

# Examination of Verb and Verb Phrase in Boier Ahmadi Lori Based on X-bar Syntax

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## Abstract

The big Chomskyan revolution took place by publication of *Syntactic structures* in 1957 but it evolved gradually during the time. In *Syntactic structures*, Chomsky introduced a grammar known as Generative Transformational Grammar which has many branches. One of its branches is Government and Binding theory / GB theory, sometimes called 'Principle-and-parameters Theory', also has some branches. One of its branches is 'X-bar syntax'.

It seems that X-bar syntax is able to describe verb and verb phrase in Boier Ahmadi Lori adequately. So, a free conversation of Boier Ahmadi Lori's informant was recorded. Then all of its simple sentences were analyzed based on X-bar syntax. The research comes up with this conclusion that X-bar syntax is not adequate enough to justify all characteristics of the verb and verb phrase in Boier Ahmadi Lori language.

**Keywords:** Government and binding theory, X-bar syntax, Verb, Verb phrase, Head, Complement, Adjunct

## 1. Introduction

In first days of emergence of generative transformational grammar, Chomsky assumed that linguistic competence and linguistic performance must be separated. Since he supposed that language is the mirror of mind (Darzi, 2007), he did his best to explain *universal grammar/UG* in detail. “UG is a term used by Chomsky to point out to a theory about innate and biological linguistic knowledge and this is the same as language Acquisition Device / LAD” (Dabirmoghadam , 2006:15).

*Government and Binding theory* is known as the most formal theory in linguistics (Dabir moghadam, 2006). Some may know it as *Principle-and- parameters Theory*. Government and Binding theory is a theory about UG. Chomsky thinks that UG must have two conditions. First, it must be compatible with all known facts about all languages (Radford, 1988:37). In other words, it must be flexible enough to be able to explain diversity of languages. Second, it must be contain a highly constrained set of principles, because Chomsky maintains that “the evidence which the child has to rely on in acquiring his native Language (=the speech of those around him) is *degenerate* (i.e. incomplete) and imperfect.” (ibid: 35) Chomsky continues that:

In many cases that have been carefully studied in recent work, it is near certainty that fundamental properties of the attained grammars are radically underdetermined by evidence available to the language learner and must therefore be attributed to UG [Universal Grammar] itself.

(Chomsky, 1981:3, cited in Radford, 1988)

So, it is expected that UG contains some universal and fundamental *principles*, which constraints the structures of human languages and grammar that human brain can learn, and also some *parameters*. In other words, parameters are fixed limits within which languages seem to vary (Radford, 1988).

UG constitutes from ‘Deep-structure/D-structure’, ‘Surface -structure/ S-structure’, ‘logical form’, and ‘phonetic form’ (Miremadi, 1999).

In Chomsky's view, bounding theory, government theory, theta theory, binding theory, case theory, control theory and X-bar syntax are sub-branches of GB theory (Cook and Newson, 1997).

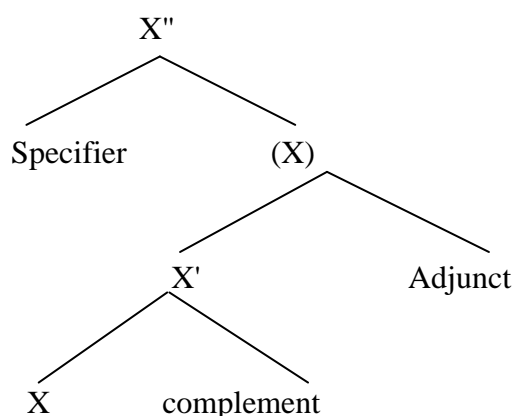
Since this research is based on X-bar syntax, only this theory is clarified.

### 1.1 X-bar Syntax

X-bar syntax is one of sub-branches of GB theory which examines the phrase structure rules within a sentence. In fact, it illustrates the relationships present within each phrase of a sentence (ibid). Each phrase may be made of one or more than one constituent. To display relationships of constituents present in a phrase, a *tree-diagram* is drawn. Each tree-diagram has some branches and nodes.

What X-bar syntax emphasizes at is that each phrase has a head, as its main part, and one or more than one (pre- or post-) modifier. The modifiers can be either specifier or complement or adjunct.

Complement of a head is its sister. Where head is presented, head and its complements together form an x-bar constituent and that x-bar can be expanded by the addition of appropriate specifiers into an x-double-bar constituent. The following tree-diagram shows these above mentioned rules:



Radford (1988:277) writes the following constituency rules for the above tree-diagram:

$X'' \rightarrow x', (Yp)$  (Specifier Rule)

$X' \rightarrow x', Yp$  (Adjunct Rule)

$X' \rightarrow x, Yp^*$  (Complement Rule)

To sum up, X-bar syntax believes that there is an intermediate constituent which exists between phrase-level and word-level.

### 1.2 Boier Ahmadi Lori:

Lori is one of clusters of Indo-Iranian languages with over four million speakers (Anonby, 2003). It has some dialects which are spoken by both settled and migratory folk over a large area of western Iran, including parts of Hamadan Province (at least from Nehavand southward) through Lorestan to Khuzestan, Chahar Maḥal and Baḳtiari, Kohgiluyā and Boier Aḥmadi, and Fars. They belong, together with Persian, to the southern branch of Western Iranian (MacKinnon, 2011).

MacKinnon (Ibid) believes that the river Āb-e Dez which acts as the geographical dividing line between Lori dialects has divided them naturally into two quite distinct groups corresponding to the distinction between the so-called Greater Lors (*Lor-e bozorg*) and Lesser Lors (*Lor-e kuchek*). Greater Lors' dialects include Baḳtiari and Mamasani of the

Boier Aḥmadi group, other Boier-Aḥmadi, and Kohgiluya. On the other hand, Lesser Lors' dialects are dialects spoken in settled communities of Khuzestan such as Ramhormoz and Masjed Solayman.

Boier Ahmadi Lori dialect is selected to be examined based on X-bar Syntax.

## 2. Methodology

First of all, a free conversation of an informant was recorded. Then all of its simple sentences were transcribed. After that, all sentences were analyzed based on X-bar syntax.

Radford (1988) puts forward some evidence in favor of positing V, V', and V'' constituents, which will be explained and examined in Boier Ahmadi Lori dialect.

### 2.1 Verb Constituent

Radford (1988) assumes that generally each individual word, and especially each verb, can be identified according to the range of inflections which it permits. So, verb's inflection forms in Boier Ahmadi Lori will be reviewed.

Gholamalizadeh (1997:42) thinks that “verb, as a lexical category, is a linguistic element which functions as head of a verb phrase. Thus, a verb may be representative of a sentence.”

Meshkatodini (2004) presents a framework for paradigms of verb in Persian, which is applied for description of the verb ‘to eat’ in Boier Ahmadi Lori.

Table 1. Present simple of *x::rd::n* ‘to eat’

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	ix::rom (‘I eat’)	ix::rim (‘we eat’)
2nd person	ix::ri (‘you eat’)	ix::rit (‘you eat’)
3rd person	ix::re (‘he/she eats’)	ix::ren (‘they eat’)

Table 2. Present continuous of *x::rd::n* ‘to eat’

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	hey ix::rom (‘I am eating’)	hey ix::rim (‘we are eating’)
2nd person	hey ix::ri (‘you are eating’)	hey ix::rit (‘you are eating’)
3rd person	hey ix::re (‘he/she is eating’)	hey ix::ren (‘they are eating’)

 Table 3. Present Subjunctive mood of *xard::n* ‘to eat’

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	bex::rom (‘I should eat’)	bex::rim (‘we should eat’)
2nd person	bex::ri (‘you should eat’)	bex::rit (‘you should eat’)
3rd person	bex::re (‘he/she should eat’)	bex::ren (‘they should eat’)

 Table 4. Past simple of *xard::n* ‘to eat’

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	x::rdom (‘I ate’)	x::rdim (‘we ate’)
2nd person	x::rdi (‘you ate’)	x::rdit (‘you ate’)
3rd person	x:: (‘he/she ate’)	x::rden (‘they ate’)

Table 5. Past continuous of *x::rd::n* 'to eat'

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	(hey) ix::rdom (‘I was eating’)	(hey) ix::rdim (‘we were eating’)
2nd person	(hey) ix::rdi (‘you were eating’)	(hey) ix::rdit (‘you were eating’)
3rd person	(hey) ix:: (‘he/she was eating’)	(hey) ix::rden (‘they were eating’)

 Table 6. Present Subjunctive mood of *x::rd::n* 'to eat'

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	x::rd:: buyom (‘I have eaten’)	x::rd:: buim (‘we have eaten’)
2nd person	x::rd:: bui (‘you have eaten’)	x::rd:: buit (‘you have eaten’)
3rd person	x::rd:: bu (‘he/she has eaten’)	x::rd:: buen (‘they have eaten’)

 Table 7. Present perfect of *x::rd::n* 'to eat'

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	x::rdeme (‘I have eaten’)	x::rdime (‘we have eaten’)
2nd person	x::rdi (‘you have eaten’)	x::rdite (‘you have eaten’)
3rd person	x::rde (‘he/she has eaten’)	x::rdene (‘they have eaten’)

Table 8. Past perfect of *x::rd::n* ‘to eat’

Person / number	Singular	Plural
1st person	<i>x::rd:: biyom</i> (‘I had eaten’)	<i>x::rd:: biim</i> (‘we had eaten’)
2nd person	<i>x::rd:: byi</i> (‘you had eaten’)	<i>x::rd:: biit</i> (‘you had eaten’)
3rd person	<i>x::rd:: by</i> (‘he/she had eaten’)	<i>x::rd:: biyen</i> (‘they had eaten’)

 Table 9. Imperative form of *x::rd::n* ‘to eat’

Person / number	Singular	Plural
2nd person	<i>bexa</i> (‘eat ( you) ’)	<i>bex::rit</i> (‘eat( you) ’)

All the above verb inflections prove that V-constituent exists as Radford (1988) believes.

## 2.2 Verb Phrase

In Radford’s view (1988), in every type of phrase, there is a head which is obligatory and some other elements, which are optional and play the role of (pre-or post) modifier for the head of phrase. Thus, a verb phrase is a phrase with a verb as its head. The verb phrase may or may not have some modifiers.

He (ibid) gives some syntactic evidence to prove existence of verb phrase. They are applied for Boier Ahmadi Lori:

### 2.2.1 Movement

“Only phrasal constituents can undergo movement (from one position in a sentence to another)” (ibid: 72)

1. a. / vo bi Ali m::dres:: r:: /

He / she with Ali to the school went

‘He/she and Ali went to the school’



1. b. / m::dres:: r:: vo bi Ali /

To the school went he / she with Ali

‘He/she and Ali went to the school’

### 2.2.2 Sentence-fragment:

“Only phrasal constituents (i.e. whole phrases) can serve as sentence-fragments (in an appropriate context)” (ibid: 72)

2. a. SPEAKER A: what did he do?

2.b. SPEAKER B : / bi Ali m::dres:: r:: /

With Ali to the school went

‘He/she and Ali went to the school’

### 2.2.3 Coordination

“Only identical categories can be conjoined, idiomatically.”

#### A) Ordinary Coordination

3.a. / Reza om:: . Reza esterah::t ke/

Reza came. Reza slept.



3.b. / Reza om:: o Reza esterah::t ke /

Reza came and Reza slept.

‘Reza came and slept.’

#### B) Shared Coordination

4.a. / m::ma q::za pot. ima q::za x::rdim /



Mother the meal cooked. We the meal ate.

‘Mother cooked the meal. We ate the meal.’



4.b. / m::ma q::za pot o ima q::za x::rdim /

Mother the meal cooked and we the meal ate.

‘Mother cooked the meal and we ate the meal.’

#### 2.2.4 Pronominalisation

“Proforms generally replace *phrase-level* constituents, not *word-level* constituents.” (ibid:79)

5.a. / Zahra bay::d rastgu bu. Maryam bay::d rastgu bu/

Zahra must honest to be. Maryam must honest to be

‘Zahra must be honest. Maryam must be honest.’



5.b. / Zahra bay::d rastgu bu. Maryam h::m h::minto/

Zahra must honest to be. Maryam the same.

‘Zahra must be honest. As must be Maryam.’

#### 2.2.5 Ellipsis

6.a. / Ali nit::re xub ran::ndegi kene. mo it::rom xub ran::ndegi kenom./

Ali NEG-can well drive (a car). I can well drive (a car).

‘Ali cannot drive a car well. I can drive a car well.’



6.b. / Ali nit::re xub ran::ndegi kene. mo it::rom ./

Ali NEG-can well drive (a car). I can.

‘Ali cannot drive a car well. I can.’

#### 2.3 Verb Phrase in Boier Ahmadi Lori

Verb phrase in Boier Ahmadi Lori, like other Iranian languages, is the most prominent constituent of a sentence. This language, like Persian, is a pro-drop language. It means that

subject may or may not exist in this language. Instead, affix attached to the end of a verb is person and number marker. Thus, many sentences can be observed in which a verb phrase is representative of a whole sentence.

In Boier Ahmadi Lori (the same as Persian), verb phrase are *endocentric structures* (i.e. structures where the category of a given phrase matches that of its head) (Stowell, 1981: 70; cited in Radford, 1988:259) and they follow *modifier maximality constraint* (i.e. every non-head term in the expansion of a rule must itself be a maximal projection some category) (Ibid: 263).

Chomsky (1981) supposes that subject of a sentence play the role of ‘external argument’ for the main verb of the sentence and other arguments play the role of ‘internal argument’.

Carnie (2002:79) reckons that:

Direct object is daughter of verb phrase;

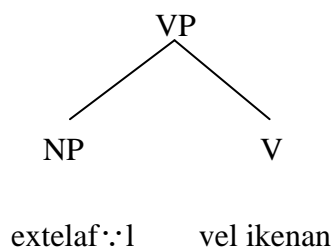
Prepositional object is daughter of prepositional phrase.

The same is true for the Boier Ahmadi Lori. Look at the tree diagram of the following sentences:

7. / extelaf- :·l vel ikenan/

Discrepancy-PLURAL care of

‘ [They] do not care of discrepancies.’

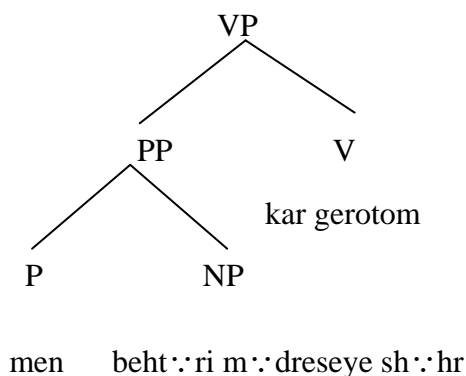


As it is evident, *extelaf :·l* as direct object is dominated by verb phrase.

8. / men beht :·ri m :·dreseye sh :·hr kar gerotom /

In the best school of city work

‘I worked in the best school of the city.’



*beht::ri m::dreseye sh::hr* as prepositional object is daughter of the prepositional phrase.

However, strict adjacency principle, which states that an NP complement must appear strictly adjacent to its verb, is not true in this language:

9. / *reshtem-::*      *xeili*      *dus darom* /

my field- OBJECT MARKER very much love

‘I love my field of study very much.’

The above sentence shows that *xeili* which is the adjunct of the verb *dus darom*, has appeared between verb and its complement, i.e. *reshtem::*. This flouts the strict adjacency principle.

### 2.3.1 Differences between complement and adjunct in verb phrase:

Radford (1988:233-38) puts forth some differences between complement and adjunct. These differences are examined in Boier Ahmadi Lori:

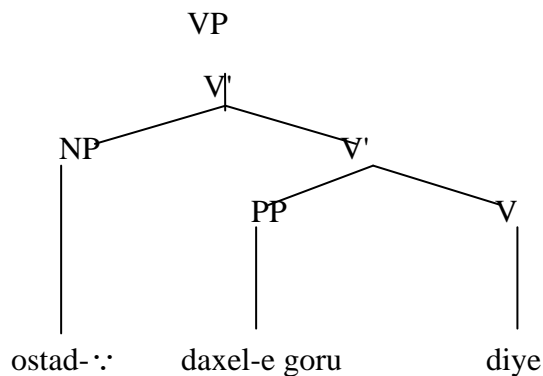
- Complement is within V' containing head V, but adjunct is outside of it.

This difference is true *to some extent* in Boier Ahmadi Lori, but there are some cases which are not true. For example:

10. / *s::rd::ste-ye*    *goruy-al*      *ostad-::*      *daxel-e goru*    *diye/*

head- POSSESSIVE group-PLURAL the professor-OBJECT MARKER in department seen

‘The head of the group had seen the professor in the English Language Department.’



In this tree diagram, though *daxele goru* is adjunct of verb, it is within the V' containing the head verb. On the contrary, *ostad ::* is complete of verb but it is outside of the V' containing the head verb.

- Complement comes closer to the head than adjunct.

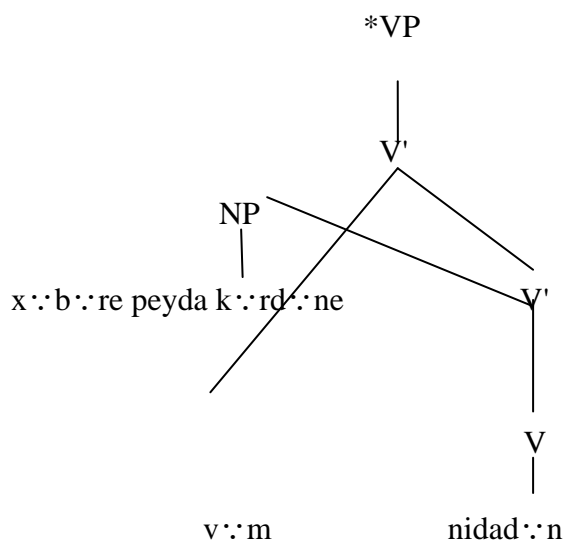
What is inferred from the analyzed data is that this difference is not always true for this language. What makes this matter important is that if adjunct appears closer to the head than complement, 'No Crossing Branches Constraint' will be flouted. Look at the following:

11. /ey ka□ x : : b : : re peyda k : : rd : : nesh v : : m n-idad : : n/

I wish the news of finding him to me NEG-give

'I wish they had not given the news to me that he had been found.'

The adjunct *v : : m* is closer to the head than the complement *x : : b : : re peyda k : : rd : : nesh*. So, the tree-diagram of the sentence (11) will be as follows:



- Complement is obligatory but adjunct is optional. This is true for this language.

12.a. / q : : za -n : :      bei    qa□oq    x : : rdom /

the meal- OBJECT MARKER with    spoon    ate

‘I ate the meal with the spoon.’

Deletion of complement makes the sentence ungrammatical:

12.b.\* / bei    qa□oq    x : : rdom/

with    spoon    ate

\*‘I ate with the spoon.’

But deletion of adjunct does not make it ungrammatical:

12.c. / q : : za -n : :      x : : rdom /

the meal- OBJECT MARKER    ate

‘I ate the meal.’

- Ellipsis: under appropriate discourse conditions, a verb and all its complements, with or without its adjuncts can be ellipsed. This matter is true for this language, too.

### 3. Results and Discussion

X-bar syntax, as one of sub-branches of Government and Binding theory, must be both compatible with all known facts about language and also be flexible enough to explain diversities of languages.

This research aimed to examine the adequacy of X-bar syntax for description of verb and verb phrase in Boier Ahmadi Lori. The findings of this research suggest that though X-bar syntax is adequate for describing some of properties of Boier Ahmadi Lori's verb, there were found some cases that X-bar syntax could not justify them at all. It seems that the reason lay on the fact that this language has a flexible word order, while a language such as English has a rigid one. Another reason may be that this language is a pro-drop language and as a result in this language, a verb can play the role of a complete sentence with all its parts.

It is worth mentioning that the research was done on very small samples and the results of this study are confined to Boier Ahmadi Lori. So, the same research on other languages may produce different results. Indeed, to generalize results, more studies must be done.

The question remains that if X-bar syntax can present an adequate explanation of other Iranian languages or not.

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