It has been argued in the literature that the subject of an unaccusative verb is an internal argument of the verb and occurs in the complement position. Such a subject, on this view, is just like the object of a transitive verb (Perlmutter 1978; 1989). In this paper, focusing on Turkish, we take a closer look at the syntactic positions of bare NPs, based on aspeactual properties of verbs (e.g. Vendler 1967; Dowty 1979) and prosodic structure, and argue that internal arguments of verbs do not uniformly occur in the complement position of the verb. Looking at where low adverbs appear in Turkish, we propose that bare internal arguments of achievements are base-generated in SpecVP (a position higher than the sister of V) while those of accomplishments originate in the complement position of V.

Previous literature showed, for Turkish, that, in this language, an indefinite bare NP never moves from certain structural domains such as VP/vP (see (1)) (Kornfilt 1984). In light of this fact, both the position of adam ‘man’ in (1a) and that of kitap ‘book’ in (1b) have been assumed to be the same complement position of the verb. This claim also seems to be supported by certain prosodic facts: The indefinite subject of an unaccusative verb stays within the same phonological phrase (PPh) as the verb (see (2a)), just like the indefinite (bare) object of a transitive verb (see (2b)), as indicated by phrasal stress facts – the rightmost PPh corresponds to VP in Turkish (Özçelik & Nagai 2010). This should not, however, be taken to necessarily mean that the indefinite subject adam in (2a) must occur in the complement position of the verb; all (2) shows is that adam in (2a) should occur within the same (maximal) projection as the verb, i.e. within the VP. It does not make any predictions as to where exactly in the VP it should occur. We hold that internal arguments of a certain class of verbs occur in the specifier position (cf. Larson 1988; Hale & Keyser 2000; Alexiadou & Shäfer 2010), irrespective of the unaccusativity (or transitivity) of verbs.

Evidence for this comes from a consideration of the position of low adverbs in Turkish: Consider, for example, the behavior of the low adverb çabuk ‘quickly’ in (3a) and the corresponding prosodic structure in (3b). Under the standard view of the placement of low adverbs, one could assume that çabuk attaches to VP (e.g. Miyagawa 1989). The adverb çabuk occurs immediately before the indefinite object kitap and appears within the same phonological phrase as the verb, as in (3b). It is clear, then, that it must stay, at least, within the VP. Now, compare (4) with (5): The same adverb cannot appear in (4a, b), but it can in (5a, b). We argue that the VP structures of (4a, b) are different from the ones of (5a, b) in terms of aspeactual properties (e.g. Vendler 1967). The aspeactual classification of VPs can be determined by looking at the behavior of PP modifiers such as x boyunca ‘for x time’ (See (6) and (7)). In (6a, b), the VP denoting an instantaneous event is incompatible with the durational PP (i.e. the achievement class). In contrast, in (7a, b), the VP denoting a durative event is compatible with the durational PP (i.e. the accomplishment class). Achievement VPs do not allow low adverb modification (see (4)) whereas accomplishment VPs do (see (5)). Now, following the idea that multiple specifiers (or adjuncts) are not allowed in phrase structure (Kayne 1994), we predict here that low adverbs like çabuk occur in SpecVP in Turkish, and that the reason why çabuk cannot occur in SpecVP in (4a, b) - as opposed to (5a, b) - is because the indefinite bare NP and the low adverb compete for the single specifier position available in the sentence. The prosodic phrasing given in (8) reflects the syntactic structure in (4) – SpecVP in the achievement construction is not available for the adverb to occupy since the indefinite bare NP already occurs in that position, which yields the ungrammaticality of (8a, b). Notice that once the internal argument of achievements is scrambled away from VP to some higher position (SpecvP- a canonical accusative-case checking position), getting the definite interpretation (Kornfilt 1984), the low adverb can occur (See (9)). On the other hand, SpecVP in the accomplishment construction is available for the adverb to occupy since the indefinite bare NP occurs in the complement position (lower than SpecVP) (See (10)).

In conclusion, an indefinite internal argument of an achievement verb (for both unaccusatives and transitives) occurs in SpecVP while that of a non-achievement verb is in a position lower than SpecVP (or in the complement position of V). Achievements and non-achievements (accomplishments) are syntactically different with regard to VP-structures. Syntactic and prosodic properties of sentences jointly support the hypothesis presented here about tree structure.
(1) a. \([VP \text{ adam gel-di}] \) man arrive-Past
   ‘A man arrived.’

   b. \([\text{John } [VP \text{ kitap oku-du}]] \)
   book read-Past
   ‘John read a book.’

Note: PPh-level stress (which falls on the leftmost prosodic word in a PPh, Kabak & Vogel 2001) is indicated in bold.

(2) a. \([[[VP \text{ adam gel-di}]]] \text{PPh}\)I
   man arrive-Past
   ‘A man arrived.’

   b. \([[[\text{John} ][VP \text{ kitap oku-du}]]] \text{PPh}\)I
   book read-Past
   ‘John read a book.’

(3) a. \([\text{John } [VP \text{ çabuk kitap oku-du}]] \)
   quickly book read-Past
   ‘John quickly read a book.’

(4) a. \(*[[VP \text{ çabuk adam gel-di}]]\) quickly man arrive-Past
   ‘A man quickly arrived.’

   b. \(*[[\text{John } [VP \text{ çabuk para bul-du}]]]\)
   quickly money find-past
   ‘John quickly found a coin.’

(5) a. \([VP \text{ çabuk [V hastal yayıl-di]}] \)
   quickly disease spread-past
   ‘A disease quickly spread.’

   b. \([\text{John } [VP \text{ çabuk kitap oku-du}]] \)
   quickly book read-Past
   ‘John quickly read a book.’

(6) a. \(*[VP \text{ çabuk [V adam gel-di]}]\) one hour for man arrive-past
   ‘A man arrived *for an hour.’

   b. \(*[\text{John } [VP \text{ çabuk [V para bul-du]}]]\)
   one hour for money find-past
   ‘John found a coin *for an hour.’

(7) a. \(\text{bir saat boyunca adam geldi}\) one hour for man arrive-past
   ‘A man arrived *for an hour.’

   b. \(\text{John bir saat boyunca para bul-du}\) one hour for money find-past
   ‘John found a coin *for an hour.’

(8) (=4) a. \(*[[VP \text{ çabuk adam gel-di}]]PPh\)I
   quickly man arrive-Past
   ‘A man quickly arrived.’

   b. \(*[\text{John } [VP \text{ çabuk para bul-du}]]PPh\)I
   quickly money find-past
   ‘John quickly found a coin.’

(9) a. \(\text{XP adam [VP çabuk [V gel-di]]}\) man quickly arrive-past
   ‘The man quickly arrived.’

   b. \(\text{XP John [VP para-yı [V çabuk [V bul-du]]]]\)
   money-acc quickly find-past
   ‘John quickly found the coin.’

(10) (=5) a. \([VP \text{ çabuk hastalı̇k yayıl-di}]]PPh\)I
   one hour for disease spread-past
   ‘A disease spread for an hour.’

   b. \([\text{John } [VP \text{ çabuk kitap oku-du}]]PPh\)I
   one hour for book read-past
   ‘John read a book for an hour.’

SELECTED REFERENCES: