Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach
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Lecture - 17
Lexical Typology: Generalizations (Kinship terms and Personal Pronouns)

Hello everyone, welcome to this session of my NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach. We were discussing lexical and morphological typology. We started the discussion with lexical typology, and then I said that we will eventually move over to morphological typology. To refresh your memory, we did discuss what is the difference between lexical and morphological words, the phrase lexical and the phrase morphological and what are the similarities that you might have. Primarily the similarity is that whether it is lexical or morphological; the discussion centers around words.

The similarity and the difference is that when you are trying to approach lexical similarity or lexical typology, you are approaching word as a whole unit, but when you are approaching morphological typology, you have to analyze, examine, observe the data at the subunit or the subpart level of word. So, you are not going to look at a word as a whole, rather you are trying to find out if you can divide it into subunits. So, that is going to be your morphological discussion or morphological typology.

Considering this is a typology discussion centric course, primarily we would come up with some generalizations for each unit. Whether it is in syntactic, semantic, morphological or lexical, we have to focus on the generalizations that can be drawn through the empirical data or through the empirical evidence that linguists have been working on.

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On that note, we did consider six different domains and we tried to understand how the semantics of these six domains are understood or are analyzed to explore typology, based on lexicon not the lexical typology. And what are the six different notions or six different domains of semantics? I have already mentioned it in my previous discussion that we are going to focus on semantics of body parts, kinship terms, personal pronouns, numerals, antonymic adjectives and color words.

Due to the paucity of time, I might not go through all the details for this particular session, but I would surely talk about body parts and kinship terms and I would expect you to read the book and find out more about it, as far as the other domains of the things are concerned at the semantic level.

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Generalizations about kin terms

– GEN-7: Generational differences, the difference between consanguineal and affinal relatives, and sex differences of the relatives are present in all languages.

– GEN-8: In all languages, there are separate words for 'father' and 'mother' (although each word may also include other relatives). (Greenberg 1966c : 74)

– GEN-9: If sex is differentiated in the second descending generation, it is also differentiated in the second ascending generations. (Greenberg 1966c : 82).

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

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Generalizations

• Gen-1: All languages have a word for 'body'
• Gen-2: Most languages have separate words for 'head', 'trunk', 'arm', 'eye', 'nose', and 'mouth'.

We did discuss the first generalization if you could recall, it was about how all languages have a word for body, because we are talking about body parts. The second generalization

was that most languages have separate words for head, trunk, arm, eye, nose and mouth. So, that is the second generalization. Third generalization was that if a language has a word for individual toes, then it would definitely have a word for individual fingers. And generalization four, if a language has a word for foot, then it will also have a word for hand. All these are related to the body parts. Fifth generalization was that the word head, h e a d is a monomorphemic word in all languages. (Refer Slide Time: 03:33)

Generalizations

- Gen-3: If a language has a word for individual toes, then it has words for individual fingers.
- Gen-4: If a language has a word for foot, it also has a word for hand.

(Andersen 1978: 352)

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The morphological structure of body-part terms

– GEN-5: The word for 'head' is monomorphemic in all languages.

– GEN-6: If words for a part of the upper body and a part of the lower are in a derivational relationship, the upper-body term is the base.

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

The sixth one was that, let us say there are certain words which involve the upper part and the lower part of the body and let us say they are derivational. So, if either the upper part or the lower part of the body and the terms are are derivational, then the upper part body terms are going to be considered as the base form and the lower parts is the derivation.With this information, we move to the kinship terms.

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Generalizations about kin terms

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In the kinship terms, primarily we were talking about the generalization that involves affinal versus consanguineal. I have my apologies if I do not pronounce it correctly, but then primarily the difference between consanguineal and affinal relatives, then the sex difference, the generation difference, things like that. So, on the basis of these relative things sex differences or gender differences and generation differences, certain generalizations could be formed.

The seventh generalization was that, if you look at the generational differences, the difference between consanguineal and affinal relatives and the sex difference of all the relatives are present in all languages. That means, if you have a word for the male sibling of your father, then it would definitely have a word for the female sibling of your father.

The other way round also it is this kind of thing. If a language allows a term for the male sibling of your father, then the same language would also allow a term for the male siblings

of your mother. So, from both the sides, we will have generational differences, consanguineal versus affinal relatives differences, then the gender differences. And the eighth generalization was all about having separate words for father and mother; so that means your male parent and your female parent. All languages will have different words for that.

Then we had a discussion if the sex is differentiated or the gender is differentiated in the second descending generation, it is also differentiated in the second ascending generation. If there are terms for the grandfather, then there would also be terms for the grandchildren. So, two different generations, whether it is ascending or descending; if there is a word for the descending generation, it will definitely have a word for the ascending generation. The other way round may or may not be true, but at least having a word for descending ensures that there would be a word for the ascending generation too.

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The morphological structure of Kinship Terms

4 (a) monomorphemic words: English
      father
      mother
      son
      daughter
   (b) polymorphemic words:
      grandfather
      grandmother
      grandson
      granddaughter

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

So, that is about a few generalizations related to kinship terms. I just mentioned this is lexical and morphological typology, so, we will now focus on or we will talk about what is the morphological structure of kinship terms. Let us say what kind of morphological structure do they have. So, the idea here is that in most of the cases, the words like father, mother, son and daughter are always monomorphemic in most of the languages. And what are the

polymorphemic words? Grandfather, grandmother, grandson and granddaughter, these are mostly polymorphemic words.

So, for sure in English, the first category or the first set belongs to monomorphemic and the second set belongs to the polymorphemic one. Look at the words given here. The idea here is that or the assumption here is that in most of the languages, you would find things like that. So, kinship terms can sometimes be monomorphemic, can sometimes be polymorphemic depending on the nature of the word.

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In this connection we will move to the next generalization that involves lexical morphological complexities. It is the tenth generalization which tells us that in all or most languages, kinship terms that are frequent, are semantically and morphologically simple. Less frequent terms are semantically and morphologically complex. It is a very interesting thing to notice and it is a very interesting thing to understand also.

The idea here is that; since we are talking about the complexities of morphological structure of kinship, you need to notice the tenth generalization talks about the semantic and morphological simplicity versus complexity. It is written in all or most languages, the kinship terms that are frequent are semantically and morphological simple. For example, father, mother, so these are the most frequently used terms. That is why semantically also they are

simple, morphologically also they are simple. The less frequent terms are semantically and morphologically complex. What are the less frequent ones? Let us say niece or sister-in-law or nephew or you can say grand grandaunt.

So, these kind of terms which are not frequently used in the discourse or not frequently used in day-to-day life, they seem to be or they appear to be semantically and morphologically complex. So, complexity and simplicity is related to frequency of occurrence in the discourse. More frequent relations, less complex semantic and morphological units; less frequent relations, more complex at the semantic and morphological level.

So, that is what it is about the generalization 10. Look at the example as I have just mentioned father versus father-in-law; father is a more commonly used or more frequently used word in the discourse. That is why this is semantically simple, morphologically is also simple. But father-in-law, it is semantically complex morphologically also complex, because it is a polymorphemic word. There are three morphemes father, in, and law; but in case of father, there is only one morpheme. So, if you take both into account the morphology and semantics, father versus father-in-law is going to be like if you compare it, then obviously, the previous one is simpler and the later one is more complex. So, that is about the tenth generalization.

With this information about the generalizations on the complexity and the simplicity, or the complexity of semantics and morphological level, we can have a look at the personal pronouns and the kinship terms. So now, since \we were talking about the complexities at the semantic and morphological level, to conclude, if I want to bring it to the structural lexical typology, then we should note that the kinship terminologies largely follow the factual and naturally given divisions.

The way it has been used in the discourse, the way it has been used in the society, the societal norms and the kinship terms; they are primarily factual like it depends on the kind of relation or the kinship terms that you have in the family and in the extended one. However, just as in case of body part terminology, not all possible natural divisions are picked up by all languages. If you could recall what we were talking about the body parts, what is the feature

of an ideal vocabulary? There should be a word for everything if that is the case, if that is true.

We have already discussed that there are a couple of terms or there are a couple of things in your body where you cannot or you do not have words for it. It is not possible for any language or it is not available in any of the human or natural languages that all of your body parts have independent terms for themselves.

We observe something similar in the kinship terms. In the kinship terms, human relations depending on the generational differences, gender differences, and let us say depending on the extended family or the relative kind of thing. So, when you were talking about the affinal and consanguineal differences, there are many relations which cannot be given a word for everything. That is the reason we can draw a parallel or we can draw a similarity between the lexical typology related to body parts and the kinship terms. Just as in case of body part terminology, it is not possible to have natural divisions for all kinds of kinship terms in any of the languages.

We should not look for an ideal vocabulary in these connections. Whether it is the kinship terms or it is the body parts or any language that you speak or any language that you use for for the purpose of communication, please do not ever expect that that is the ideal vocabulary and your language is superior than any other language. Not really, it does not work in this way. Languages are self-sufficient at the same time they may not have the ideal kind of situation and you should not worry about it at all.

Each language has its own way of expressioning things, whether it is all the six types of semantic domains that we were talking about. Languages vary from one another and we should not look for the idealness in the vocabulary of these human languages or all human languages.

Generalizations

Existence

GEN 11: Almost all languages that have independent pronouns have separate words for 'I', 'you', 'other'.

GEN 12: Most languages have some plural pronouns. (Greenberg 1966a : #42 proposes all languages do)

GEN 13: Some languages have the exclusive–inclusive distinction in first person.

GEN 14: For most languages, if they have gender distinctions in the first-person pronoun, they also have gender distinctions in the second- and/or third-person pronoun. (Greenberg 1966a , #44 says this for all languages; but see exceptions in Siewierska 2005a)

GEN 15: For most languages, if they have gender distinctions in plural pronouns, they also have gender distinctions in some singular pronouns. (Greenberg 1966a , #45 says this for all languages; but see numerous exceptions in Plank and Schellinger 1997 : 93)

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

So, with this information, let us move to another category, which is related to the personal pronouns, and we can draw certain kind of generalizations based on the personal pronouns that a particular language has. I will try to link it with kinship terms as we have discussed, because when we say personal pronouns like I, you, he, she, it, so it definitely has some connection with the kinship terms.

Keeping that in mind, now I am asking you the question, how we can link the personal pronouns with the kinship terms. One way how we can link is that the kinship terms they served to identify people differently from names; like let us say John, Peter, a Mary or let us say the description something like instead of saying let us say a furry animal in the corner, we can say the name of a dog or the name of a cat, something like that or you can say it or you can say that.

So, these are different ways by which you can actually replace the proper nouns and common nouns and rather you can actually use the personal pronouns. So, to refer a particular person and especially the kin terms, they specify the relation between the self and the other individual. So, that is the reason why you need personal pronouns. When I say my, your, or his, that means I am identifying the relation between a particular person and the kinship term associated with it. When I say my, that means, it is related to the word I. When I say your, it is related to the you with something else or somebody else. When I say his, that means I am

talking about he and its relationship with something else. So, there should be some relation between the self and another individual.

Because of this relation between self and another individual, the personal pronouns they have strong connection with the kinship terms. So, let us see how it works and how it goes. In addition to the kinship terms, there is also another set of words that both refer to a person and describe the self's relationship and that is what we were primarily talking about personal pronouns. And it can replace all kinds of something the example that I just gave the furry animals or the let us say the strong child or the bubbly child over there. So, you can replace these with personal pronouns. So, that is why they have a strong connection.

Now we were going to have a closer look at the meanings of the personal pronouns to understand the lexical typology in this domain. So, moving on, when we started the discussion with the body parts, then we move to the kinship terms and now we are moving towards the personal pronouns. Our first and foremost aim is to look at or is to find out the meanings of it and once we catch hold or once we get hold of the meaning, then we can definitely decide on the typology of the personal pronouns.

So, what then should we should do here? We will find out how should we distinguish or how should we categorize different kinds of personal pronouns. So, remember singular first person, what is it? All of you should know that, because these are simple grammar things. Singular and first person is I, singular second person is you, singular third person is the person or the thing talked about, that we are talking about it, could be he, she, it, they anything. So, these are the major or these are the primary personal pronouns in English and I am sure such kind of things would also be there in any other language. Mostly most of the world's languages will have the personal pronouns.

So, on that basis let us see what sort of generalizations have been drawn in like what sort of generalizations have been drawn by the linguists to understand the typology of personal pronouns. So, it will start from the eleventh generalization as we are going to call it gen eleven. So, this is almost all languages that have independent pronouns have separate words for I, you and other. This is Greenberg 1966 and Kaiser 2003.

It is not written all, it is written almost. You never know there is a scope for finding out some other languages which may or may not have words for this. So, what is it written? It is written almost all languages that have independent pronouns. If you have independent pronouns like he, she, it, then you would surely have and these independent pronouns will have independent words. You cannot club them together. You cannot say that you and she and other everything is in one, everything can be clubbed under one category that does not work in this way. Almost all the languages if they have independent pronouns, they would have separate words for I, you and other. That is the eleventh generalization.

What is the twelfth generalization? Twelfth generalization says, most languages have plural pronouns. It is not notice the use of the word carefully, it is not written all languages, it is written most languages and when you say most languages, that would cover the majority of the sample And the twelfth generalization says, that most languages have some plural pronouns.

So, something like we, they, so, if not also you is the second person pronoun the singular and the plural, both are the same words. But at least in the first and the third person, you have different. In the first person, the singular is I and plural is we; the second person, it is the same, no difference. The third person singular is either he or she or it and the plural is going to be they. So, that is the twelfth generalization.

And what is the thirteen generalization? Thirteen generalization is some languages have the exclusive-inclusive distinction in first person. Some again notice that this might not be a frequent phenomenon. So, in the first person, some languages will have exclusive and inclusive distinction. I will give an example when I am sitting here and the students are sitting there, I will say we will go to the market. We will go to the market means the students are also going to be a part of this we and let us imagine a situation, here there are three colleagues, there are three students and I am sitting here. So, when I am looking at the students and I am saying we are going to the market; that means the students might be exempted; it is only me and my colleagues that are going to the market. So, the word we is both exclusive and inclusive.

We means I am going to count you in my team, we means the other way also, I am not going to count you in my team, there are other people to be with me in the team. So, the thirteenth generalization says that this kind of a phenomenon it happens or it occurs in some of the languages, but not all. It is not really an absolute universal, not really; it could be statistical or implicational or something like that; implicational primarily. It is not going to be considered as an absolutely universal. This exclusive-inclusive distinction is available in some of the languages.

With this information about the inclusive and exclusive distinction in the first person, let us move to the next generalizations. So, what is the next generalization? It is says for most languages if they have gender distinction in the first person pronoun, they also have the gender distinction in the second and/or third person pronoun. It is a little tricky to understand the and/or relation.

So, what is it about? It is saying or it is showing; let us say a language allows gender distinction, not all languages do that, but then if a particular language, in this case the word most has been used. If most of the languages have gender distinctions in the first person, let us say in the first person pronoun I, if I has a feminine version and a masculine version, then it will surely have gender distinction in the second and or the third person.

English is not the right kind of example for that because in English we do not have any gender difference in the first person pronoun. Nor even in the second person, but for sure in the third person, third person we have he versus she, but for I and you, there is no gender distinction.

In case there is a language which distinguishes or which has distinct words for masculine and feminine gender in the first person, then it will surely have the second one.You would not find many languages falling in this category. At least in a language like let us say English the gender differences are there in the third person, but not in the first and second and then with this idea about the gender distinction, another related generalization is the fifteenth one.

Let us see what is the fifteenth generalization. So, gen fifteen says, for most languages, if they have gender distinctions in the plural pronouns, they also have gender distinction in the singular pronounce. So, the idea here is that sometimes, in the plural personal pronoun let us

say we or they;, in case of English there is no gender distinction. We can be either masculine or feminine. They can be either masculine or feminine depending on the situation. If there is a group of boys then it is going to be a masculine, if there is a group of girls, it is going to be feminine.

So, structurally or semantically we and they are gender neutral. On the surface by hearing the term we, we cannot identify whether it is a masculine thing or a feminine. So, English is again not a right example, but in case of any other world's languages, if there is a gender distinction in the plural pronouns, they also have a gender distinction in the singular pronouns. So, that is what we were talking about in the third domain of third domain of semantics based discussion

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Let us check it one by one. The first set of generalizations we had related to body parts, then the next set we had kinship terms and the third one now we are talking about the personal pronouns. So, taking the discussion further let us have a look at whether the morphological structure in personal pronouns are complex or simple; just like we did it for the kinship terms.

So, let us have a look at the sixteenth generalization. Sixteenth generalization says in all languages, if there is a derivational relationship between the singular and the plural pronoun, the plural is derived from the singular rather than vice versa. So, this is interesting, and we

can give you English data for this. So, what I will do, I will write here there is a box. So, gen 16 says there is a derivational relationship. It is about derivational relationship.

In this derivational relationship what is derived from what, there is singular and then there is plural. So, we can say this is derived. The singular derives the plural. That means, the terminology or the morphological complexity is more in case of plurals. The singular ones are morphologically less complex. In all languages if there is a derivational relationship between a singular and a plural pronoun, then the plural is derived from the singular.

So, singular is the base and plural is the derivation. The other way round is unacceptable. You cannot say the singular has been derived from plural, not really, rather it works the other way round. So, that is about the gen sixteen. How about gen seventeen? Seventeenth generalization says that in all languages, if the plural of first or second person pronoun is formed with the nominal plural affix, so is the plural of third person pronoun.

I have written some data here on the board to explain both generalization sixteen and seventeen. Let us look at generalization sixteen again. Both sixteen and seventeen are related and they talk about the derivation. So, 16 says, if there is a derivational relation between singular and plural, then it is the plural which is derived from the singular not the other way around. And seventeen generalization says, if there is a plural of first or second person pronoun and it is formed with a nominal plural, then the plural of the third person is also going to be formed in the same way.

Now let us see if the data that has been given from Russian, French, and Turkish can help us to understand these two generalizations. Look at the Russian data. In Russian one is ono; that means, when you say ono, it means one and the plural of one is going to be on-i. The plural of il or elle is going to be il-s and ell-s, that is in French and plural of on is going to be on-lar in Turkish. So, that is about the third person singular. I have to draw another line here to segregate. So, third person pronoun singular plural then we have noun singular plural.

Third person singular noun in Russian is one or ono, third person plural is on-i; third person singular in French is elle or il and the plural is going to be elle-s or il-s; third person singular in Turkish is on and third person plural in Turkish is on-lar. Look at the data here. So, this

was about personal pronoun, now let us go to the noun. The noun book in Russian is kniga. So, in plural it becomes knig-i.

 The same noun book in French is livre and in plural it is going to be livre-s. Another noun that is man in Turkish the singular form is adam and the plural form is adam-lar. So now, what do we see from here, what kind of derivation do we see? Look at the noun list book and man; book kniga, knig-i, livre, livre-s, adam and adam-lar. So, all the three plural forms have been derived from the singular ones.

That is what generalization sixteen would talk about. If there is a derivational rule, when you are talking about the singular and plural, so it is the plurals which are derived from the singular not the other way around. Now let us look at the seventeenth, what it is saying in all languages if the plural of first or second person pronoun is formed with the nominal plural affix, then the plural of third person is also the same thing. So here, the data that we have for Russian, French and Turkish does not really help us directly, but we can look at the third person data.

We do not have the data for the first and second person here, maybe you can refer to the book to know more about it, but at least in the third person you see there is a nominal plural affix marker. So, if there is a nominal plural affix marker on the first and the second person, it will surely be there in the third person. The other way round may not hold true, but at least in case of first and second, the presence of the nominal plural affix is going to reflect or is going to pave the way for similar kind of things in the third person. So, that is what sixteenth and seventeenth generalizations are about.