

**Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach**  
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**Lecture - 48**  
**Goals of Language Typology – Part 1**

Hello everyone, welcome to this session of my NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach. I am going to talk about a few things related to the goals and objectives of this course. You can consider it as a part of your introductory lectures. Let us just try to understand why this particular course is giving so much emphasis on typology and what typology? Linguistic typology.

When I say linguistic typology, that means, I am definitely going to discuss what are the different types of languages that you encounter in the day-to-day life. You may or may not understand all of them, but that does not mean that you do not encounter the kind of languages that human beings speak.

As you remember, I have always been talking about even if you check the introduction video which was uploaded long back, it is about natural language and when I say natural language, it is language, it is the language used by the human beings. And when I say it is used by the human beings then that means definitely you get an idea that being a human you are privileged and the privilege lies in the ability or capability if I can say of using a language to communicate.

Communication is for sure one of the primary goals of language, but that does not mean that is the only goal, there are many more things. But then we will try to approach it from how you understand or how you find out those human languages could be of many types. The kind of languages that you hear in the day-to-day life, whether they have some similarities or differences, being natural language I am sure they would have certain kinds of similarities and since they have certain kinds of similarities, they might also have differences.

And to account for the similarities and differences, we have this called linguistic typology. So, I will give you a situation let us say you are in an elevator or a lift, and there are two people standing next to you and they are talking in a language which you do not understand.

It is a foreign language for you, and the words are absolutely noisy for you, because you do not understand a single thing that they are talking or they are conversing with.

Since you do not understand their speech or since you do not understand what they are talking, this would come to you as just plain noise. It does not make any sense, but something which is noise to you, is actually communication for the people who speak that language.

How do you know whether they are communicating or not? They are communicating because it is a continuous ongoing conversation. One person is speaking, the other person is responding and this process goes on. Then there could be some sort of discussions happening between themselves and then there is a laughter, there is a silence, probably there are certain things which they do not agree with each other.

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## Goals

Languages are different



- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| (1) Give us today our daily bread.               | English   |
| (2) Chleba naszego powszedniego daj nam dzisiaj. | Polish    |
| bread our daily give to.us today                 |           |
| (3) Mindennapi kenyérünket add meg nekünk ma.    | Hungarian |
| daily our.bread give PREF to.us today            |           |
| (4) Gündelik ekmeğimizi bize bugün ver.          | Turkish   |
| daily our.bread to.us today give                 |           |

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

Eng. - V Pro Adv Pro Adv N  
Polish - N In Adv V Ing  
Hungarian -  
Adj N V Pref Pro Adv  
Turkish  
Adj N Pro Adv V



These kinds of clues will give you an idea, there is something that you feel is a noise is actually not a noise, it is a language. Some sounds might be completely gibberish, but then that does not mean that this is not considered as a language. This will be a language which you do not understand. What is your experience so far, when you encounter such situations or when you encounter such incidents? That means, different people speak different languages. And when different people are speaking different languages, you can actually put them in various types.

If you speak English, somebody else is speaking Hindi, the third person is speaking Telugu or Tamil, that means, English, Hindi and Telugu or Tamil, they belong to different language families, let us not go into the language families for the moment. They definitely belong to different language types. English type will have different phrases, Hindi type will have different phrases and Telugu type will have different phrases.

Those who know a bit about linguistic typology or of the language families which are spoken in the country, you would understand that Hindi as a language has similarity with Marathi or with Gujarati. Telugu as a language has similarity with let us say Tamil or Malayalam or Kannada. These languages belong to a separate type and Hindi type languages, they belong to different types.

Hindi and related languages are Indo-Aryan languages, Telugu and related languages are Dravidian languages. These are genealogically similar. Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam there typological is similar as well as genealogically similar. On the other hand, we have Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Bangla, Odia, they are also genealogically similar plus typologically similar.

So, what we are going to do, what is the goal of this particular course? The goal is that we need to find out how to identify different types and what does this division tell us about the languages that we speak or the languages that we encounter. I will not say speak because although many Indians are like multilinguals, but then let us approach it from the perspective of knowing a language; you may not speak that, but you are aware that such a language exists.

On this note, let us have examples from four different languages. I would follow these empirical evidences or these empirical data from the book *Introducing Language Typology* published by Cambridge University Press and the author is Edith Moravcsik. Let us look at four examples that Edith would give. The first example is from English, the second one is in Polish, the third one is Hungarian and the fourth one is Turkish. The word orders are different, the kind of phrases used are different, but what is same? The meaning is same.

I was just talking about the elevator experience or while ago, you were standing beside two people who are not speaking a language that you know, which is why you happen to consider

it as just simple noise. All these languages the four examples that we have here English, Polish, Hungarian and Turkish let us see how they are different and how they are similar, if at all there is any similarity or if at all there is any difference. Let us look at the words or let us look at the phrases that they use.

The first one, there is a sentence give us today our daily bread. What do you understand, what is the meaning of it? That means, you are asking somebody or requesting somebody, it is an imperative sentence with imperative mood, and you are saying please give us today our daily bread. Here, what do you have? You have the verb, then you have a pronoun that is us, then you have today which is an adverb, then you have another pronoun, then daily that is going to also be considered as an adjective because it is primarily qualifying the bread which is the noun.

In such kind of a construction, how do you have the word order? The word order starts from the verb which is give, then you have the object which is us, then you are talking about what is to be given that our daily bread that is another object, and then you have an adverb that is today.

If I write it over here, the English example that you have here, it is the verb, then the object, then there would be another object, no sorry, the first one is give, the second one is object 1, the third one is an adverb, the fourth one is another object too. That is how you have the word order. Now let us look at the second example or the example given in Polish.

In this language let us see whether we follow this VO, adv, O policy or not. First you have bread, and this bread is not our daily bread, it is written bread our daily. I will write the English example like this. First is verb, then you have the pronoun, then you have the adverb, next you have the pronoun, then you have the adjective and then you have the noun, so that is how the English example organized the words.

In the second one, first you have the noun, then you have a pronoun, third one is what? Third one is an adjective, fourth one is the verb, fifth one to us, so that is going to be your pronoun again, then finally, you have an adverb, that is how Polish looks like. And Hungarian let us see if we have a similar kind of construction or different. Here the first phrase is daily, so that

is an adjective in this case. Second one is our bread which is the combination of your noun that carries the pronoun which is a qualifier.

When you say our bread, bread is a noun which is occurring or which is manifested with the pronoun. So, adjective, noun, then you have the verb, then there is the then what is that, so meg is written as p r e f, so that is a marker; so let us write it as perf and then we have to us which is another let us say pronoun that comes with preposition 2, then you have today which is the adverb.

How about Turkish? Let us look at Turkish data, Turkish data will have daily that is the adjective here, our bread which is a noun that comes with a pronoun, to us something similar we had it in Hungarian. So, to us is again going to be the pronoun with a preposition. Then there is today which is an adverb, and finally, verb.

So, what is to notice here there are different types of languages we have. Just by looking at the data you can see that the word order is different here, sometimes the verb is in the sentence initial position as in English. But in Hungarian the adjective daily which is daily bread that is there in the sentence initial position; in Polish it is the noun which is in the sentence initial position which is bread and in Turkish it is daily which is adjective here occupies the sentence initial position.

So, this would give you an idea that the languages here are different, they are not only different on the basis of the word order, but also the lexical differences, the way the words are manifested that is also different in these four languages. Now, we will go to the next set of data to find out if there is any similarity between any language. Considering English, Polish, Hungarian and Turkish, they do not really give us an idea that languages could be similar.

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## Goals

Languages have similarities



(5)	Unser	tägliches	Brot	gib	uns	heute.	German
	our	daily	bread	give	us	today	
(6)	Vårt	dagliga	bröd	giv	oss	idag.	Swedish
	our	daily	bread	give	us	today	

*Word order  
German } Pro Adj N V Pro Adv  
Swedish }*



Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

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The next set of data would tell you if there is any similarity at all, differences we have already seen. Now, let us look at the similarities that languages might have. In this case we have data from German and from Swedish. Again the empirical data has come from Moravcsik's book *Introducing Language Typology* published by Cambridge University Press.

Get a copy of the book if possible, so that you can get to know about more information related to linguistic typology on your own. Let us look at these two languages' data given in this slide. We saw a lot of differences when you discuss languages like English, Polish, Hungarian and Turkish. However, in the case of German and Swedish, you might see similarities more than differences.

Let us see how the similarities are more than the differences at least as far as the word order is concerned. The same example give us today our daily bread. So, here, the first word which is the German counterpart given here, look at the data. In German also you have our daily bread give us today, and in Swedish also you have the same thing. So, what is similar here? Similarity is in the word order. If it is German, then also you have, let me just write here.

Both German and Swedish will have the pronoun first which is our, then you have daily that is the adjective, then you have bread which is noun, then give that is the verb, and us which is a pronoun again and today that is an adverb. So, there is a similarity in the word order when

you compare German and Swedish. Besides the word order similarity, you would also see there is a lot of lexical similarity as far as phonology is concerned, at least in case of the verbs, you would see there is some similarity. So, this is give.

So, ga e sound that is remaining same and in case of Swedish it is vu and in case of German that is bar; so, brot and brod very similar; uns and oos some kind of similar. So, the last words for today might not be, but you can see not only we have word order similarities in these two languages, we also have the lexical and the phonological similarity or I can say the phonetic similarity in languages like German and Swedish.

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## Why ?

- How are languages different from each other and how are they similar?
- What is the reason for their differences and for their similarities?



Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

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## Similarities

- Genetic Relatedness
- Language Contact
- Shared Cultural Environment
- Types
- Universals



SOV (Hindi)  
Maine khānā khāyā  
Subj Obj Verb  
I ate food  
'I ate food'  
S V O (English)

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

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Now let us see since we saw there could be differences in languages as in Turkish, Hungarian, Polish and English. There could be similarities as in German and Swedish let us focus more on the similarities for the moment. Why do you think two languages are similar? Before that I would try to draw your attention to the Indian languages for that matter as I just discussed a while ago. You might see a lot of similarities in the words let us say in Hindi and in Odia which are Indo-Aryan languages.

So, [FL] in Hindi is house and in Odia it is [FL]. The only difference that you see between Odia and Hindi is that in Odia this ends with a vowel and in Hindi it ends with a consonant /r/ sound and in Odia it ends with the /ɔ/ sound. Besides that you can also find out a lot of similarities in languages like Hindi and Gujarati for that matter or Hindi and Marathi for that matter. A lot of words are similar, you just need to find out.

Before that you need to know since we were talking about the word order, all these languages under the category of Indo-Aryan would have the subject, object and the verb word order. My suggestion for you is to check it for your own language; if you are new to linguistics you need to know what sort of a word order your language follows in most of the cases you see it will be SOV.



I will give you a Hindi example over here. It is [FL], then this would be [FL], this would be [FL]. I am not really giving you the case marking and stuff like that. I will just write this is the subject which is [FL], [FL] would be what? [FL] is is the object and what is [FL]? That would be the verb. Let me just write this one here. This is I, this is food and this is ate, the simple gloss. I am not really writing any kind of case marking and stuff like that.

What does it mean? I ate food. Now, compare the English example I ate food with the Hindi example [FL]. What sort of similarity or difference you see? The clear difference that emerges if you compare these two constructions as far as the word order is concerned, in English this is subject, verb and object. So, this would be S, V, and O, that is the English word order. When the same sentence you are trying to write in Hindi this is going to be S, O, and V.

Why don't you check which word order does your language follow or which word order languages that you know they follow? With this information, this is just a difference, but what are the similarities, there are many more and we have already shown you the German and Swedish example as far as Hindi and English as languages are concerned, there are a lot of lexical similarities or phonetic similarities.

We will get back to it later, but for the moment, let us just get an idea how the similarities in languages are understood in linguistics literature. Why do you think languages could be similar? What could have been the possible reasons? Why certain languages have similar sounds, similar words, similar word order type? What could have been the possibilities? Think about it.

If you scan through the existing literature available and the book that I suggested and where I am drawing a lot of references from, if you look at the slides then there is a list of reasons why languages are considered to be similar. The first reason is there is genetic relatedness which if you go back and try to remember I was talking about genealogical typology. Genealogical typology is related to genetics of certain languages.

So, if you try to put them together under categories, you can actually draw the genealogy that follows these languages. There is a mother language, then there would be no two languages, then there would be sister languages. So, genetically they are related to each other. One very

important or one of the most prominent reasons why languages have similarities is genetic relatedness.

We will talk about it in more detail later, but let us find out what could be the possible reason. So, reason number 1 is this. What is the reason number 2? Reason number 2 is language contact. When you say language contact, I am talking about the geographical contact.

When two different communities and when I say communities, I will primarily focus on the speech communities. When two different speech communities share the geographic area or the regional contact, in that case also, you find out a lot of languages behave similarly or the other way around. In most of the cases because of the language contact you find out a lot of language similarities are available or are found.

So, the second reason is when languages come in contact with each other, they develop similar features. You tend to find out more similarity because of the geographical proximity that they have or the regional contact that they have, so that is the second reason.

What is the third reason? The third reason is the shared cultural environment. Let us say you have culturally a lot of similarities, that would also affect your language, I will not use the word affect, that would impact your language, that will definitely have some impact on both the languages. The cultural similarity will result in the linguistic similarity or the speech similarity. So, if two different speech communities have shared cultural linkage, then very likely you are going to find out some similarities.

Keywords: genetic relatedness, geneological typology, language contact, shared cultural linkage