇒ *ability to cross CP*

The properties tying to one and the same factor (i-iii) cluster together in their values. If, for example, a movement chain is of type A (independent of whether it was induced by a bare [A] or a composite [A'/A] probe), it interacts with case, obviates WCO, does not license PGs, can feed further A-movement and does not need to reconstruct into its base-position for cond. C.

• **Systematic A'/A patterns:** I show that cross-linguistically, composite A'/A derivations depict a systematic mixture of A'/A properties, highly predictable and not subject to a random mix-and-match distribution. I draw on data from unrelated languages that have been analyzed as involving [A'/A] probes: promotion to pivot in Dinka, Balinese, Malagasy (van Urk 2015, Erlewine et al 2017/2019), Mandarin BEI passives & low topics/foci (Chen 2023), Khanty passives (Colley & Privoznov 2020), and wh-agreement in Passamaquoddy (Grishin 2023, Richards t.a.). Since all derivations involve [A'/A], probing is restricted to ϕ-goals, in-sensitive to intervening partial fits, whilst simultaneously triggering information structural effects and ϕ-agreement. The movement chain the A'/A probe induces can be of type A or A'; rendering uniform values with respect to WCO, PGs, further A-movement, case-assignment and condition C connectivity. If the A'/A probe is located on C, it allows movement to leave the CP phase, irrespective of whether it is an A'- or A-chain. If [A'/A] is located on Voice, it enables successive-cyclic (A-)movement through VoiceP. Which of the two heads (Voice and C) carries an A'/A probe is not dependent on each other; all combinations are attested. Contrasting [A'/A] probes with bare [A'] and [A] probes, we predict the possible combinations in table (2); the prediction is borne out given the empirical landscape of composite A'/A (as well as bare A' and A) derivations. The important observation of this study is that even in A'/A probing, the A'/A properties from table (1) do not randomly mix and match. The properties tracking the movement chain cluster together in their values, and so do the properties tracking the probing head, rendering a small set of possible combinations.

	probe	*mvt type*	**case**	**WCO**	**PG**	**feeds A-mvt**	**info-struct.**	**restr. to nominal**	**ϕ-agree**	**mini-mality**	**can cross CP**
i)	[A']	A'	×	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	A'	✓
ii)	[A'/A]	A'	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	A'/A	✓/×
iii)	[A]	A	✓	×	×	✓	×	✓	✓	A	×
iv)	[A'/A]	A	✓	×	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	A'/A	✓/×
TABLE 2			*= Movement type (A' or A)*				*= Probe type (A', A or A'/A)*				*probe on C*

i)	English wh-extraction, topicalization, focalization, relativization	[A'] on C
ii)	Passamaquoddy wh-agreement	[A'/A] on C+Voice
iii)	English raising to subject, passivization	[A] on T
iv)	Dinka, Balinese, Malagasy promotion to pivot	[A'/A] on C+Voice
	Mandarin BEI passives & low topics/foci, Khanty passives	[A'/A] on Voice

• **The A'/A signature:** This work suggests that a two-way A'/A-distinction (table (1)) might be too coarse as a language-universal. Instead, A'/A properties tie to three syntactic factors, allowing for different combinations of property-clusters: i) the type of movement chain (A or A'), ii) the probing head (A', A or A'/A), iii) the location of the probe. The pattern of i)-iii) in English is just one option out of many: other languages allow for other combinations, labeled the language-specific *A'/A signature*. Cross-linguistically, there is only a finite number

of possible A'/A signatures which becomes evident only from a comparative perspective, taking into account configurations with and without composite A'/A probes. From table (2) it is evident that the properties tying to the movement chain exhibit consistent values; we thus do not need to refrain from an A'/A distinction, not even in languages with composite probes.