X-Bar Theory Review

* Syntax’s fundamental prerogative is to identify and determine the ways in which the words in a sentence interact with each other individually, and the sentence as a whole.
* That is to say that the words that make up a sentence are part of larger wholes.
* Each word in a sentence forms its own, basic, primary unit called a *head*.
* You can think of the head as a kind of nucleus, except that instead of protons or electrons, the elements that surround a head are other words.
* When other words relate to the head in some manner, for example, modify or describe properties of that head, we create larger *phrases*.
* These, phrases, or *constituents*, interact with each other and the overall sentence.
* So, what are specific examples of heads?
* Well, you can’t cook a goulash without the ingredients, and syntactic heads are essentially ingredients in your sentence stew.
* In syntax, our basic ingredients are our *parts of speech*, and these can be divided into the following principal parts (given with the English, and the Hungarian names):
  + Noun (főnév)
  + Verb (ige)
  + Adjective (melléknév)
  + Determiner (névelőféle)
  + Adverb (határozószó)
  + Preposition (elöljáró)
  + Conjunction (kötőszó)
  + Complementizer (alárendelő kötőszó)
* Each of these heads interacts with the others in a variety of different ways.
* When words or phrases are semantically (meaning) tied to another head, they form larger phrases. Consider the following sentence:

1. The happy cat sat on the very tired man’s lap.

* When you read this sentence an image appears in your mind, and you are easily able to make associations between the words (provided you speak English, of course).
* You are quickly able to make the association between *happy* and *cat.*
* You are also able to identify that it is in fact *the man* and not the cat that is tired.
* When you attempt to assess the word *very*, a bit more thought is required. What is this word doing in the sentence? Well, you cannot say \**a very cat* or \**I cooked very*, which means that it cannot be an adjective or a noun. You also cannot use it to connect sentences, or as you would a word like *in*, e.g., *\*very a house.* This means that it is doing something else. The words immediately before and after it are *the* and *tired.* The word very clearly cannot be describing the word *the*, which leaves some kind of relationship with the word *tired* which we all know is an adjective. That means that the only thing left to consider very is an adverb. And indeed, adverbs are used to modify adjectives and verbs.
* The other thing in the sentence to make note of is that lap is being *possessed* or *owned* by the man, but that the *lap* itself is the main head in that phrase (as it is the thing that is being described).
* So, when you start piecing together the puzzle, you can determine the following elements:
  + - *The happy cat*
    - *The very tired man’s lap*
    - *Very tired*
    - *On the very tired man’s lap*
    - *Sat on the very tired man’s lap*
    - The whole sentence
* Each of these pieces forms smaller phrases that build up to the entire clause which labeled TP.
* The parts of the clause that interact with each other do so in a manner that makes it specific whether or not the information expressed is integral to the meaning of the phrase, or the overall sentence.
* The parts of a phrase or clause that are considered **optional** are called *adjuncts.*
* The parts of a phrase that are considered **necessary to complete a word’s meaning**are called *complements.*
* We may now introduce X-Bar theory. The basic structure is as follows:
* [XP Specifier [X’ X [COMP]]], where X stands for any of the above-mentioned heads.
* When a complement is present in the structure it is a sister to a head.
* When an adjunct is present, it is a sister to a bar level.
* So, if we return to our cat example, we can parse the phrases more specifically.
* Adjectives are never necessary for a noun to make sense which means that all of the adjectives in (1) are adjuncts.
* The adverb modifying *tired* is also not required for the adjective tired to make sense, so it is an adjunct in the adjective phrase.
* The prepositional phrase after the verb *sat* is also not necessary (i.e., you can say *the cat sat/was sitting*), which means it, too is an adjunct.
* All of the sentences cross-linguistically may be analyzed like this, and indeed must be to see how words relate to each other.