

Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach
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Lecture - 42
Syntactic Typology - Part 2

Hi, hello, everyone. Welcome to this session of my NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:23)

Word Order



Subject & Object & Verb

Verb & Subject & Object

Ainu

Totto amam esose .

mother rice borrowed

'The mother borrowed rice.'

Samoaan

Sa sogi e loane le ufi .

PST cut SBJ John the yam

'John cut the yam.'

Existential statements:
1. Some languages have noun-adj agreement and others don't
2. Some languages put the verb at the end of sentence and others at the beginning.



Having seen these examples, how languages resemble and differ in the choice of words and word forms, now we will go to the third syntactic parameter of variation. What was it? That is order of words. I talked about three different syntactic parameters of variation; the choice of words, choice of word forms, and then the word order. We have already discussed choice of words. The first one, the second one was the choice of word forms and now I am moving to the choice of word order.

We just discussed the first two syntactic parameters on the basis of which we are trying to find out the crosslinguistic similarities and differences in the domain of syntactic typology. And then, the third thing that we have in hand, the third parameter is the word order

parameter. When we are trying to understand the word order parameter, primarily we will focus on three different grammatical categories. That is the subject, object and then, the verb.

I have given the data from two different languages again from Moravcsik's text book instead of giving the regular English-Hindi, English-Telegu or English-Kannada or English-Odiya examples. Here we have very different languages in hand. Please refer to this book Introduction to Language and Linguistics published by Cambridge university press, when you have time. You will get a lot of other data samples.

Here, we have two languages; one is Ainu, the other one is Samoan. In Ainu, we see the word order is subject, then object, then verb. The mother borrowed rice. The mother is the subject which is I think totto here; borrowed would be eso esose which is verb final and in the middle we have the object which is amam, that is rice. So, mother rice borrowed, that is what the word order parameter is in a language like Ainu.

However, the other language Samoan that we have, we see interestingly it starts from the verb. This is VSO. In case of VSO language, this one is the past tense marker. Then, we have the main predicate cut then we have the subjunctive mood and then John which is the agent, then we have the classifier the or you can call it a determiner and then we have the object like the yam. So, 'John cut the yam' is the construction which follows the VSO order in a language like Samoan. So, Ainu is SOV and Samoan is VSO. This is the word order that these languages follow.

There are many other examples. You can think about your own language. What do you think your language is SVO or SOV or VSO? The fourth one is VOS and the last ones are OVS and OSV. These are the six possible word orders that languages follow. My suggestion for you would be to find out syntactically or going by the syntactic typology, does your language belong to any of these two Ainu and Samoan; which category your language belongs to? If not, then what is the word order pattern of the language languages that you speak?

With this, I will give you a detailed description about the choice of word forms and the choice of words later, but before that I would like to tell you what we should take home from this much of discussion that we have just had. The first thing in this section or in this discussion, duration what we have seen? We have seen both the similarities and differences

in the syntactic pattern of languages that involve the choice of words, word forms, and then, the order of words. All the three parameters are equally relevant to identify the syntactic typology of languages.

And on the basis of these three parameters that we have, remember I have to repeat it because these are the very important things to understand the syntactic typology domain. First, you need to find out what is the choice of words these languages follow. Second, which form of the words that they choose. Third, which order the words are deployed or which order the words are assembled. On the basis of this we zero-down on or we try to keep languages in different categories or in different types. Using these three parameters, what we can do? We can formulate existential statements. So, these are the two existential statements that we have identified or that we can claim after the discussion that we have had about the choice of words and word forms.

Another question which should occur to you is that this is a pattern that we have identified, but what is the distribution of these patterns across languages; how many languages follow which category; do we have data for that; do we have statistics of it; how frequently if I can put it in other way how frequently, these conditions are occurring in different languages?

So, that is a different domain of discussion. The frequency of occurrence or the distribution of such patterns, but at least one thing we are sure about the discussions that we have had so far is that these two generalizations can emerge. One, some languages have noun-adjective agreement, some languages do not. They might have the noun adjective-agreement on the basis of the plural marking on the basis of the animacy marking.

Sometimes some of the languages may not have any kind of matching between the nouns and adjectives. Other way around, when we were talking about the word order, it is going to be some languages have the verbs at the end, some have the beginning, some could have also in the middle of it. When you say SVO, then the verb is going to be in the middle of the sentence. So, those are at least two existential statements that we have identified.

With this, let us look at some particular grammatical items to understand how syntactic typology works on the basis of the first two parameters that we have had. We do not focus on

the frequency or the statistics of it for the moment. The attention is on the choice of words and then, the choice of the word forms. For this I would consider a resumptive pronoun.

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Choice of Words: Resumptive Pronouns



English

The man was my uncle; I gave milk to him .

? The man that I gave milk to him was my uncle .

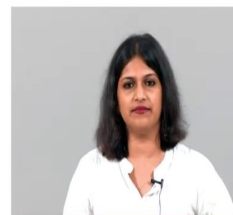
Persian

mardi ke man shir-râ be u dadâm
man that I milk-ACC to him gave:1S

'the man that I gave milk to'

Accessibility hierarchy
SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP

English → 'him' can be dropped in the second example.
Persian → 'him' is mandatory



Keenan and Comrie (1977)
Noun phrase accessibility and universal grammar

What do you mean when you say a resumptive pronoun?. I would rather say I am going to consider at least one such grammatical item that is the resumptive pronouns or you can also call it the personal pronouns, which are used in the relative clause constructions.

Let us consider a sentence like the man was my uncle, I gave milk to him. This is not really a formal like you do not really find this kind of construction in formal English, rather this is extremely colloquial. But that is fine; we do not have any problem about it and when we have for construction like the man that I gave milk to him was my uncle, it sounds a little weird. We will discuss these examples in a while. But for the moment let us look at how we are going to construct a sentence to understand the resumptive pronouns.

So, this example, the first one that we have in hand, both of them are semantically idle use of words. But like that there is a kind of pronoun and there is also a kind of noun. But for this discussion I am primarily going to talk about the pronouns. We have the nouns like uncle, we have the nouns like milk, but let us focus on the pronoun that is him, the personal pronoun or the resumptive pronoun.

See how this resumptive pronoun has been used in two different instances. Occurrence of the word in the first two sentences, they differ like the first the English sentences that we have they differ in function. How they differ in function?

In the first one, the man was my uncle. I gave milk to him. Him means to the man. What it refers? It refers back to the man. I gave milk to the man and he is my uncle. However, in case of 6b which is kind of colloquial, we do not really use it in the formal English style. But still when you say the man that I gave milk to was my uncle, in this construction, it seems something does not contribute to the meaning of the sentence. Even without him, without that resumptive pronoun, the sentence seems to be ok, not really much needed. I can simply say the man that I gave milk to was my uncle, should be fine.

And if I put the pronoun him, then also it is ok, but then you see there is a question mark here which is not really used in formal English. But again, I repeat. We generally see this kind of a construction in colloquial English. As far as English is concerned, this resumptive pronoun has two different ways of being used. When in constructions like the second, it may or may not be used. If you drop it, the sentence does not lose its semantics, but that does not work in a construction in Persian.

Consider the Persian data here; this bay and ooh should to him, it is mandatory. You just cannot drop him from the Persian example. So, this is what you write. English and Persian which are two different languages, their choice of words are also different and their choice of word forms are also different.

When you look at the word forms, So, when it is to him, the choice of words be, bay, and ooh and in case of the form of words also sometimes you can drop it, sometimes you cannot as far as English is concerned. But if it is Persian, then you just can't do that; you cannot drop the phrase him which is a resumptive pronoun in such constructions.

It is not only Persian, there are many other languages which require the resumptive pronouns in some of their relative clauses and the relative clauses constructions are quite interesting in that sense. Let us see what are the other languages. At least one language that we got to know

is Persian and then there could be other languages. For example, in most of the south Asian languages it is a correlative.

So, the structure is going to be different. Considering, we have the correlative constructions, we will have a different sort of data altogether. But at least in case of the study that is done by Keenan and Comrie, they have reported 26 languages at least which have the distribution of these pronouns across various kinds of relative clauses which actually has a clear pattern.

So, at least in Persian, if you refer to Moravcsik's textbook, you will get more data about it otherwise read Keenan and Comrie. This is the work Keenan and Comrie (1977). They have talked about relative clause constructions. Of the 26 languages that they have studied, they saw that there is a pattern which can be drawn taking into account or considering the resumptive pronouns that we have.

So, that is at least one one sort of sample that we have and what Keenan and Comrie would claim or would contend is that this distribution followed a certain hierarchy and which hierarchy? This is called accessibility hierarchy. here. The accessibility hierarchy will have the pattern something like this. The subject is the highest accessible grammatical item, then it is the direct object, then it is the indirect object, then the oblique case marked objects or case marked arguments Then, we have genitive case marked argument and finally, the complementizers.

So, this is how the accessibility hierarchy works as per Keenan and this is OCOMP is objective comparison, something like the man who my brother is taller than blah blah blah. Objective comparison comes towards the end. The accessibility of the subject is higher than the accessibility of the direct object. This is higher than the indirect object, then the oblique is marked one, genitive case marked one, and finally, the objective comparison. That is what Keenan and Comrie would claim. So, on the basis of this discussion of the resumptive pronouns and their distribution among world's languages, where they are mandatorily needed; sometimes they can be dropped and they are optional, in such cases, Moravcsik and other typologists have drawn two parts of a generalization.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:44)

Typological Generalisation



GEN-1

(a) If in a language, a resumptive pronoun is obligatory at any one point on the Accessibility Hierarchy, it is obligatory at all points to the right as well.

(b) If in a language, a resumptive pronoun is optional at any one point on the AH, it will not be obligatory to the left.



The generalization number one is if in a language a resumptive pronoun is obligatory at one point on the accessibility hierarchy, it is obligatory at all points to the right as well. Now look at the accessibility hierarchy, and what is the generalization? Let me reread it.

You have the accessibility hierarchy here. The generalization number one section like the first subgeneralization 1a, if in a language a resumptive pronoun is obligatory at any one point on the accessibility hierarchy, it is obligatory at all points to the right as well. Let us say in the accessibility hierarchy of IO, which is indirect object, here if the resumptive pronoun is mandatory, it will be mandatory everything towards the right on the obligatory mark like the oblique marked ones, the genitive marked ones and the objective comparison in all the cases it is going to be mandatorily required. The oblique object or genitive or the possessor thing or the comparative thing. So, that is the first generalization.

The second generalization, if in a language a resumptive pronoun is optional at any one point on the accessibility hierarchy, it will not be obligatory to the left. So, these are the two parts of a generalization 1. Let us recall; let us try to understand. The first generalization says or the first part of generalization any resumptive pronoun which is obligatory at any one point of the accessibility hierarchy, it is going to be obligatory at all the points to the right.

What is the second one? If in a language the resultant pronoun is optional at any point of the accessibility hierarchy, it is going to be optional on every point to the left. So, that is how we are going to understand the first set of generalizations that we have.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:07)

Generalisation 1

Predicted types						
	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
TYPE I:	-	-	-	-	-	-
TYPE II:	+	+	+	+	+	+
TYPE III:	-	+	+	+	+	+
TYPE IV:	-	-	+	+	+	+
TYPE V:	-	-	-	+	+	+
TYPE VI:	-	-	-	-	+	+
TYPE VII:	-	-	-	-	-	+

Types ruled out						
*TYPE i:	+	-	+	+	+	
*TYPE ii:	-	+	-	-	-	

and so forth



Let us look at the table that we have had. So, these are the predicted types and we have some six types given over here; type 1 2 3 4 5 6; and type 1 which one should be ruled out and which one should not; which one should be ruled out as far as this left and right obligatory and optionality is concerned.

Thank you.

Keywords: resumptive pronoun, correlative, accessibility hierarchy