Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach
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Lecture - 41
Syntactic Typology - Part 1

Hi, hello everyone. Welcome to this session of my NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach. We were talking about Syntactic Typology. We started the discussion with basics of syntax; how syntactic analysis is useful for natural language; be it English, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil whatever and then, we did find out how the ambiguity can be resolved by using syntactic analysis; how recursion can be explained. We can also find out when we have complex structures and there are issues like word order.

Considering English is a different word order language and Hindi is a different word order language, how we need to do the syntactic analysis for these things. Taking this discussion forward on the basis of the understanding that we have about the basics of syntax, I would like you to have an understanding or to to get an idea about syntactic typology. When I say syntactic typology, primarily, I am going to focus on the syntactic differences and similarities among languages, as simple as that. It sounds simple, but it is actually not. I am going to deal with it at a very preliminary level considering this is an introduction course.

So, primarily the focus for this unit is going to be syntactic differences and syntactic similarities and I will primarily get data from Moravcsik's book Introduction to Language and Linguistics published by Cambridge university press. There is a huge sample of crosslinguistic generalizations which have been documented in this book and I am going to get my data from there.

Key Concepts

- Crosslinguistic similarities and differences in the choice of words and word forms
- Frequencies of order patterns
- Crosslinguistic examination of grammatical categories

Now I am going to discuss key concepts in this section. I will first talk about the crosslinguistic similarities and differences in the choice of words and then, the word form. Remember, there are two different things; one is which language chooses which word and what are the different word forms that the languages choose crosslinguistically. That is what is going to be my focus for the initial couple of minutes.

Then, I will talk about the word order. The frequencies of the word order patterns, some kind of statistics I am going to discuss and eventually, I will move over to the crosslinguistic examination of grammatical categories like subject or let us say for example, I will talk about the classifiers or I might talk about the resumptive pronouns. These are a few grammatical categories that I am going to discuss to make it palatable to my participants, about what syntactic typology is.

Assembling words

- Languages differ in:
  i. The choice of words that are used to express a given meaning.
  ii. The choice of word forms that are used to express a given meaning.
  iii. The order of words that are used to express a given meaning.

So, to begin with, syntax is what? Syntax is the technical or the systematic study of sentence structure in any given language. When we talk about sentences then; obviously, its the the most important thing to remember is that this is the assembling of words. When you have so many lexical items at your disposal, then you need to put it together in such a way that this will give you a complete meaning. That is what a sentence is all about.

Sometimes a sentence could be just one word that is a different story. But then the moment we have a complex or a compound or even a simple sentence with multiple words, our focus should be on assembling the words in the right order. So, when we are going to deal with these many words in the syntactic typology section, we need to focus on three things and what are the three things?

We need to find out how languages are similar or languages are different, on the basis of the choice of words that they have. To read it I have written down three points here, the choice of words that are used to express a given meaning. If the languages are similar, what is the choice of words; if they are different, what is the choice of words? Then, the second thing is not only the choice of words, the similarities and differences under the category of typology should also be studied on the basis of the choice of word forms.

What are these forms? These forms are used to express a particular meaning or a given meaning. After we find out the choice of words and the choice of word forms in relation with typology, we are going to focus on the order of words. Which word should occur after what or before what so that the meaning can be expressed properly.

These are the three things that are going to be discussed in this section. So, to repeat or to help you to reiterate, first choice of words; second choice of word forms and third order of words. On the basis of these three parameters, I am going to talk about or I am going to give you an idea how typologically languages are different.

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Choice of Words

ENGLISH	SERBO-CROATIAN	RUSSIAN	ARABIC
I am a student.	Ja sam student.	Ja učenik.	?ana t γ a:lib
You are a student.	Ti si student.	Ty učenik.	?anta t γ a:lib
He is a student.	On je student.	On učenik.	Huwa t γ a:lib

We will start from the first tool that we have in hand that is choice of words. So, here, we have considered again taking the data from Moravcsik's book Introduction to Language and Linguistics published by Cambridge university press. It is a fairly new book which has been comprehensive as far as descriptive data is concerned and there has been a lot of samples from different world's languages. This dataset deals with four different languages; English, Serbo-Croatian, then Russian and then Arabic.

Now, let us see how the choice of words are different. So, when I say I am a student, this is the sentence. Here is the Serbo-Croatian counterpart, then we have the Russian counterpart and then, we have the Arabic counterpart. Let us see how typologically these languages are

similar or different. When you look at the choice of words English contains four words each; I am a student, you are a student, he is a student.

In all the three constructions, we see there are four words each. However, in the second sentence or in the second language which has been listed here, the number of selection of lexical items or the words are three. In case of English it is four. In case of Serbo-Croatian, it is 3 and going to the third language which has been discussed. Russian has only 2, and how about Arabic? Arabic is also again having two two different words to say the same sentence or to represent the same sentence, I am a student; second sentence, you are a student and the third sentence he is a student.

If we look at this pattern typologically since we are talking about syntactic typology, which one seems to be closer to what? First language which we have in hand, English 4 words; second language Serbo-Croatian, we have 3 words; Russian, we have 2 words and Arabic also has 2 words. Considering this list of languages or the samples that we have in hand, it seems Russian is closely related to what? As far as the number of words is concerned, it might be related to Arabic.

But then look at the verbal form or if you look at the let us say English and Serbo-Croatian examples. Let us start one by one. Going by the number of words, Russian and Arabic are closer and what are the differences? The differences are in English and Serbo-Croatian, you can see, there are like I am a student. This is ja or yeah sam student. So, in this case, you see that this seems to be a bit similar as far as phonological representations are concerned.

So, what happens in these two the first and the second language, English in Serbo-Croatian, there is a verb to be, which is known as copula. Copula is present in English and Serbo-Croatian, but it seems to be missing in Russian and Arabic. Considering it seems to be missing, Russian, Arabic tend to go towards one direction and English and Serbo-Croatian tend to go to the other direction. However, they are not that similar. It is that in Arabic, the verb to be seems to be missing.

So, if this seems to be missing in this case, then there is a bit of pattern, the pattern which you are able to identify is based on the number of words that it has. But as far as the lexical items or the verb form is concerned, English and Serbo-Croatian, seem to be going a bit closer to

each other, but if you look at Russian and Arabic, though the number of words remain the same, but in case of the grammatical categories that it has, it does not seem to be much of similarity.

So, these are the things we need to keep in mind when we are talking about the choice of words. Some languages might choose more number of words, some languages might choose fewer number of words. Sometimes copula, could be mandatorily required to express a sentence like I am a student. It is an identificational sentence, but it may not be required for languages like Russian. It may not be required in that sense. Also the tense feature could be different. I do not have the data here, but then there are also languages like let us consider Hungarian.

Hungarian is a language which does not have a copula in such kind of constructions and on the other hand we have Cantonese Chinese, in this case it could be simply like an adjective. When you say I am a student in Chinese, it may not need a copula, but a simple adjectival lexical item is going to express such meanings. So, these are the different ways by which we can claim that the choice of words makes the languages typologically similar or different.

It depends on the number, it also depends on the kind of lexical item that the languages choose and also the tense pattern that remains varied from language to language, but eventually you have to remember that both the things have to be taken care of. So, quantitatively how many words have been used and which form of the word has been used? The next discussion is going to be based on the choice of word forms. Just by going through the choice of words is not limited to the typological research, rather we need to find out besides the choice of words, we can also think about the choice of word forms to decide on the typology of the samples of languages that we have.

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The next slide is about the crosslinguistic differences related to choice of word forms. Next, we are moving to the choice of word forms, but let me just summarize what we discussed in choice of words. We had four languages at our disposal. We had English; we had Serbo-Croatian; we have Russian and then, we have Arabic, where we saw that English and Serbo-Croatian, they seem to be a little close to each other as far as the use of copula is concerned.

They seem to be typologically similar, whereas Russian and Serbo-Croatian which are slavic languages; ideally, they should show similar kind of features, but in this particular instance, Russian and Arabic they seem to go together without deploying the copula. So, that is about the syntactic typology based on the tool that we have in hand the choice of words. With this, we will move to the next criteria or the next parameter that is the choice of word forms. So, which forms of words do languages choose? We can put them in a category called type.

Let us say x type or y type or a type or b type. Just like we did for the other four languages, here we have another sample. We have English; we have Japanese; then we have Spanish and then we have Swahili. So, here we see English and Japanese, these are unrelated languages. Let us see how the adjectives are going to be studied here because the example that we have taken here is small spoon.

That is small spoon singular; small spoons plural. Then, we have small child singular and small children plural. We are going to find out whether the singular and plural have the same adjective or different adjectives. Typologically which two languages or three languages or all four of them belong to the same category or the same type. If you look at the data carefully, you will see let us analyze the data lets study the data, if not analysis let us just study the data carefully. Here you see in English and in Chinese, there is one similarity and one difference.

So, what is the similarity? No matter whether the noun is spoon or the child both English and Japanese use similar adjectives. It is small for spoon as well as child. So, whether it is a human or non-human or animate or inanimate, the adjective remains the same in both the languages English as well as Chinese. In Chinese this is tiisai and in English this is small.

No matter whatever might be the noun, the adjective is the same. But does the story remain the same for Spanish and Swahili? Not really. If you look at Spanish, for the inanimate noun, the adjective is different and for the animate noun or human noun, the adjective is different. For spoon,. they have cuchar, for a child they have nin

Spanish seems to be different, and Swahili has a very different story to tell. In Swahili, you see when it is an inanimate object like spoon, there are two different adjectives and for a human child or for a human form or for a human noun, the adjectives are different. So, we need to find out what is the correlation between plurality and the use of adjective, plus the kind of noun that we have, how typologically they are going to be different.

If we look at the kind of language families that we have in hand English and Japanese, they are absolutely unrelated. But in case of the deployment of adjectives, they seem to behave similarly. They have one adjective for both animate and inanimate. For Spanish, which lexical item decides the use of adjectives? It is the noun. So, with an inanimate noun the adjective is something else and with an animate noun or a human noun, the adjective is something else.

However, in the category of Swahili, we see both the plurality and adjectives they are different on the basis of the even like all the three things are working. When it is an inanimate object like spoon, spoon singular the adjective is ki; spoon plural the adjective is vi. That means, here the difference in the adjective is also related to the singular and the plural things.

Same is the case with the second one when it is child which is human agent unlike which is human noun, the adjective is ma and when it is children, the the like the adjective is going to be wa.

Swahili is typologically very different. Spanish is somewhere in the middle like the type 2 and English and Japanese, they can be put under one category; though they are different as far as language families are concerned, at least on the basis of the use of adjectives like English and Japanese, they seem to behave similarly in this construction. There we saw how the adjectives are going to be different on the basis of the feature of the noun, whether this is animate or inanimate, singular or plural. Some languages do not discriminate on any of these; some languages discriminate only on the animacy features, and some languages like Swahili, differentiate it or they deploy different adjectives not only on the basis of the animacy features, but also on the basis of the number features. So, English and Japanese would behave similarly as far as adjectives are concerned. They are in one type. Swahili is going to be on the extreme end and then, we have Spanish which is there in the middle of it. But one thing that you need to notice in case of Japanese is that it does not have any difference between singular and plural in case of the inanimate noun.

So, when it is small spoon and small spoons, look at the data here. The data is same for the words that we use, that is same for both singular and plural. However, with child versus children, they have a different plural marker that is tati I think. So, kodomo and then, kodomo-tati that seems to be the plural marker, but that is not the story with the inanimate nouns. There are subtle differences and there are subtle similarities, but at least English and Japanese share some kind of similarity with only one difference, we are going to put them almost in the same type though they belong to two different language families.

In case of Spanish the differences are only on the basis of the animacy features, but in case of Swahili the differences are both on animacy as well as number features. So, that is one way of understanding typology on the basis of the choice of word forms.

Crosslinguistic differences: Choice of word forms

ENGLISH:
I follow him.

ENGLISH:
dissatisfied with *something*

ENGLISH:
three boys

GERMAN:
Ich folge. ihm.
I   follow he.DAT

FRENCH:
mécontent de quelque chose
dissatisfied GEN some   thing

RUSSIAN:
tri   mal'chik-a
three. boy-SING.GEN

Here is another set of data we have. Let us do a comparative analysis among four languages. We have English, then German, French and Russian. The first sentence in English is I follow him and look at the German example, I follow then he dative and in case of English the second example we have dissatisfied with something and here is the French counterpart and three boys, here is the Russian counterpart.

Now, let us see what do these differences show as far as grammatical case is concerned. In case of English, German, French and Russian, you look at it, the case marking is slightly different. In German, it is going to be dative; the object is dative marked. In case of English also it is the same, but then if you look at the three boys in English, here the Russian example that we have, it has a genitive marking. Let us see what is happening here. In English the verb to follow takes the direct object case. So, him is the direct object case which is the accusative case.

But in case of German, if you compare it takes the indirect object case which is the dative case. So, when I follow him; him is accusative marked, but when you say it is the same sentence German, it is dative marked. So, typologically the case marking is a little different here. What is the other thing that is specific about English as far as the adjectives are

concerned? The first one is the case marking type case marking features, the second one is related to the adjectives.

In the English example that we have, the adjective dissatisfied requires an instrumental marker. Instrumental marker means with. I open the lock with the key. So, with is the instrumental marker. However, its French counterpart does not need an instrumental marker rather what does it need? There is a genitive marking. So, instead of saying dissatisfied with something with an instrument with, here we have de which is the genitive case marking. So, the adjective in the first case which is English, it requires instrumental preposition and in French, it requires the genitive preposition. So, there is a difference out here.

Now, come to Russian in case of the numeral ok. In English, the numeral that we have is three boys. So, three boys in English, it has the subject form of the noun; that means, null nominative; it does not have the overt nominative mark or the overt nominative marker. But in case of Russian, the noun that follows three, it has to be the genitive case. See, there is a distinct difference between English and all the three languages which have been shown here.

So, let us recap; let us find out what we discussed. In case of English in a construction like I follow him, it is the direct object and it is marked with accusative. Its German counterpart is getting dative. The second example the adjective has an instrumental preposition. In French, the similar kind of example, the adjective has a genitive preposition. In English, the numeral seems to have the subject form which is null nominative marked. However, in case of Russian, it is genitive marked.

So, what kind of generalization we are going to draw? In these cases German, French and Russian, considering they deploy different kind of cases, their syntactic typology is going to be different. Lus go back to the old example that we have. In such cases, when we have multiple or when we have different types of case markings, we need to find out these case forms, they are dictated by other words which do not reflect the form of governing words.

What is government? We are going to talk about it later, if we have time. But just remember crosslinguistically, we are going to encounter many such differences even within the languages which belong to the same language family. For instance English and German.

Considering English and German belong to the same language family, in case of the case marking, they are different.

Let us go back to the primary objective of this unit, to find out the crosslinguistic similarities as well as differences. There must be some similarity which is why English and German, they belong to the same language family, but in spite of the similarities that they have, we can also highlight the differences that these languages have on the basis of the case system or the case marking.

Keywords: case marking, nominative case, accusative case, dative case, instrumental case, null nominative case, genitive case, genitive preposition,