

Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach
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Lecture - 54
Typology of language change

Hi, hello everyone. Welcome to this session of my NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach. So far we have discussed typology at various levels, we have discussed lexical typology, morphological typology, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic as well as phonological. We have been discussing all these so far at the synchronic level.

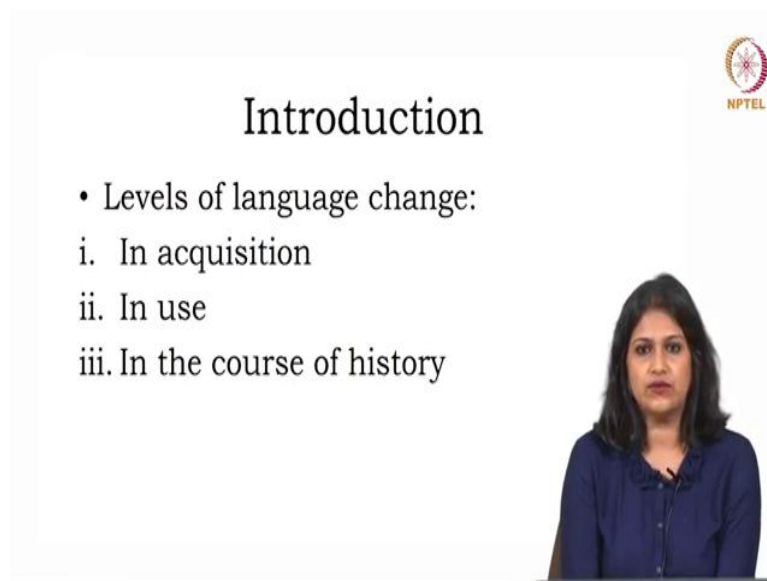
We are trying to find out what sort of crosslinguistic generalization can be drawn at the current level, at the present time, that is why we call it synchronic. Considering a lot of discussion has happened or in the structural domain of world's languages at the synchronic level. I am trying to move to a different direction for this particular unit which is titled as typology and language change.

When I say language change, you can understand that I am going to talk about what are the different domains where we observe change in the use of language, change in the structure of language; and to make it more clear for this particular unit, my focus is going to be on the historical perspective in the developmental perspective, so either historical or developmental.

When I say historical, I am going to approach it from the diachronic perspective; when I say developmental, I am going to talk about the child language acquisition for that matter. How things have changed or how language develops for a human being starting from the very beginning stage like from the one word, two words, babbling stage or stuff like that.

So, one aspect of this unit would deal with developmental changes, the other aspect of this unit will deal with the diachronic or the historical changes. That is why the unit is titled as typology and language change; the change here that I am going to talk about would have two different aspects.

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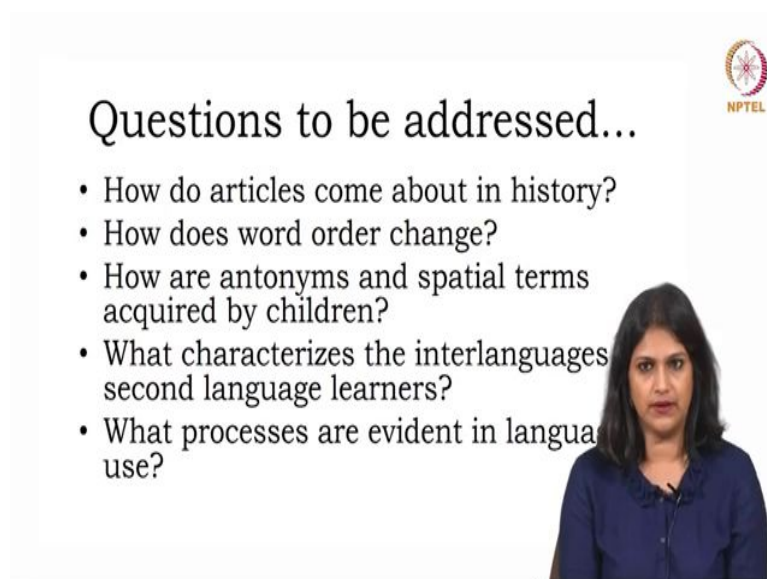
The slide is titled "Introduction" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains a bulleted list of levels of language change. A video inset in the bottom right shows a woman with dark hair wearing a dark blue shirt.

Introduction

- Levels of language change:
 - i. In acquisition
 - ii. In use
 - iii. In the course of history

When I say two different aspects, it will have three levels. What are the three levels that I am going to discuss in this unit? Again, very briefly and I would expect you to read the book, the same book that I have been referring to all the time. Introducing language typology that is written by Edith Moravcsik and then it is published by Cambridge University press.

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The slide is titled "Questions to be addressed..." and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains a bulleted list of five questions. A video inset in the bottom right shows the same woman as in the previous slide.

Questions to be addressed...

- How do articles come about in history?
- How does word order change?
- How are antonyms and spatial terms acquired by children?
- What characterizes the interlanguages second language learners?
- What processes are evident in language use?

So, when I say I am going to discuss languages, how languages change on three levels, the first one is going to be in the acquisition level, use level and in the course of history level.

These are the three different levels where we are trying to find out what sort of crosslinguistic generalization can be drawn as far as language change is concerned from a typological approach.

What are the major questions you might expect to be answered or to be discussed? Let us say historically these are just some kind of indicative questions. The questions could be even broader than that or you might think about some other linguistic phenomena. But to make it a little more specific and that is to lead the discussion towards the specific area, the first question that you might expect to get an answer to is what you think historically, how do articles come into existence in any given language? For example, in this case it is English. Odia for that matter which is an Indo-Aryan language, Hindi which is in Indo-Aryan language, we do not have articles, but English does have.

If we approach languages like English any language which hosts any kind of article, the first question that you might seek for an answer is that how do articles come about in history? What is the historical pathway by which languages which have articles, they had articles? And the second question that I might touch upon in the due course of discussion is that how does the word order change?

Sometimes SOV becomes SVO or vice versa depending on the situation, how does that happen? That is also a historical question. So, the first and the second questions are based on the historical evidence or the historical discussion. Third question is how are the antonyms and spatial terms acquired by children? This is an acquisition based question.

Then the fourth one, what characterizes the interlanguages of second language learners? Again, acquisition based question. What do you think; what are the characteristics of interlanguages in case of the second language learners? And finally, what processes are involved or what processes are evident in language use? When you say you are going to talk about language use, what do you think, what are the different processes involved in such a situation?

Again, these are the questions which have been discussed in Moravcsik's book. And that is going to be indicative, but we will definitely try to find out some potential answers which these questions might deal with.

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Introduction

Historical Change

- affects an entire community.
- small changes happening within a single individual's lifetime.

Language acquisition is a process of going from no language to language, or from one language to a second one

Language use takes us from knowing to doing.

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

Now let us go back to some introduction based discussions. So far in this course we have talked about the crosslinguistic recurrent patterns in the synchronic structure as I just mentioned; be it syntax, semantic, morphology, phonology, pragmatics we have always been talking about crosslinguistic generalizations at the present time which is also known as synchronic level.


But the question here is that language is dynamic and it keeps evolving. If it keeps evolving then we also have to have a look at the process of language evolution or how languages change, I am not really going to go back to how language evolution happened, not really. We will just try to find out using certain linguistic phenomena as tools if we can find out how tiny changes are happening in natural language or in human language.

For instance, look at the phonetic inventory of today's English. It has been very different how it used to be in the early fifteenth century or even older than that. The phonemic inventory of today's English has gaps. What kind of gaps? It does not contain certain sounds that other languages have. For example, I will give you a difference between Hindi and English.

Let us say Hindi has a sound let us say /θ/, the dental /tha/ sound is not available in English. It would either be /t/ or it is going to be /ð/, but then the dental /θ/, is not available in a language like English. Similarly, some other sounds like fricatives, let us say fricative English has a label dental fricative like /θ/ as in thick. Alveolar fricative like /s/ as in seal and palatal fricative like /ʃ/ like as in shean, but the velar fricative something like German has. That does not occur in English, or the dental sound /θ/, that does not occur in English. I am not sure about the dental sound /θ/, but at least the German velar fricative it used to be in old English, but gradually the phonemic inventory has lost it. How do the linguists claim that it used to be there? Because the traces are still preserved in the silent gh in night and light.

When you say laugh in German, that is going to be a different sound, but when you say light and night, that gh is silent. Why is it silent? That could have been some connection with the way the phonetic inventory of English is changing. This shows that there has been a process of chronological laws spanning the centuries of old English which is gradually morphed into the modern variety. This change of losing certain sounds, addition of the new sounds, these are all coming under the domain of let us say what we say the historical or the diachronic historical change in any given language.

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Introduction

Historical Change


- affects an entire community.
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German - Lachen 'laugh'
Velar Fricative
→ Has any other language gone through similar change?
→ What are the other changes languages have gone through?
→ Languages gain new sounds;
→ How do the changes happen and why?



Considering we are discussing how the sound changes occur in a diachronic fashion or a diachronic manner, starting from the German velar fricative *x*. My apologies for my pronunciation in German because that is the language I do not know at all.

So, this *x* sound, which is the velar fricative, it used to be in English, but it does not exist in it anymore. There has been a phonological loss or there has been a phonological change when old English is moving towards modernity. So, these kind of changes or these kind of differences should be accounted for, at the synchronic state the crosslinguistic convergence. But, we have to find out typologically if we can come up with some generalization as for as historical changes are concerned.

The bigger question in historical change is do you think we can come up or we can suggest some sort of crosslinguistic recurrent pattern available? Is it possible for the linguists to find out crosslinguistic pattern how language change is happening in various world's languages?

So, if we take into account this velar fricative *x* as in German, do you think some other languages have also gone through similar kind of changes? That is one question. Let me just write it over here, this is the example that we are talking about that is *x*, this is the change here that we are discussing is velar fricative.

So, what are the questions? Question number one, it could be has any other language gone through similar change? That is one question. The second question would be, what are the other changes languages have gone through? This is another very significant or important question. Then we have questions like do you think languages gain new sounds?

If you are talking about the new sounds, how do the changes happen and why? These are some of the crucial questions that linguists try to find the answers for. When you are trying to find out in such cases just one example we got is the velar fricative as in German.

Immediately the question should come to your mind is that, do you think there is any other language which has also lost the velar fricative from its phonemic inventory? It is not only about the velar fricative, there could be some other changes which the languages have gone through. And do you think it is possible for us to find out crosslinguistic recurrent pattern to identify if some other changes also happened in the due course of time?

The third question, besides losing sounds, do you think languages also gain new sounds? That is also a very relevant question. It should not always move towards losing things, you might also have an aspect of gaining new sounds or gaining new words for that matter. Do you think languages also gain new sounds? And finally, whatever changes happening this losing and gaining and changing of the semantics whatever, all kinds of changes which are happening in the due course of time, in the diachronic manner or in the diachronic fashion, how do they happen; how do the changes happen and why do they happen?

So, these are a few questions that we should ask ourselves as linguists and language enthusiasts. But, remember whatever historical changes happen, they do not affect an individual rather these changes affect the entire community. Whoever is speaking that language, the speech community entirely gets effected by such changes. It is not about one particular person.

When I say it is affecting the entire speech community, the root cause could be small change in the individual's usage, but that small change accumulates to bigger changes in the flow of language. So, that is about the historical aspect or historical change or historical method of change in language and in the typological fashion.

But what happens in the developmental level? I told you, one is historical level or historical domain, the other one is developmental domain and these two domains can be conflated into three different levels. One is acquisition, second is use and the third one is diachronic aspect.

So, as a child we acquire the language and we constantly drop in this acquired knowledge for comprehending and speaking, that is the fact and all of us know about it. So, we acquire language, it could be any language, it is our first language, it could be English, French, German, Chinese, Hindi, Odiyar, whatever. After we acquire the language, what was the result of this acquisition? We started using it. And in what case, why did we use it? We used it for comprehending and speaking, to convey our message, to understand other's messages also.

So, this language acquisition which is a process of growing from no language to language, so generativists will have a different approach altogether. They wouldn't say that there was any

stage in a human where you did not have any language. If you are a human, language has been innate and it has been inbuilt into your brain just because you are a human child.

So, following the formal or the generatives approach, we are not going to go into this debate, but at least if you look at the functionalist approach. When the child was born the child was not speaking, but eventually the child acquired the language. If we believe in something like from no language to language or one language to the second language or from the second language to the multiple languages, in all kinds of stages this process of language acquisition and language use are the two additional areas where crosslinguistic similarities may be sort.

So, since I was talking about historical and development, under the domain of development, we have two different levels, and what are these levels? One is the acquisition level, the other one is the use level. So, when you say acquisition level, the child, so from the no language to language from one language to the second and second to multiple languages.

If you are a multilingual speaker then this entire process of language acquisition and language use are the two new areas or the two additional areas where crosslinguistic similarities may be sort from the typological perspective. Now let us see, one is historical, the other one is language acquisition and the third one is language use.

In the category of historical change, as I mentioned, it affects the entire community and this affecting the entire community this process begins with one individual's single change like the change of a single individual's lifetime. So, the way you are using this language, that is going to contribute to the change in the whole language, that is going to contribute to the change through this linguistic community or the speech community.

In the language acquisition, we are going to check or we are going to see how this process involves from no language to one language and from one to multiple. When you are talking about the language use, you are mainly trying to find out how knowing a language is going to help you to comprehend and to communicate with the others. So, three levels and the potential questions that we are going to discuss.

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Questions

1. QUESTION ABOUT INITIAL STAGES
Given B as a final stage, what are crosslinguistically recurrent A-s that B can (or must) come from?
2. QUESTION ABOUT FINAL STAGES
Given A as an initial stage, what are crosslinguistically recurrent B-s that A may (or must) turn into?
3. QUESTION ABOUT INTERMEDIATE STAGES
Given that A changes to B, what are crosslinguistically recurrent intermediate stage(s) C (if any) that can (or must) occur between A and B?
4. QUESTION ABOUT CONDITIONS
What are crosslinguistically recurrent conditions under which A may (or must) change into B with (or without) the mediation of C?

Handwritten notes on the slide:

SVO SOV VSO VOS
OSV OVS
SVO SOV
IS FS

A → C → B
(Initial) (Intermediate) (Final)

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

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Considering this is a descriptive study or this is just a preliminary kind of analysis of any kind of change through historical or developmental perspective. We are going to find out in these domains what are the initial stage, final stage, and intermediary stages or intermediate stages.

What sort of conditions do they have for the change to occur. What are all the questions that I mentioned a while ago? What are the conditions that you should look for when we are trying to understand the language change from the historical perspective and from the developmental perspective?

So, what are the questions? Let us have a look at it. The first question is initial, intermediate and final. We have to observe or we have to figure out how the changes are happening at these three stages. Given let us say the final stage is B; stage B, if that is the final stage, what are the crosslinguistic recurrent A is that B can or must come from?

Let us assume A is the initial stage, B is the final stage. So, the first question that you need to think about is that is there any way by which we can identify what are the crosslinguistic recurrent or what are the changes that A has which results in B? That means, if B has something what is their essential feature that A has which help to produce B.

B is the result of A for sure, because A is initial, B is final. If B is final, B is the result of A or B is the changed form of A. In that case, we have to find out what are the crosslinguistic recurrent that A had which is why B could get it. That is the first question. The second question given A which is the initial stage, what are the crosslinguistic recurrent B is that A may turn into?

So, what could be the possible things that A had and eventually it has turned into B? Then the third one, given that A changes to B, what are the crosslinguistically recurrent intermediate stages, what are the mediary stages or what are the middle stages that have been there so that the journey which started from A has ended with B? What are the intermediate stages that occur between A and B, maybe we can call it C.

So, the journey is something like A, C, and then B; this is the initial stage, B is the final stage, and C is the intermediate stage. I will repeat the questions that we need to explore, after a while. But what is the fourth question that we need to talk about or we need to understand? What are the crosslinguistically recurrent conditions under which A may change into B with the mediation of C?

These questions sound a little complicated, so please do not feel that you are lost in the middle of the discussion. We are trying to approach the developmental stages of any given language. This developmental change begins with initial stage A, it ends with final stage B and C is the intermediate stage.

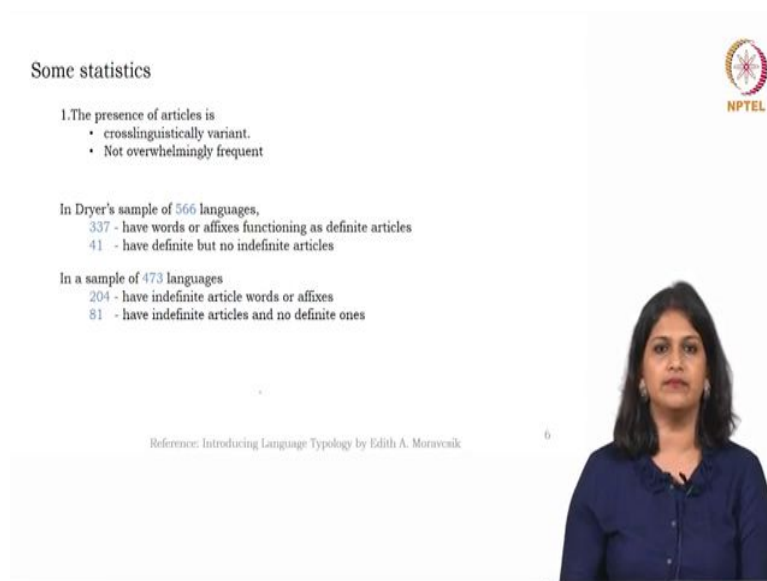
So, considering we are talking about this, the first question is that given B is the final stage, what are the crosslinguistically recurrent A is that B can come? Let me explain. A must have some features or A must have some linguistic elements or items which is the reason for the birth of B.

So, B must have something which has a strong correlation with A, that is the first question. Second one, A must have some potential features which would eventually result in the production of B. That means, these two questions are one is at the initial stage, one is at the final stage, but they are interrelated. The initial stage must have something which is by the final stage has come, and the final stage must be the result of some potential existence of the

initial stage. Then when the changes are happening from A to B, there must be a lot of other changes which are happening in the intermediate level which is C.

Now we have to find out crosslinguistically what are the conditions which we can figure out that result the change of A to C. So, the first question is related to the initial stage, second question is related to the final stage, third is about the intermediate stage and the fourth one is about the conditions. What are the conditions that you might have that you require which is why A has become B here?

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Some statistics

1. The presence of articles is

- crosslinguistically variant.
- Not overwhelmingly frequent

In Dryer's sample of 566 languages,

- 337 - have words or affixes functioning as definite articles
- 41 - have definite but no indefinite articles

In a sample of 473 languages

- 204 - have indefinite article words or affixes
- 81 - have indefinite articles and no definite ones

Reference: *Introducing Language Typology* by Edith A. Moravcsik

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Now let us take the word order SVO, Subject Verb and Object something like that English type ,I ate food. So, the question that emerges or the question that comes to mind is that what orders can SVO come from? What do you think, is this the default order, is this the order which is the most rudimentary or it has come from something else? That is one question. The second question, what are the orders can SVO change into? Imagine SVO has the initial order, then what will be the final order?

Imagine SVO is the final order, what would have been the initial order? The first and the second question. Third question given that SVO morphs into VSO, what orders mediate this process, what are the medial things? And fourth, what conditions favor this change? I am

going to write it over here. This would be easier for you to understand. Let us say this, we are going to write it over here.

There are multiple word orders: SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS and OSV, OVS. These are the 6 possible word orders. Let us begin with the discussion with SVO. If we consider it as the initial stage I am going to write it as IS, and let us say we encounter SVO. So, do you think the first question that should come to your mind, where has it come from? If this is the final stage, what was the initial stage? This could be one question.

The second question, if this is the initial stage let us say we started the discussion with SVO, what could be the possible other orders which can be considered as final ones? So that is the second one. Third question, now since SVO has changed into VSO, so from the journey of SVO to VSO, what are the other forms available, that is the third question.

And the fourth question, what could be the possible conditions, crosslinguistically recurrent conditions, which have instigated or which have helped such kind of a change? Consider; you first think about SVO as the final order what it must have come from, second question consider it as the initial order what are the other things which may happen later. Third question, imagine that SVO has morphed into VSO, in such case what do you think, what are the other intermediary or intermediate conditions? And finally, what are the reasons for which, or what are the conditions which favored such a change?

So, these are the the questions which linguists generally try to explore right. I just gave you an example, but then this is like a tool through which the linguists would try to figure out or the linguists have always been trying to figure out the development process in any given language.

Keywords: synchronic and diachronic analysis, developmental perspective