



Exploring X- Bar Syntax as Applied to English Syntactic Structures.

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of X-bar theory seems overlooked by many linguists. The question of whether or not the X-bar theory can be applied to various areas of human communication or it is just an abstract theory that is irrelevant or only relevant in the field of linguistics is no too clear.

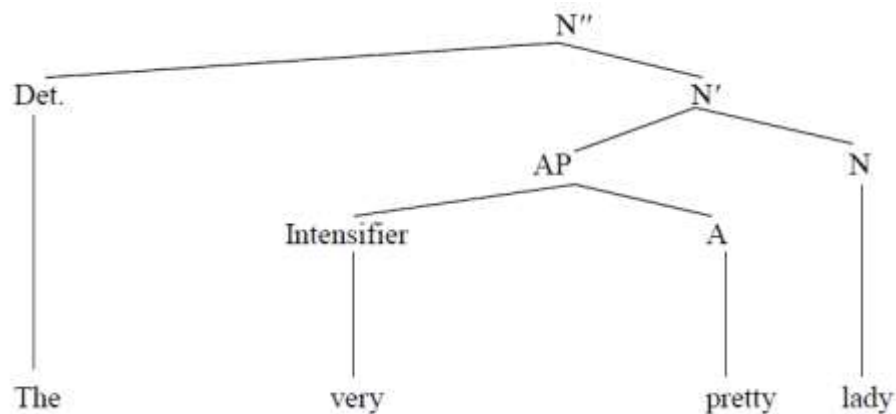
Twenty sentences drawn from different areas including literary texts, journal articles, editorials and print media were subjected to X-bar analysis in order to assess how the theory is applicable in these areas.

This research has proved the fact that the X-bar theory can be applied to sentences in any context of language use and that it not just an abstract theory that is irrelevant or only relevant in the field of linguistics. The study buttresses the fact that meaning is based on the grammaticality of structures and uses rules in analysis and not on the abstract areas of language (like context) which functionalists claim meaning encompasses.

INTRODUCTION

X-bar syntax as a system of grammatical analysis is an interesting field in generative linguistics. Linguists like Chomsky according to Crystal 2008 have argued that 'the rules of Phrase Structure Grammar need to be more constrained', but that there may be a need to recognize more types of categories, Crystal (525). Crystal also stresses that 'within the noun phrase (NP) for instance, there is need to recognise an intermediate category which is larger than the noun (N) but smaller than the phrase' (525). *Very pretty lady* in the phrase *the very pretty lady* is smaller than a phrase (NP) but larger

than a noun (N). This phrase is therefore 'tagged' N-bar. It is quite interesting to note that 'these intermediate categories, which have no status in early phrase-structure models, are formally recognised in X-bar syntax by a system of X-bars' according to Crystal (525). Each of these categories according to Crystal (525): "identifies a level of phrasal expansion: X, X⁰ = "X with no bars" (i.e., "zero-bar", the category itself); X' = "X-bar" = "X-single-bar"; X'' = "X-double-bar"; X''' = "X-treble-bar"; and so on". For example, the following tree illustrates two levels of expansion for N ("N-bar" and "N-double-bar") for the phrase *the very pretty lady*:



In X-bar theory, a head is recognised in every phrase. In every phrase, X (N, V, A, PP) is the head of XP (NP, VP, AP, PP). All XPs contain a head element. The head is a lexical category and the phrasal component is called a "projection". Since these projections may occur in layers, the topmost layers are known as maximal projections of a phrase. NP is the maximal projection of N, while VP is the maximal projection of V. There are also intermediate projections that must be accounted for in the structure of phrases. These intermediate projections are called X-bar projections. This theory basically establishes a more elaborate system of functional relationships among various structural categories in a phrase.

Head	X-bar Projection	Maximal Projection
V	V-bar (V')	VP
N	N-bar (N')	NP
A	A-bar (A')	AP
P	P-bar (P')	PP

In X-bar theory, the head of a phrase is projected in two ways – the maximal projection (XP), and the intermediate projection. In addition to a head and its projections, X-bar theory recognises another element within a phrase known as "Specifier" (Spec) in terms of its function. A similar element is known as the Complement (C). Both the specifier and the

complement occur at the second level along with X-bar categories (they occur as 'sisters' of X; sisters in the sense that they occur side by side and are of the same syntactic status).

X-bar syntax is an expansion of the phrase structure component of the grammar and it underlines the fact that phrases are endocentric, that is, an NP for example must have an N as its head and so on. The X-bar theory of phrase structure grammar, according to Radford (1988) and Haegeman (1994), 'contributes significantly to both the descriptive and explanatory adequacy of Linguistic Theory' in English and other languages. Early traditional grammar introduces a theory of phrase structure grammar (PSG) which includes two levels of categories: word-level (N, V, A, P, etc.) and phrase-level (NP, AP, VP, PP, etc.).

The creation of X-bar Syntax or X-bar theory seems to address the insufficiency in the earlier model of transformational grammar. X-bar theory takes into consideration the fact that many other kinds of lexical and phrasal units in language need to have an X-bar category added to their phrase markers. Linguists note that in order to describe the process more adequately, each kind of phrase must have a head constituent upon which a phrase is constructed.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Sentences from the editorials

1. "Boko Haram forces two million people to flee to Bauchi" *Daily Trust*, July 23rd, 2014, P.11.

"Full-time job may disrupt breast-feeding plans". *Daily Trust*, July 23rd, 2014, P.36

The first sentence is a complex sentence with an object (noun clause object) after the verb 'forces'. The second sentence is also a complex sentence.

2. "We won't allow lawlessness" (7). This is a statement made by Amosun Ibikunle, Ogun state governor. The sentence is a simple sentence

3. "Babalakin assured the governor that work will begin on the road" (7)

(From *The Nation* of Friday, 27th January, 2012). This sentence is a complex sentence, with a noun clause object after 'assured'.

4. *The Nation* of Wednesday, February 22nd, 2012, P.23.

"Kanu motivates eagles against Rwanda"

Sentences from literary texts

From Habila's *Measuring Time*

5. "Are you his son?" (38)

6. "The next day he went to her" (101)

From Okoye's *The Fourth World*.

7. "Chira closed her eyes" (66)

8. "Your father must have had a good and trustworthy friend here in Enugu" (67)

9. "Immediately, Isobel remembered her old school" (79).

This sentence is taken from Swift's *The last Good Man*.

Sentences from journal articles

10. "The first major bloody attack on residents of Jos was on September 7, 2001" (178).

11. "They have started" (179).

These two sentences are from an article written by Ella, D.N. and Dugga, A. E. in an article entitled "*Assessing the Language of Jos Crises: Syntactico-Semantic Implications of Pronouns*". This article is published in *Affrev laligens- An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*, Ethiopia.

12. "Orwell uses quite a number of slogans in his text" (220)

A sentence from an article by Nimram, M.D. titled "A Linguistic-Stylistic Analysis of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*", published in an *International Journal of Continuing Education*, University of Jos.

13. "That Prospero and his daughter landed safely on an island is divine providence" (13).

"The woman constitutes the fourth social cluster" (127).

The sentences are adapted from articles by Doki, G.J. ("Literature and Peace on the Plateau") and Lar, I. B. ("A critique of the Trial of Dedan Kimathi and its Application to Peace-Building in Plateau State, Nigeria") respectively. The two articles are published in a journal entitled, *Creative and Critical Writing for Peace Building in Nigeria: The Jos Paradigm*.

Sentences from speeches

14. "This is how America works" (114)

(From Obama's speech entitled: "A Hope to Fulfil" on April 26th, 2005, at Washington D.C.)

15. "Where do you find that courage?" (121).

From Obama's speech entitled: "Remarks at NAACP fight for Freedom Fund Dinner" on May 2nd, 2005 at Detroit, MI.

16. "Libraries have a special role to play in knowledge economy" (135)

This sentence is taken from Obama's speech titled: "Address to the American Library Association" on June 27th, 2005 at Boston, MA.

17. "But God had a plan for his people" (238)

18. "We have scorned our gay brothers and sisters instead of embracing them" (241).

(Obama's speech titled: "The Great Need of the Hour" on January 20th, 2008 at Atlanta, GA.)

ANALYSIS USING X-BAR THEORY

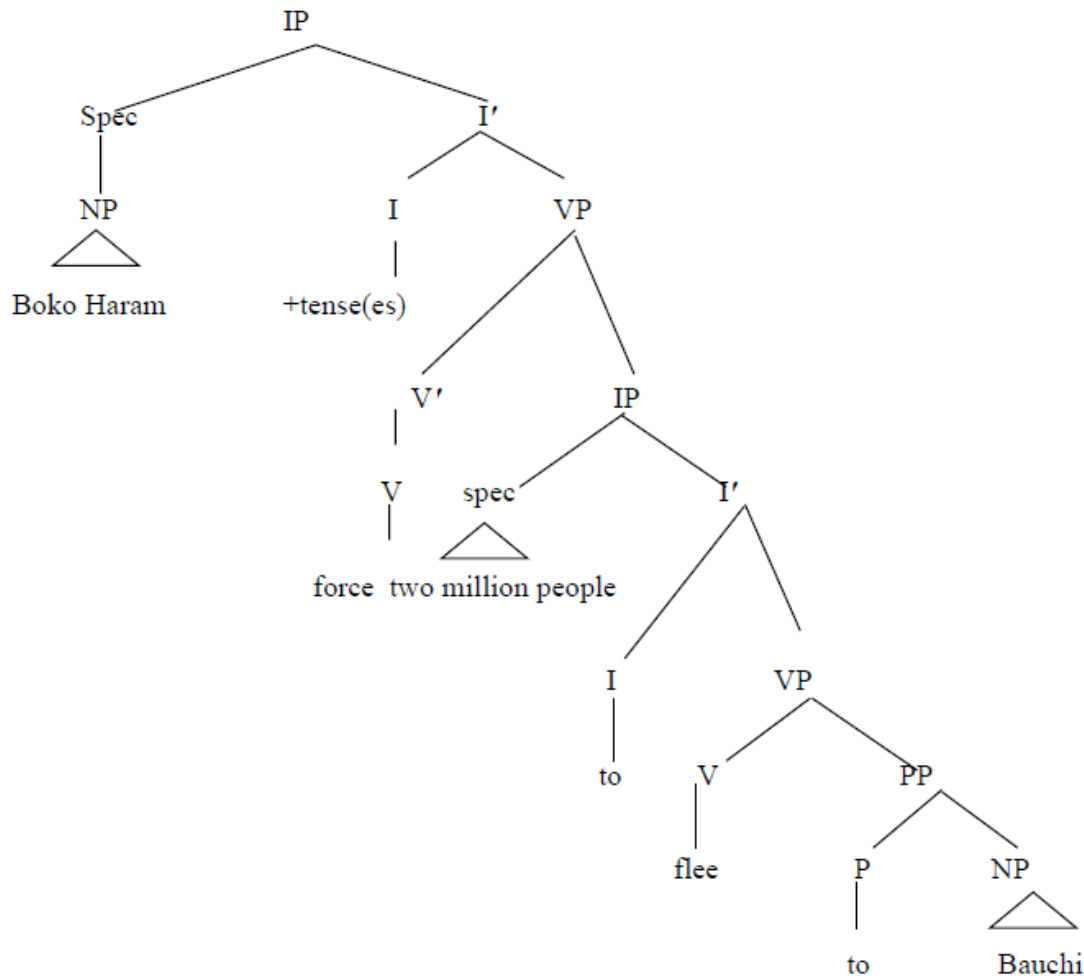
The concept of X-bar is central to modern generativist theory. One of the primary tasks of syntactic theory is to explain how sentences are built from words. This explanation is generally conceived of in terms of assigning syntactic structures to sentences. Generative grammar is concerned with hierarchical structuring of phrases and sentences. A hierarchical analysis looks at phrases and sentences in terms of constituents. These constituents usually correspond to syntactic structures and are reflected in tree diagrams.

The methods of analysis used by Radford and Aarts are basically adopted in this study for analysis. Both linguists use the Transformational Generative grammar approach. Some differences are: Radford uses the concept of IP (Inflectional Phrase) at the

sentence level while Aarts uses 'S' (Sentence). While Radford uses 'I' (Inflectional-bar), Aarts uses S'(sentence-bar) in his analysis. It is important to point out that the handling of the 'S node' has evolved in Generative Grammar. The term 'S node' was used then 'IP node' and more recently, 'TP'. Both linguists use the same major phrase types (NP, VP, AdvP, AP, PP...). Both linguists use 'I' (inflection) to account for tense and agreement features. Radford adheres more strictly to the rule of 'binary branching' which says that all nodes must branch only into two. This is because he places the VP under the I' (daughter of I') and not under the IP

node while Aarts places the I node directly under the 'S', between NP and VP. Aarts sometimes violates the binary rule in order to have a more 'convenient' analysis or tree. Both linguists believe in and use the concepts of 'affix hopping' (usually a movement to the right) and 'movements' (usually to the left) in their analysis. Below are analyses of twenty sentences using the X-bar syntax:

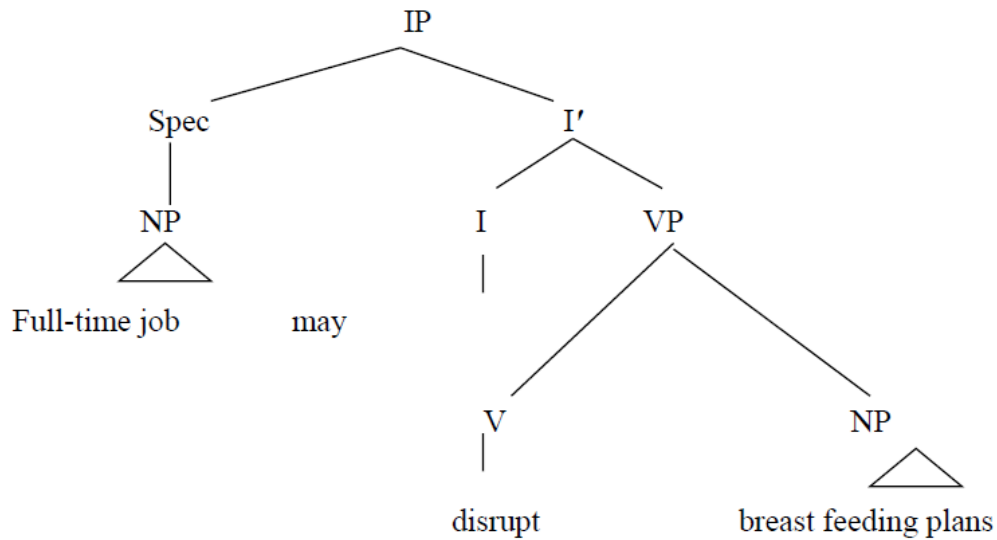
1. Boko Haram forces two million people to flee to Bauchi.



This sentence is analysed using Radford's method. Here, the 'IP' which is the sentence branches into two; the Specifier node and the I' node. The Specifier in this sentence is an NP which accounts for 'Boko Haram'. The I' branches into an I node and a VP node. The I node accounts for a tense element which is +present and also an agreement feature which is singular. The VP branches into V' which accounts for the verb, 'force' and an IP which also branches into a Specifier and an I'. The Specifier accounts for the unanalysed phrase,

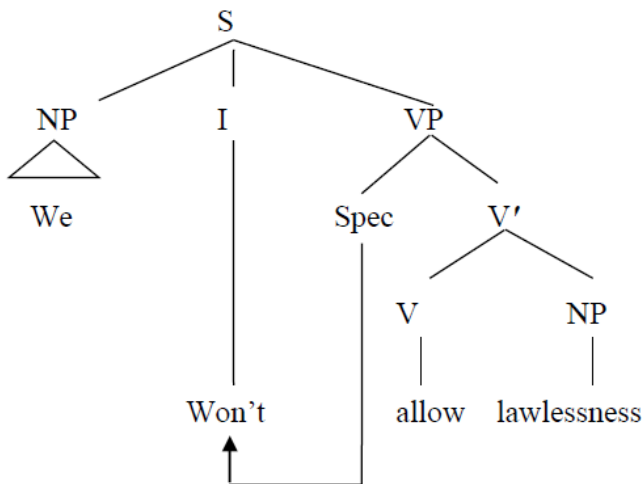
'two million people' while the I' branches further into the I node and VP node. The I node accounts for the 'inflectional to' and the second VP branches into a V which accounts for the verb 'flee' and the PP which branches into a P and an NP. The P accounts for the preposition, 'to' while the NP accounts for the noun 'Bauchi'.

2. Full-time job may disrupt breast feeding plans



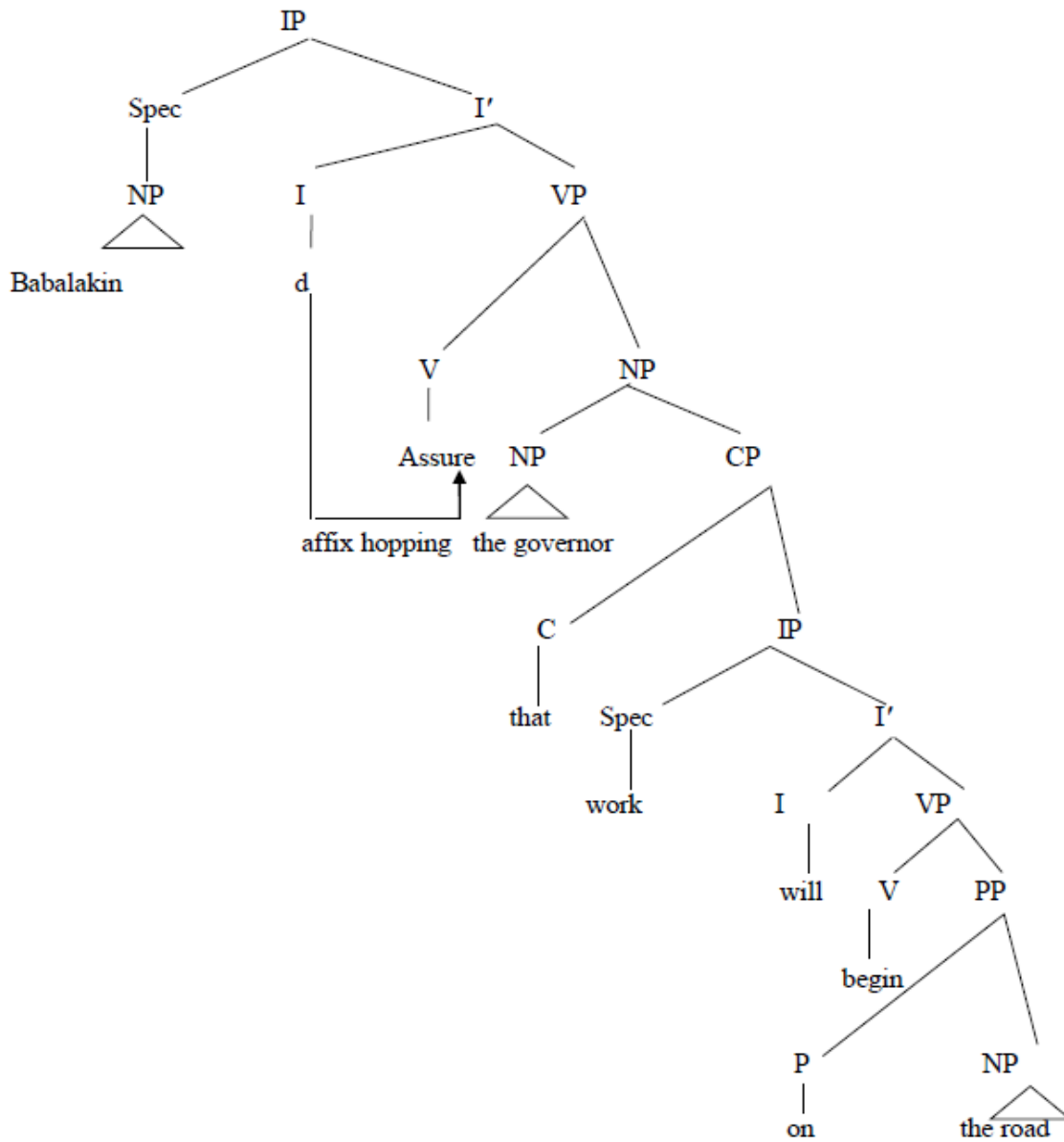
This analysis is also according to Radford's. The IP branches into Specifier and I' nodes. The Specifier accounts for the unanalysed NP, 'Full-time job' and I' further branches into an I node (which accounts for the auxiliary verb, 'may') and a VP node which branches into the V node and the NP node. The V node accounts for the verb, 'disrupt' while the NP node accounts for the NP, 'breast feeding plans'.

3. We won't allow lawlessness.



Aart's method of analysis is also used here. The S node branches into NP, I and VP nodes respectively, violating the rule of binary branching. The NP node accounts for the noun 'we' and the I node accounts for the negative element 'won't' which is a contracted form of two negative elements, will + not. The VP node branches into a Spec node and a V' node. The Spec node is empty because there is a movement of the negative element 'not' to the I node. The V' node branches into a V node which accounts for the verb 'allow' and NP node which accounts for the noun 'lawlessness'.

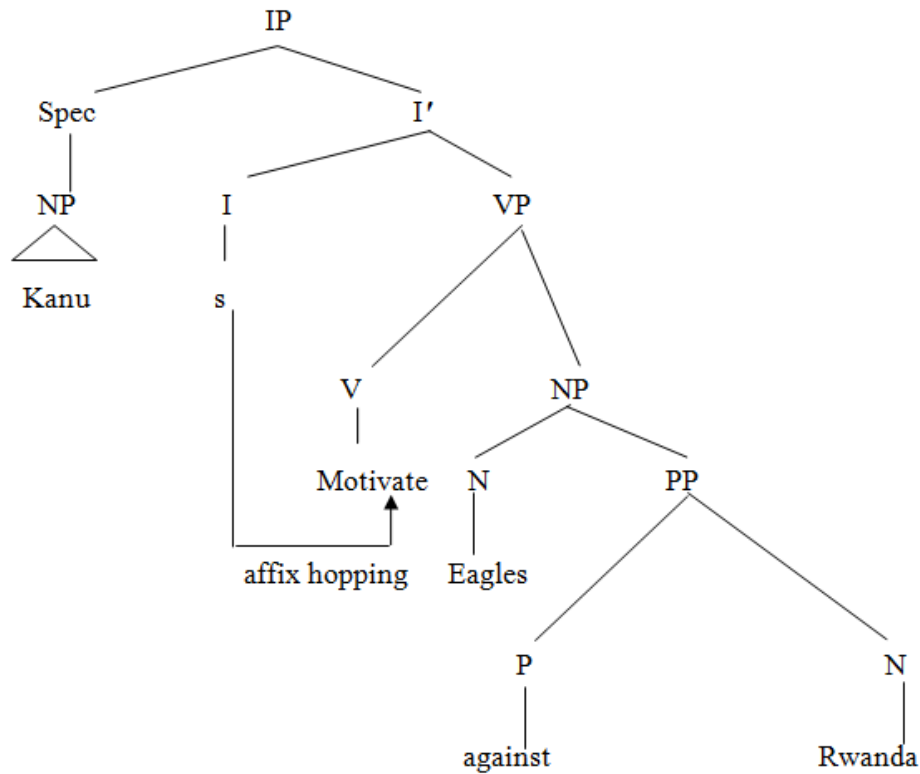
4. Babalakin assured the governor that work will begin on the road.



According to Radford's type of analysis, this IP branches into a Specifier node and an I' node. The Specifier accounts for the NP 'Babalakin' while the I' branches into I and VP nodes. The I node accounts for the past tense morpheme, 'd' and the VP branches into a V (which accounts for the base form of the verb 'assure') and an NP which further branches into an NP and a CP. The past tense morpheme, 'd' hops or jumps to the right (to the base form of the Verb), under the VP to make it past tense. The second NP accounts for the phrase 'the governor' while the CP further

branches into a C (complementizer-'that') and an IP. This second IP branches into a Specifier which accounts for the noun work and an I' which branches into an I and a VP. The I node accounts for the auxiliary 'will' while the VP node branches into a V node (begin) and a PP node. The PP node branches into a P node (on) and a NP node. This third NP accounts for the unanalysed noun phrase, 'the road'.

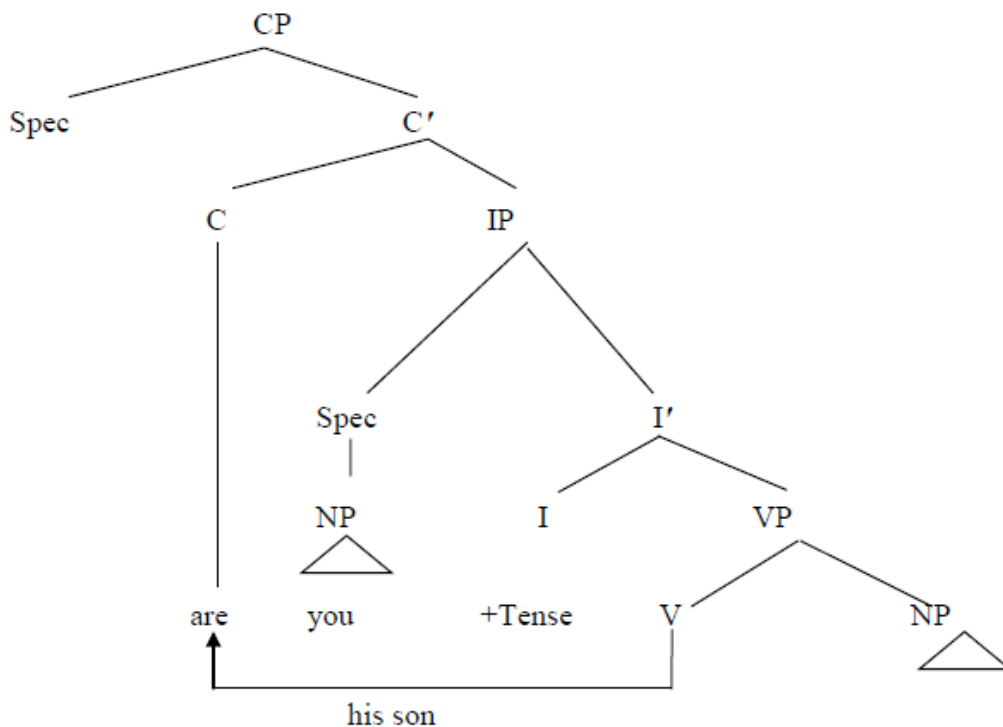
5. Kanu motivates Eagles against Rwanda.



According to Radford's type of analysis, this IP branches into a Specifier node which accounts for the NP 'Kanu' and an I' node which branches into an I node and a VP node. The I node accounts for the inflection feature 's' which indicates present tense and agreement with the NP which is singular. The VP branches into a V node which accounts for the verb 'motivate' and an NP

which branches into an N node and a PP node. The 's' under the inflection node jumps to the base form of the verb 'motivate' under the V node. The N node accounts for the noun 'eagles' while the PP branches into a P node (against) and another N node (Rwanda).

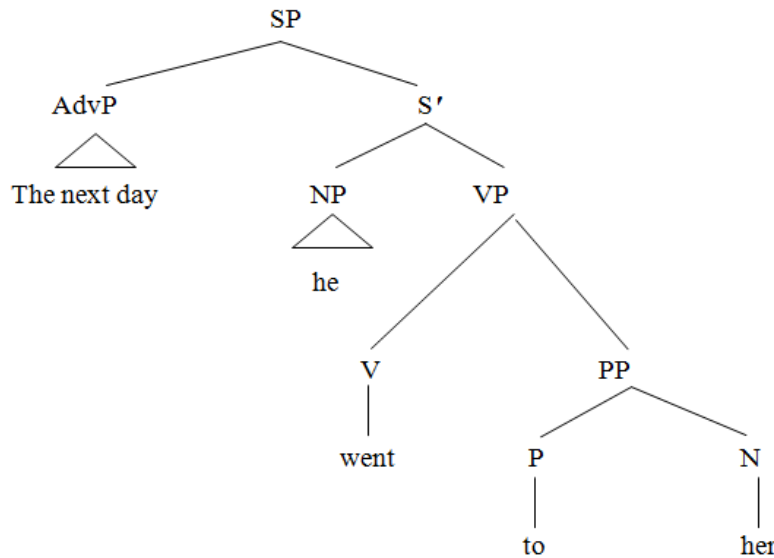
6. Are you his son?



This is an interrogative sentence. The CP (complementizer Phrase) branches into a Spec node and a C' node. The Spec node is empty while the C' branches into a C node and an IP node. The C node accounts for the verb 'are' which is as a result of a movement operation from the V node under the VP to the C node. This makes the V node empty. This type of movement is a form of 'inversion' according to Radford (513). This type of movement is under the concept of I-movement. Radford refers to this type of movement as a movement whereby an auxiliary or main verb comes

to be positioned before its subject. The IP node branches into a Spec node which accounts for the NP 'you' and an I' node which branches into I and VP nodes. The I node indicates a tense feature which is +tense and the VP node branches into a V node (which is empty as a result of the movement operation that has taken place) and the NP node accounts for the phrase his son.

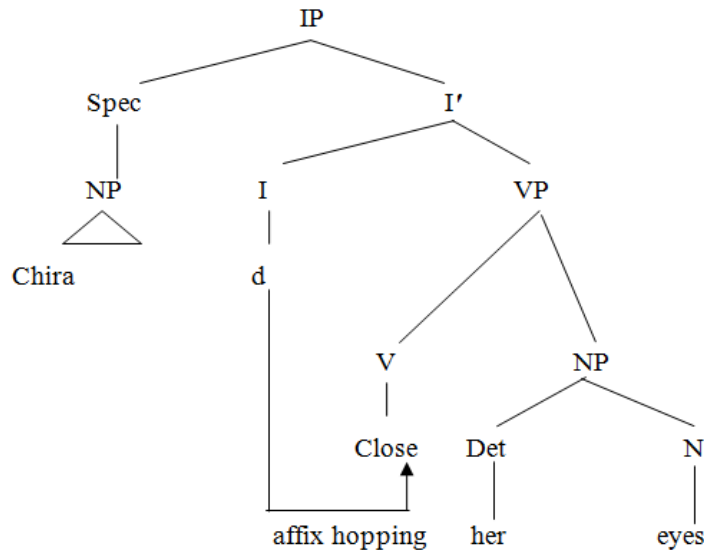
7. The next day, he went to her.



This analysis is according to Aarts' method of analysis. The 'SP' branches into an AdvP node and a S' node. The AdvP accounts for the phrase 'the next day' while the S' branches into NP and VP nodes respectively. The NP accounts for the noun 'he' and the VP branches into a V node and a PP node. The V node accounts for

the verb 'went' and the PP branches further into P node and N node. The P node accounts for the preposition 'to' while the N node accounts for the noun 'her'.

8. Chira closed her eyes.

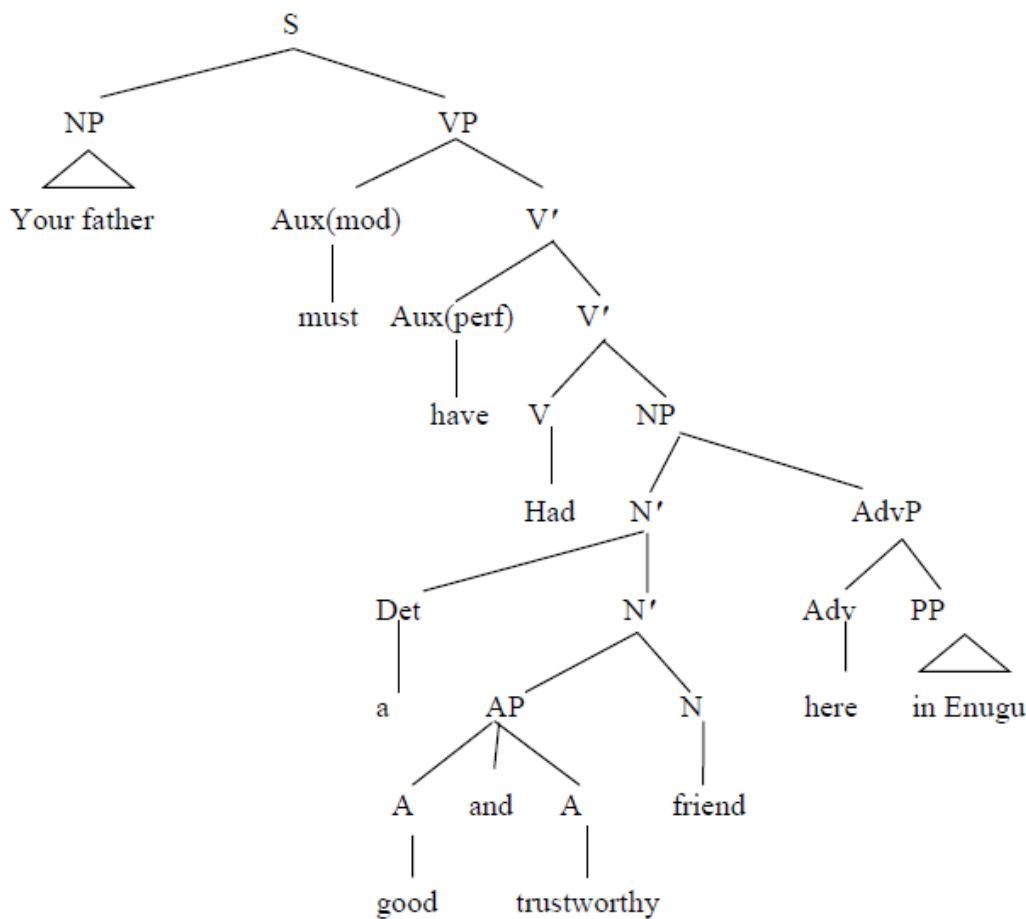


This analysis is according to Radford's. The IP branches into a Specifier node which accounts for the NP 'Chira' and an I' node which branches into an I node and a VP node.

The I node accounts for the past tense morpheme, 'd' and the VP branches into a V (which accounts for the base form of the verb 'close') and an NP which further branches into a Det node and N node.

The past tense morpheme, 'd' hops to the right (to the base form of the Verb), under the VP to make it past tense. The second NP accounts for the pronoun, 'her' and the noun 'eyes'.

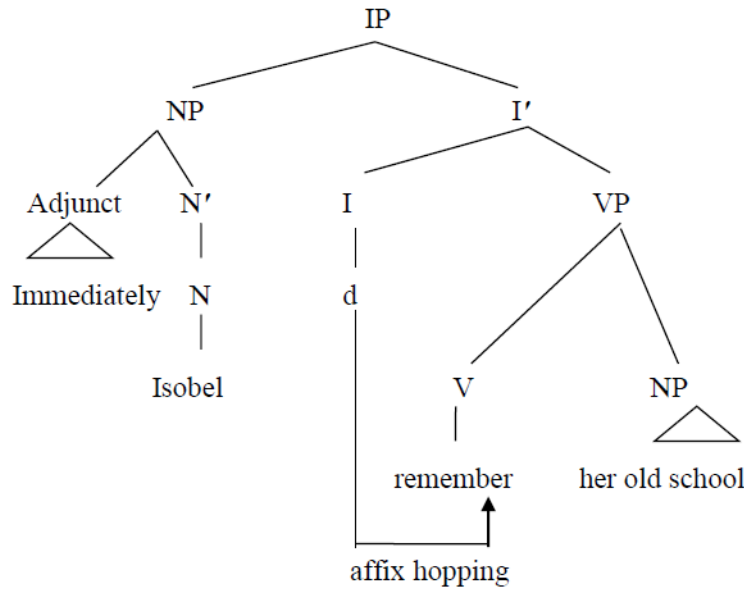
9. Your father must have had a good and trust worthy friend here in Enugu.



This analysis is according to Aart's type of analysis. The 'S' node branches into NP and VP nodes respectively. The NP node accounts for the phrase 'your father' while the VP node branches further into a Modal Aux node (which accounts for the auxiliary 'must') and a V' node. The V' node branches into a Perfect Aux node, (which accounts for the auxiliary 'have') and a V' node which branches into a V node and NP node. It will be observed from the three diagram that we have a 'stacking' of V' so as to account for several auxiliaries (must, have and had respectively). The V node accounts for the main verb 'had' and the NP node branches into an N' node and an AdvP node. The N' node branches into Det. node which accounts for the determiner 'a' and another N' node which further

branches into AP and N nodes. The AP node branches into three nodes: A node, C node and another A node. Here, the rule of binary branching is violated. This is in order to account for the Complementizer 'and' properly, since it is neither a noun nor a verb. The A node accounts for the word 'good', the C node accounts for the complementizer 'and' while the other A node accounts for the word 'trustworthy'. The N node accounts for the noun 'friend'. Lastly, the AdvP node branches into an Adv node which accounts for the adverb 'here' and a PP node which accounts for the phrase 'in Enugu'.

10. Immediately, Isobel remembered her old school.

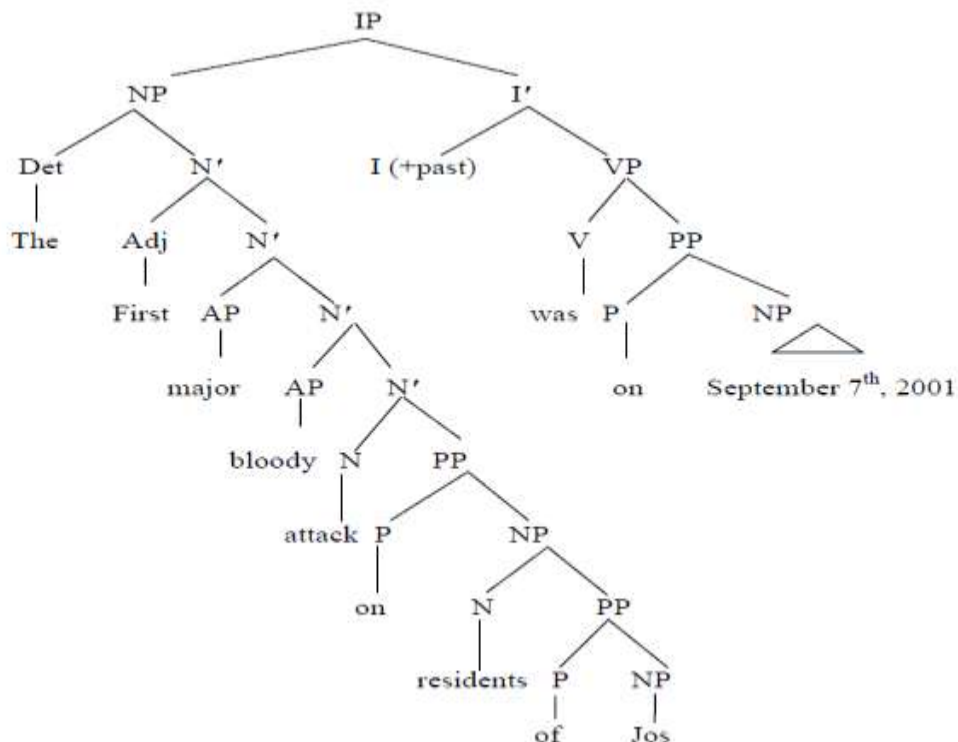


This analysis is also according to Radford’s method of analysis. The IP node branches into NP and I’ nodes. The NP node branches into an adjunct node and a N’ node. The adjunct node accounts for the adverb, ‘immediately’ while the N’ accounts for the noun, ‘Isobel’.

It is important to note that the adjunct, ‘immediately’ is mobile. This implies that it can fit into different positions in the sentence. It can come after the noun ‘Isobel’, after the verb ‘remembered’ or after the noun phrase ‘her old school’. This mobility of adverb is a type of movement operation in Generative Grammar. The I’ node branches into an I node and a VP node.

The I node accounts for ‘d’ which is the inflected morpheme of the verb ‘remember’ to make it a past tense. This results to an affix hopping (a jump to the right) because the past tense morpheme, ‘d’ hops to the end of the verb ‘remember’ to make it ‘remembered’, making it the past tense form of the word. The VP node branches into a V node which accounts for the verb ‘remember’ and a NP node which accounts for the phrase, ‘her old school’.

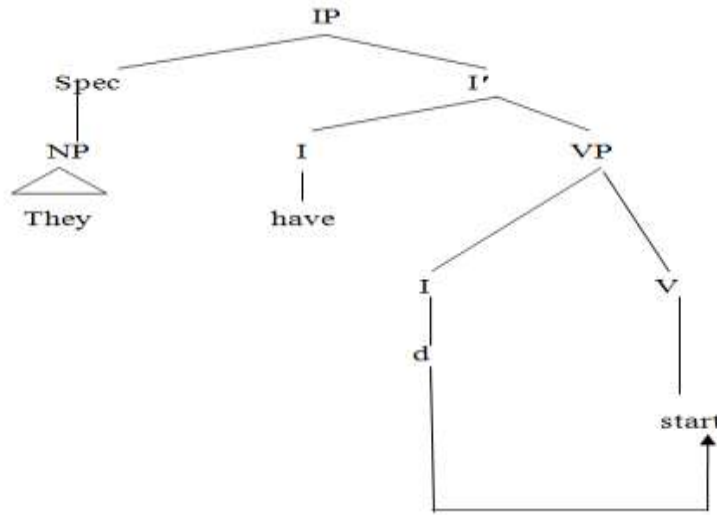
11. The first major bloody attack on residents of Jos was on September 7th, 2001.



According to Radford's type of analysis, this IP node branches into NP and I' nodes. The NP node branches again into a determiner node which accounts for the determiner 'the' and a N' node which further branches into Adj and N' nodes. The Adj node accounts for the adjective 'first' and the N' branches into AP and N' nodes. The AP node accounts for the word, 'major' and the N' branches into another AP and N' nodes. This second AP node accounts for the adjective 'bloody' while the N' node further branches into a N node and a

PP node. The N node accounts for the noun 'attack' while the PP node branches into a P node which accounts for the word 'on' and a NP node which branches into N and PP nodes. The N node accounts for the word 'residents' and the PP node branches into P and NP nodes. The P node accounts for the word 'of' while the NP node accounts for the word 'Jos'.

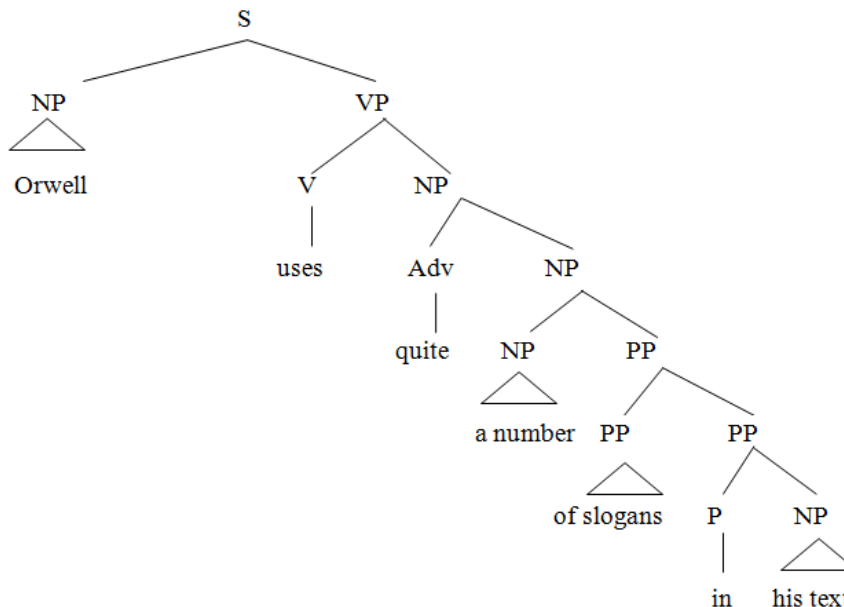
12. They have started.



The IP node according to Radford's analysis branches into a Specifier node and an I' node. The Specifier node accounts for the noun 'they' while the I' branches into an I node and a VP node. The I node accounts for the auxiliary verb, 'have' and the VP node branches into another I node and a V node. The I node accounts for 'd' which is the inflected morpheme of the verb 'start' to

make it a past tense. This results to an affix hopping (a jump to the right) because the past tense morpheme, 'd' hops to the end of the verb 'start' to make it 'started', making it the past tense form of the word.

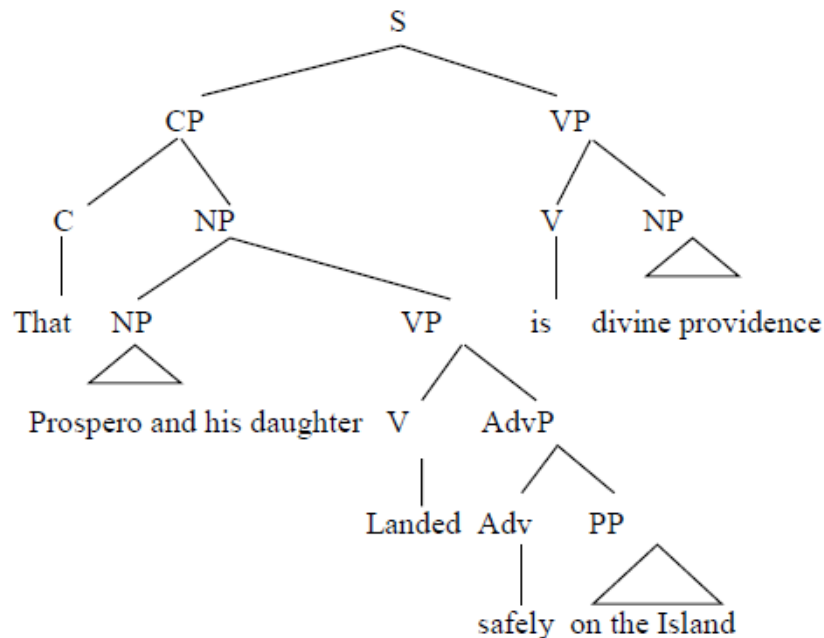
13. Orwell uses quite a number of slogans in his text.



This analysis is according to Aarts' method of analysis. The S node branches into NP node which accounts for the noun 'Orwell' and VP node which branches into a V node and a NP node. The V node accounts for the verb 'uses' and the NP node branches into Adv and NP nodes. The Adv node accounts for the adverb 'quite' which is a pre-head modifier. The NP node further branches into NP node which accounts for the phrase 'a number' and PP node which branches into PP and another PP node. The first PP node accounts for the phrase 'of slogans' and the second PP node branches

again into P and NP node. The P node accounts for the preposition 'in' while the NP node accounts for the phrase 'his text'. In this example, the pre-head element 'quite' in the phrase 'quite a number of slogans' is a bit difficult to decipher if it is performing a specifying or modifying function. This is one of the anomalies of the X-bar theory.

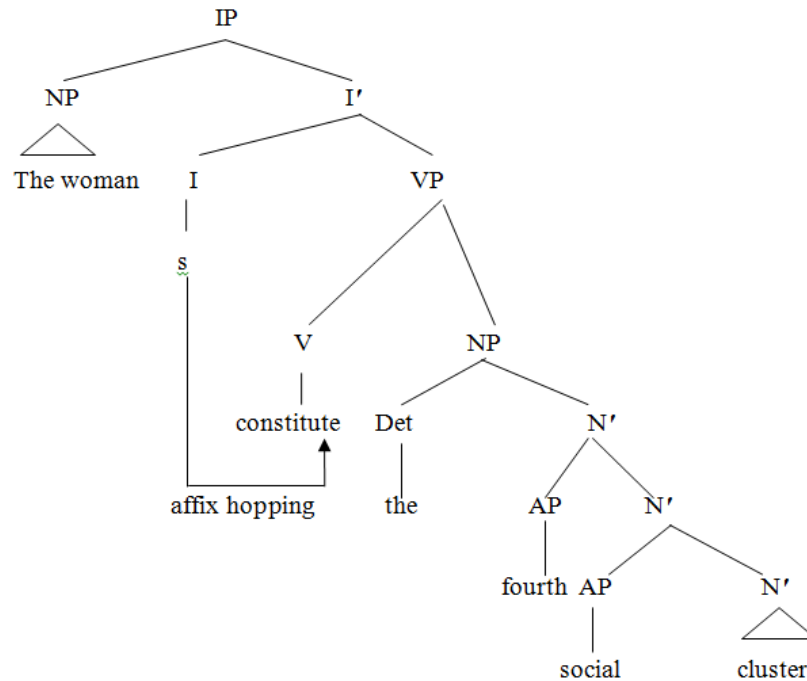
14. That Prospero and his daughter landed safely on the Island is divine providence.



The sentence branches into CP node and VP node. The CP node branches into C node which accounts for the complementizer 'that' and NP node which branches into another NP node and a VP node. The NP node accounts for the phrase 'Prospero and his daughter' while the VP branches into a V node that accounts for the verb 'landed' and an AdvP node which branches into Adv node and PP node. The Adv node accounts for the word 'safely' while the PP node accounts for the

phrase 'on the Island'. The VP node that is the direct daughter of the S node branches into V node which accounts for the verb 'is' and an NP node which accounts for the phrase 'divine providence'. It is important to note that 'that Prospero and his daughter landed safely on the Island' is the subject of the entire sentence.

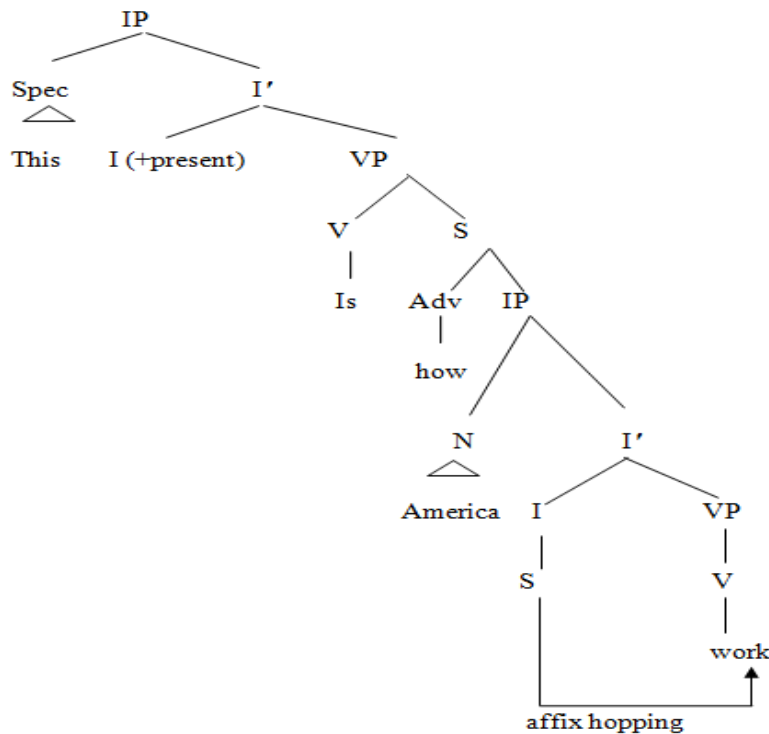
15. The woman constitutes the fourth social cluster.



This analysis is according to Radford’s method of analysis. The IP node branches into NP and I’ nodes. The NP node accounts for the phrase ‘the woman’ while the I’ node branches into an I node and a VP node. The I node accounts for the inflected morpheme ‘s’ which hops to the right to meet the root word, ‘constitute’ to make it present and singular. The VP node branches into a V node which accounts for the verb ‘constitute’ and a NP node which branches into determiner and N’

nodes. The determiner node accounts for the word ‘the’ while the N’ node branches into AP node which accounts for the adjective ‘fourth’ and another N’ node. This N’ node branches to an AP node which accounts for another adjective, ‘social’ and N’ node which accounts for the noun, ‘cluster’.

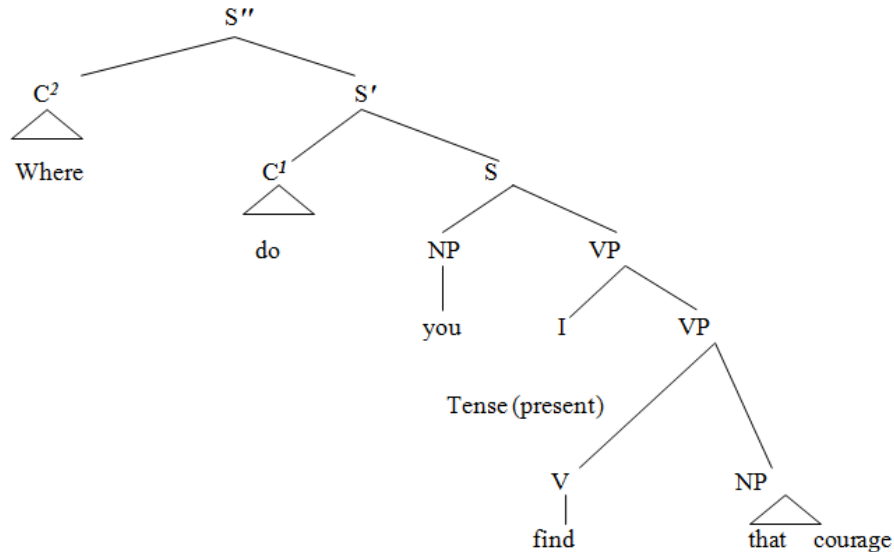
16. This is how America works.



According to Radford's method of analysis, the IP node branches into a Specifier node which accounts for the word 'this' and an I' node. The I' node branches into an I node which indicates tense as present (+ Present) and a VP node. The VP node branches into a V node which accounts for the auxiliary 'is' and S node. The S node further branches into an Adv node which accounts for 'how' and an IP node. This IP node branches into an

NP node which accounts for the noun 'America' and an I' node which branches again into an I node and a VP node. The I node accounts for the inflection 's' which hops to the root form of the verb, 'work' to make it present and singular. The VP node accounts for the verb, 'work'.

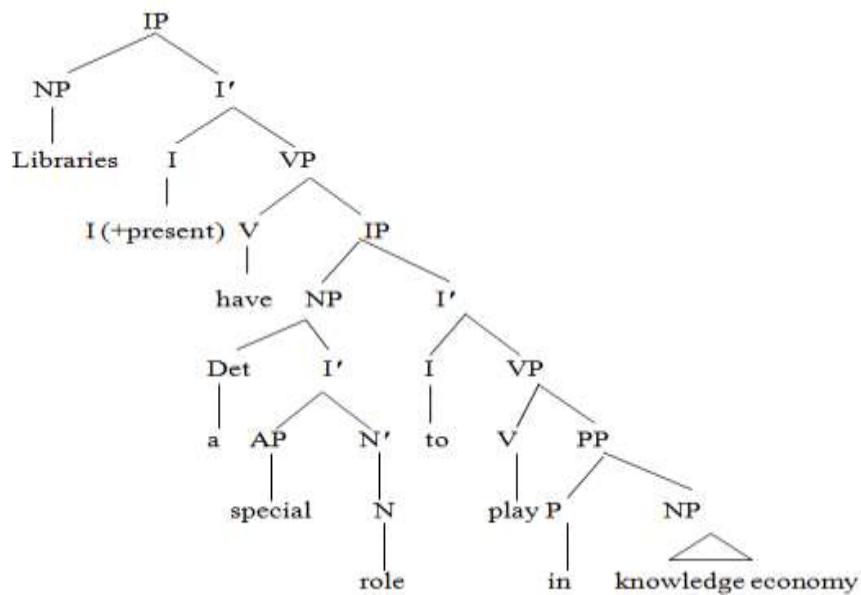
17. Where do you find that courage?



This is an inverted statement, analysed using Aarts' method of analysis. The sentence (S'') branches into a complementizer node which accounts for the word 'where' and S' node which branches further into another complementizer node and S node. This second complementizer node accounts for the dummy 'do' and the S node branches into NP which accounts for the noun 'you' and a VP node which branches into an I

node and another VP node. The I node indicates that the tense is present and the VP node branches into a V node which accounts for the verb 'find' and a NP node which accounts for the phrase 'that courage'.

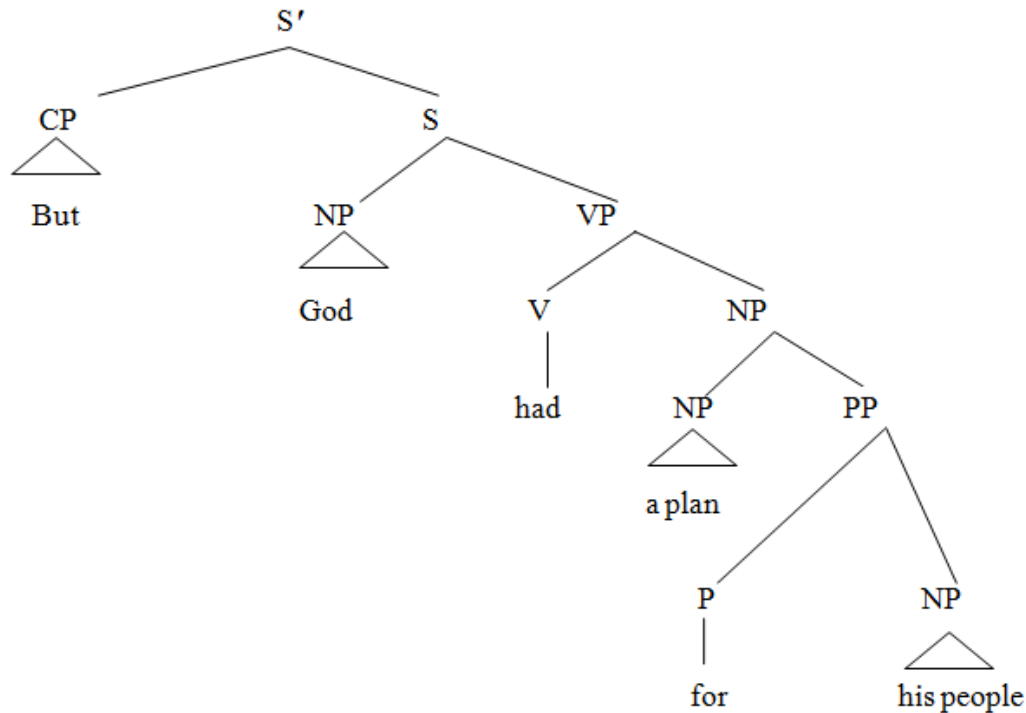
18. Libraries have a special role to play in knowledge economy.



The IP node branches into NP node which accounts for the noun 'libraries' and an I' node which branches into an I node and a VP node. The I node indicates the tense as present (+present) and the VP node branches into a V node which accounts for the verb 'have' and an IP node. The I node branches into NP node which further branches into a determiner node and an I' node which also branches into an I node and a VP node. The Determiner node accounts for the word 'a' while the I'

node branches into an AP node which accounts for 'special' and an N' node which accounts for the noun 'role'. The VP node branches into a V node which accounts for 'play' and a PP node which branches again into a P node which accounts for the preposition, 'in' and NP node which accounts for the phrase 'knowledge economy' .

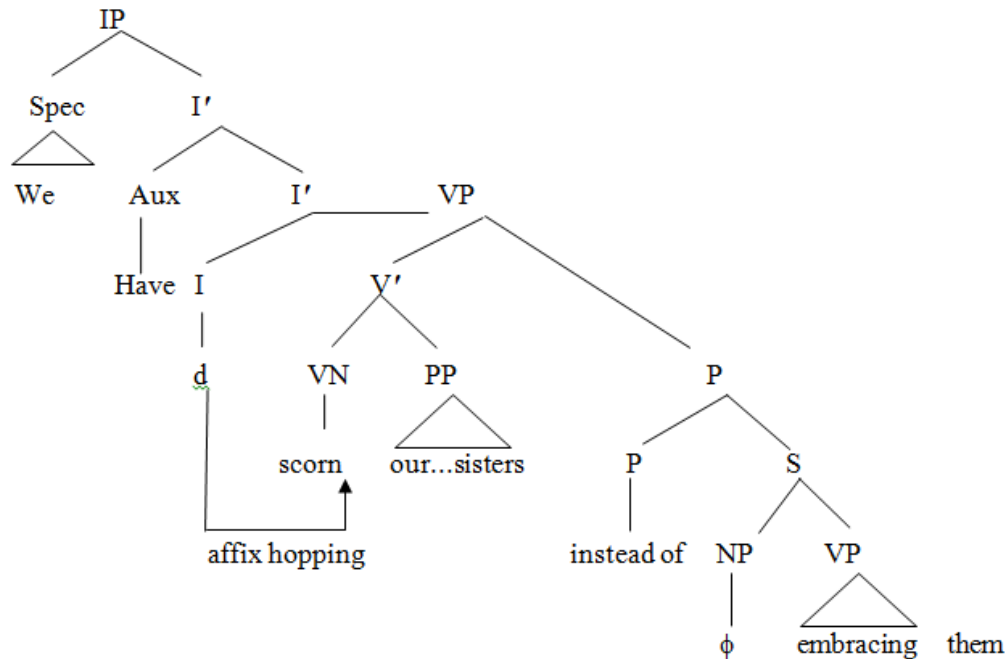
19. But God had a plan for His people.



According to Aart's method of analysis, the sentence (S') branches into a CP node which accounts for the conjunction 'but' and a S node. The S node branches into NP node which accounts for the noun 'God' and a VP node which branches into a V node and another NP node. The V node accounts for the verb 'had' and the NP node branches into NP node which accounts for the

phrase 'a plan' and a PP node which branches into a P node and a NP node. The P node accounts for the preposition 'for' and the NP node accounts for the phrase 'his people'.

20. We had scorned our gay brothers and sisters instead of embracing them.



The IP node branches into a Specifier node which accounts for the word 'we' and an I' node which branches into Aux and I' nodes respectively. The Aux node accounts for the auxiliary 'have' and I' node branches further into I and VP nodes. The I node accounts for the morpheme 'd' (a past tense marker) which jumps to the verb 'scorn' to make it past tense while the VP node branches into V' and PP nodes. The V' node branches into V node which accounts for the verb 'scorn' and NP node which accounts for the phrase 'our gay brothers and sisters'. The PP node branches into P node and S node. The P node accounts for the phrase 'instead of' and the S node branches into NP and VP nodes. The NP node is empty while the VP node accounts for the phrase 'embracing them'.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

This study has proved the fact that the X-bar syntax as a theory is applicable in analysing sentences used in different fields of human endeavours. This has been proved by the carefully selected sentences that were subjected to the X-bar analysis. The study has also revealed that the theory of X-bar syntax as an aspect of Generative Grammar despite its complexities and limitations is of great significance in the field of syntax generally and is worthy of attention. This study also 'disabuses' the minds of linguists who feel that Generative Grammar is obsolete. X-bar theory enables us to have a deeper understanding of English Language generally, particularly in understanding the relationship between highly complex noun phrases as seen in the analysis of some of the analysed data.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study is not intended to be an exhaustive study on the X-bar theory since it is focused principally on merits and demerits of the X-bar Theory, and its application in other fields of endeavours. A broader or further investigation and critique into this field especially using sentences of a language other than the English language is therefore recommended. Also, since the X-bar general schema is intended to be applicable to any language using the SVO structure, (including those languages where the ordering relations might be different), a holistic and comparative analysis or study is recommended between English and any other natural language, using the X-bar framework.

It is important to also note that Generative Grammar including X-bar theory has not been much studied in English Departments in Nigerian Universities but has been studied in Departments of Linguistics within and outside Nigeria. However, in my view, Generative Grammar including X-bar theory ought to be studied in English Departments because Syntax is one of the core courses in English Departments and Generative Grammar is a vital approach to the study of syntax.

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