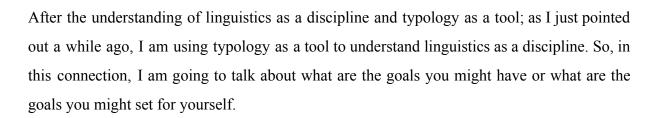**Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach**
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Lecture - 03
Goal of Typology

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After the understanding of linguistics as a discipline and typology as a tool; as I just pointed out a while ago, I am using typology as a tool to understand linguistics as a discipline. So, in this connection, I am going to talk about what are the goals you might have or what are the goals you might set for yourself.

I have my own course goals, but then you, as a participant, what should be the goals that you want to set when you are trying to understand linguistics and you are trying to figure out how typology is going to work as a tool here. Let us have a look at what is my goal for the course. I would like to help you with understanding of languages from a typological perspective or from a typological approach. You must study similarities and differences among languages. That is why we call it typology.

So, typology is just not about the differences; it is also about the similarities. When you say languages XYZ belong to type A and languages ABC they belong to type B, why do you put

XYZ in A category or in A type? There must be some similarities and when you say ABC set is different from XYZ set, why do you put them in two different types? There must be some differences.

So, primarily the focus of this particular course is going to highlight those similarities and differences, which is why we can claim that typologically language A and B are similar or typologically language A and X are different. The other thing that you must emphasize on when I highlight the similarities and then the differences among languages, these languages may or may not stem from shared genetic relationship.

Let us say the Indian languages or South Asian languages for that matter; if you compare an Indo-Aryan language like Hindi with a Tibeto-Burman language like Meiteilon, they do not share a genetic relationship. However, they have some other relationship to share and that is the areal relationship because they are spoken in a linguistic area which is known as India or South Asia.

That is why, I want to reemphasize that when I say typology, the languages that we are going to bring on the table here, they may or may not have a shared genetic relationship. They might not have any language contact, they might not have anything similar as far as the environmental conditions are concerned.

Language contact, language change and then the shared language or shared genetic relationships, genealogical similarities; they may or may not occur when we compare the languages. Keeping that in mind, I would like to introduce a couple of research tools that typologists use to study this discipline. And what are these tools? One of the most important tools that the typologists would use is the generalization.

Generally when I teach linguistics to my students here in IIT Madras, in a regular class; I give them a lot of data. And it is a good thing that Indian classrooms are diversified all the time because we have speakers from Indo-Aryan, we have speakers from Dravidian, very few are from Tibeto-Burman; though I do not have many, but sometimes I do get one or two and within the Indo-Aryan, we have multiple languages which are spoken.

In the most recent class that I was teaching, Introduction to linguistics course, for Indo-Aryan I had speakers in the class who speak Indo-Aryan languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Bangla. So, at least four Indo-Aryan languages and; obviously, considering this institute is in Madras; we do get a lot of Dravidian language speakers.

So then, I definitely had speakers from Telugu, from Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, all the four majors Dravidian languages. In Tibeto-Burman, generally I do not see many of them, but then I remember having at least one Tibeto Burman scholar and he was a Bodo speaker. Bodo, which is spoken in Assam, is a Tibeto-Burman language.

Considering my classroom is always diversified; I do get a lot of data and then people try to draw some generalizations from the given data set that we have in hand. And the data set that we have in hand may not be exhaustive, they may not be like huge, but then, for sure, that tiny set of data will also help you to draw some kind of typological generalization.

On the basis of this generalization, we can actually understand the nuances of languages in a better way. So, that is why, one of the primary research tools that I want to introduce to you or that I would like my participant here to use, is language typological generalizations.

Whenever you get a set of data, try to find out what is the common thing about it; what is the commonality rather, you find in such a data set, no matter how tiny the data set could be. So, focus on the generalizations.Then the second thing or the second tool that I want you to be familiar with or to explore are the different ways of constructing language samples. You may have to collect some data during the course to do the analysis; so you should be able to construct certai samples.

Let us say we are going to work on a certain linguistic phenomenon called nominalization. So, you may ask me the question what is nominalization? Nominalization is the way by which a particular language creates or forms its nouns. So, how the nouns are formed in a particular language, to understand that phenomenon or to understand that concept, you need to work on language samples.

And what are the language samples you might have? You as a native speaker of a particular language, you are one of the best informants for yourself. Besides that, you can also talk to

other speakers in the surrounding. There is no fixed sample size, but then the more is merrier that is how we all understand. Through this course, whatever I am going to discuss related to language, linguistics and language typology; you should be able to construct some language samples and also use it as a research tool in this particular course.

And besides that, you should also be able to figure out the sources for obtaining language data, since I mentioned or I put emphasis on language samples and then drawing generalizations, empirical data. You must be aware about what should be your reliable source when you are talking about language data.

Who is going to be your informant and who you are going to talk to when or whether the data that you are going to collect, you want to put it in a written form or in a spoken form, that is a different story altogether. How to collect the data? Who should be your informant and what are the demographic details that you want to consider to collect the data? So, these are small questions that you should keep in mind when you are trying to understand the sources or when you are going to figure out how to collect the data.

I will share a couple of stories; what are the challenges you might encounter when you go for the data collection. It may not be that exhaustive; it could just be a language that is spoken in your vicinity. You do not have to go to the field in that sense. I am giving you my own example. I am a native speaker of Odia, which is an Eastern Indo-Aryan language; it also has a lot of Dravidian features. That is why we say that Odisha is the link between the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian cultures.

Culturally also we are like the hyphen and we are also the linguistic hyphen between the northern and the southern part of the country. So, if I want to work on certain linguistic phenomena in Odia, I may not have to go to a far off place to collect data. But if I want to study the varieties that this language has; then I definitely need to get the samples from different places.

But if I do want to focus on the varieties to begin my research with; which eventually might be needed later, but then let us say I wanted to study passives. So, when I am trying to understand passives, I may not have to go into the varieties of passives or the varieties of

languages that Odia has, rather I focused on my variety which is spoken in this tiny place called Bhadrak; which is in the eastern part of the state.

I just considered one variety and that is what I considered as Odia. Odia definitely has multiple varieties and my Odia is one of them. So, in this case, I did not really go for data collection to the field in that sense rather, what I did I just talked to people in my surrounding like in my family, friends and then; obviously, I did consider different generations.

Though we do not have much difference as far as the generations are concerned, in understanding passives, I did not really find out any difference in speech as far as demographic details like gender is concerned or educational status is concerned or generation is concerned; so, I did not really focus much on that. For me, these details, they were not that significant; rather I was trying to understand how would they consider a passive construction in Odia.

Considering passives are not so frequently used in the discourse, it was really tricky for me to get the data. It depends what kind of linguistic or language phenomenon you want to study. If you want to study a function like nominalization, you might get a lot of data easily, but then again if you want to focus on the spoken form like the natural conversation.

So, for passives, it was a little tricky for me; I could not really find much of passive constructions in the natural conversational discourse. However, that does not mean that Odia does not have passives; it definitely has passives. So, what I did? I kind of thought about what could be the possible passive constructions and I asked my informants if these constructions were okay with them.

I as a native speaker, I try to figure out what could be the possible passive constructions in this language. Once I understood that these are the passives in my language, then I tried to test it or I give the questionnaire to the informants with a set of possible passive constructions in Odia.

And I wanted them to let me know whether these are acceptable or unacceptable for them. Some people would find it extremely bad, then those would be unacceptable constructions.

Some would find it these are the acceptable ones. And there are certain examples which would be somewhere in the middle; it is not that acceptable, but then sort of okay.

I had three different ways by which I can sort of analyze my data. So, what I did? I did not consider the ones which are absolutely unacceptable. Now there are two other categories left; some passive constructions which are ok; some were not ok, but then sometimes they do use that. So, this is how I collected my data, but you may not have to follow this method all the time; you can simply go and do some recording of the natural conversation.

And these are the best data I would say because no matter how much of structural research you are doing trying to understand the forms of language, eventually the real uses of language is tested in the discourse. So, what kind of a discourse? It is a conversational discourse. Language survives with the speakers, so if the speakers are not going to speak it, the language is going to die. So, some people work on conversational discourse and then they try to record some data, that is also another way by which you can collect your data.

If you look at the slide, the third point that we have here, the sources. The sources of obtaining language data. Ass the investigator or as the researcher; you have to figure out which source you are going to consider. Either you have a set of sentences or examples which will work as a questionnaire and you are going to test it with the native speakers. The other side of the story is that you do not really have a questionnaire in hand, rather you are going to analyze some natural conversational data. So, how to get the natural conversation? You have to go for a recording, otherwise it is not possible to analyze the data. You have to ask people to speak to each other; may be they can sit together in a group and then you are going to talk about it. And when you have got the recording done, then you are going to transcribe and eventually you are going to analyze the data.

So, that set of conversational discourse would actually help you to give a lot of interesting data for multiple linguistic phenomena. Because when we speak, we do have very interesting phenomena that we encounter during the conversational discourse. So, that is going to be your source for obtaining language data.

What my focus here as far as the goals of this particular course is concerned; let me just sum it up. Let me wind it up very quickly. I am going to ask you to understand generalizations.

What are generalizations? The typological generalizations once you have a set of data ready which I am going to give you the first set of data and eventually for the assignments; you have got to do your own; you have to go for your own data collection which could be very rudimentary. It could be extremely basic. Do not worry about it. This is a basic level course or the fundamental level course.

So, do collect some very basic data from your surroundings; you do not have to go for a data collection to 'the field' in that sense. Just talk to people around you and then find out what kind of data that you can collect; whether you are going to use a questionnaire or you are going to use the recording system, but eventually you should be able to find out some typological generalization that your data has got to offer. And once you are able to do that, typological research becomes fun, I can assure you that.

When you try to analyze it or when you look at the language samples and then you get the empirical data in hand, that would actually trigger a lot of research questions to take it up further.

So, these are a couple of things that I wanted to discuss; as far as the goals of this particular course is concerned. Primarily my focus is going to be on the language samples, generalizations and then the linguistic data. So, if you are able to do that by the end of this course; then I would consider the course to be a successful one. So, with this, I would move over to the different sub disciplines of linguistics in the next class.

Until then you have to remember what I discussed and then appreciate linguistics as much as you can. And try to try to understand how linguistics as a discipline is going to help you to do; sort of to understand human language better and human beings in a much better way or in a comprehensive or systematic manner.

Thank you.

Keywords: typological generalization, language samples, data collection, questionnaire, conversational discourse, conversational recording