

Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach
Dr. Anindita Sahoo
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Lecture – 56
Language Change: Word order

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

(Refer Slide Time: 00:24)

Word order change

- THE ORDER OF S, O, AND V
Among the six logically possible linearizations of Subject, Object, and Verb, SOV, SVO are the most common, with VSO a distant third.
- CORRELATION PAIRS
 - (a) Most OV languages show the following patterns:
 - Noun Phrase & Adposition ✓
 - Possessor & Possesum ✓
 - Head Noun & Relative Clause ✓
 - (b) Most VO languages show the mirror image of (a):
 - Adposition & Noun Phrase
 - Possesum & Possessor
 - Relative Clause & Head Noun

English ←

3. Woh aadmi jo jaa raha hai
that man who is going
Head noun Rel. Clause

OV Type (Hindi)
khānā khāyā
3009 ab ✓
0
1. Kitāb-ke neche
NP Adposition
book under
2. larkī maa
girl mother
possessor possesum

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik 10

With this, let us move over to the second type or to the second question that we had in mind. The second question was about Word Order Change. Remember the SVO, SOV story that I discussed before. I am just going to briefly talk about this. What are the six possible word orders that we have? Remember SOV, second is SVO, OSV, OVS, VOS and VSO, these are the six possible word orders that we have. Which ones are the most commonly found? SOV and SVO, these are the most commonly found word order patterns and which one is distinct? VSO, we do not see it in the course much.

SOV and SVO are the most prominent or the most frequently occurred word orders. If that is so, then what should we talk about? Our discussion should center around the crosslinguistic regularities of word order. So, if that is what we are going to discuss, then first we will see

what sort of correlation these pairs have. One of the OV languages, Object Verb languages, follows noun phrase, adposition, possessor, possessum, head noun, and relative clause, remember this. So, this, this and this. If it is an OV language, OV would be what? Hindi type – khana khaya. Khana is object which is food, khaya is verb which means eat.


In a language like Hindi, which follows the pair of OV, first comes the noun phrase then comes the adposition. I am going to give you the data here. OV type, the example is Hindi. This is khana khaya, this is food and this is ate; this is O, this is V. If this is the language then noun phrase comes first, then the adposition. 1, kitab ke neeche, this is the noun phrase and this is the adposition. This is kitab-ke book and neeche would be under. Then the second thing is possessor-possessum – ladki ki maa; possessor is girl, this is mother, this is possessor and this is possessum.

Then the third one is here head noun and relative clause. Let us say baccha jo khel raha hai. I have to write a bigger sentence. This is the third one, woh aadmi jo jaa rahaa hai – this is the correlative, relative-correlative construction. But remember, this is the head noun that man, this is the relative clause, head noun and this is the relative clause. I have given you the example of Hindi and I would suggest you to work on the second type, the VO languages; VO languages Verb Objective is English. Why don't you try this and do some; maybe this is going to be part of some questions assignment.

So, in all kinds of OV object verb languages, you would see this order noun phrase, adposition, processor, possessum, head noun, relative clause. In case of all VO languages verb object languages, you have adposition, noun phrase, possessum, possessor, relative clause, head noun just the mirror image. When OV becomes the mirror image as VO, the word order completely changes. Just have a look at it. This is one crosslinguistic recurrent pattern in most of the world's languages.

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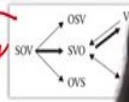
THE EVOLUTION OF THE ORDER OF S, O, AND V




Proto-Germanic:	SOV
Old English:	SOV SVO VOS VSO OSV OVS
Modern English:	SVO

FROM: TO: →	SOV	SVO	VSO	VOS	OSV	OVS
↓						
SOV	-	YES	0	0	YES	YES
SVO	0	-	YES	YES	0	0
VSO	0	YES	-	YES	0	0
VOS	0	YES	YES	-	0	0
OSV	0	0	0	0	-	0
OVS	0	0	0	0	0	-

Q-1: How did the word order evolve?
Q-2: Why did the word order evolve the way they did?



Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik



So, now, where do we go from here? We understood there are two major types SOV and SVO these are the correlation pairs and now, we have to find out how did these things evolve and then the second question is why did these things evolve the way they did?

These are extremely important and relevant questions. I will just briefly talk about them because I do not want to complicate the discussions more. I will just give you what are the findings that the linguists have come about so far. So, the question here is we got to know about the word order. So, what should we do next? Where do we go from here? When we notice something about this kind of a word order pattern, we need to find out if the word order has evolved like this, what could have been the possible reason?

Something like if you say ice on a winter road, that is because it started out as water and when the temperature dipped it became ice. Obviously, ice cannot come without water. Water turned into ice. So, obviously, to reach the ice we have to trace back where has it come from. It has come from water. Water is the reason why we have ice. Similarly, what could have been the possible reason why we have the word orders like this.

So, what should we do from here? These are the two questions. Let me just focus on the questions here. Question 1, how did the word order evolve? And the second question, why

did the word order evolve the way they did? So, these are the two questions why and how. Let us look at this.

If you look at old English, look at the table on the slides here. The Proto-Germanic and old English had all kinds of word order. If you look at the word order changes that emerged from the history of English, in old English, the word order was mostly free, it was not this rigid as it is now.

The rigidity of SVO has become the feature of modern English, but not the Proto-Germanic or old English. So, the old English had all kinds of things SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS, OSV, OVS all kinds of word order was found in the old English. But, historically if you trace the route modern English which became extremely rigid, is the result of the free word order system that it used to be.

Now let us see how it works. If you look at the ancient OV order, it is replicated in an English compounding pattern is still productive today. So, OV letter opener, babysitting, shoe shining. Modern English still has the trace of OV. Though you say I opened the letter, you as a human you are basically a letter opener.


This OV order is still trying to give us some idea to begin with, the word order was OV. Word processor, lawn mower or baby sitter or shoe shining or mail carrier, so, something like that. These and also other languages in the Germanic family have also moved in the same direction.

So, in today's German, the verb is normally second in the main sentence as in English but, it may not be the same before. This is one evidence which helps us to deduce that SVO did not have to be the order in original first language of mankind, it could have evolved from SOV.

So, the default order could be SOV, which is why we have words like letter opener or bottle opener or you can say mail carrier or you can say shoe shining. So, considering these phrases they have the verb ending, the deduction is that or the assumption is that the human language or the proto languages the default form was SOV and SVO is a new style of writing or the new form of writing.

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The historical paths of the order of major sentence constituents.



GEN-2

(A) INITIAL STAGE

- (a) The most common word order change in major sentence constituents starts with SOV.
- (b) Object-initial orders are not initial stages.

(B) INTERMEDIATE STAGES

- (a) SVO is a necessary intermediate stage to V-initial orders.
- (b) SOV is an infrequent intermediate stage.


(C) FINAL STAGE

- (a) OVS and OSV may be final stages in a change from SOV.

(D) CONDITIONS

SOV may be a final stage in a change from SVO if SOV is either borrowed from another language or, it is the result of grammaticalization.

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik



So, that is one historical evidence that we might have. This is the table. Look at the second table on the slides. So, SOV yes, yes, yes. SOV could be SVO could be OSV could be OVS. Now, what we are going to check, what sort of changes have been attested so far? This six major constituent orders or the six major word orders in principle how they are changing.

So, what are the 30 logically possible paths of change? Why we call it if you try permutations and combinations, this is how it should look like. So, SOV can have these forms, SVO can have. So, counted it should be 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9. When you say 0; that means, this kind of a form. So, if you try the permutation combination, the change of word order, potentially it should have thirty, but you count the yes points, we do not have thirty, we have basically nine different word orders like nine different forms.

Out of this thirty logically possible paths of change, the linguists have documented only nine, and this is the table. SOV might result in SVO, OSV and OVS, SVO might go to VSO, VOS. VSO might go to SVO and VOS and VOS, VSO would go to SVO and VOS and VOS might go to SVO and VSO it is like that. It is a little clumsy, but try to understand the table.

Logically thirty let us say intermediary stages or logically thirty possibilities emerged from six different word orders, but instead of thirty, we have nine possible word orders. And these

changes happen gradually; they did not happen one fine day, they did not happen overnight. The emergence of new word orders have become a gradual process.

So, how these gradual processes these are the more condensed forms. Gelman and Ruln(2011), have drawn the form like this. So, SOV resulted in OSV, SVO and OVS. Look at the arrow mark and see how they have evolved SVO has become VSO also VOS and VOS might go to VSO. So, it is like 1 2 3 4 5 6 then there is interconnectivity also. So, there are a couple of things we need to notice.

I would request you to focus on the third table and look at the two bold lines; one bold line goes from SVO, the other bold line goes from SOV. These are the two most frequent changes. The two bold lines show that SOV and SVO are the most frequent changes. What is the second thing to notice? Each step in the documented process there is just a single constituent changing place. When SOV becomes SVO, so the OV thing is changing. When SVO becomes VSO, only the VS component is changing. So, that is how in all of them only one constituent is changing.

Those who do not come from linguistics or syntax background, it would be a little difficult for you. My suggestion for you would be to check my discussion on syntactic typology or the introduction of syntax. It will probably. be easier for you. In each level we see that only one constituent is changing or in other words, the mirror image changes do not occur let us say SOV does not immediately become VSO or VOS. SOV does not immediately become that, only one part or only one component or only one constituent is changing. So, it has to be completely the mirror image.

The third thing is that all the OV orders SOV, OVS and OSV are connected by the pathways of change. There is nothing independent, there is some kind of connection. Look at the arrows, one arrow is listed with another. So, there is some kind of connection among the three, SVO, OVS and OSV. They are always connected, so the change has not been independent rather it has been a linear development.

Fourthly, the very rare orders which are the rare orders OSV and OVS these two the upper and the lower one, the ones which start from O. So, the very rare orders OSV and OVS have

just a single chance to evolve only here, but the rest of them have more chances. So, if you look at the arrow, OSV is at one end, OVS is at the other end.

There is only one chance for them to evolve whereas the other ones SOV, SVO, VSO and VSO have multiple chances. That is why their frequency is more and the lowest frequency we have is OSV and OVS. My suggestion would be, look at the table more carefully, then it would be easier for you to understand how the changes are happening.

There would be a lot of data, you can have a look in the book. But let us try to generalize now. Let us try to find out the generalization as far as the word order pattern is concerned. Remember, we are talking about the initial change, intermediate change and then the final change. And what are the conditions? They have always been language contact.

The fourth point is not mentioned here, if you go and check similar slide in articles, you have four points; initial, final, medial condition, but in case of word order, we have not really added the condition because it is understood that language contact could have been the reason for these changes.

Now let us see what kind of generalizations we can draw as far as the development pattern is concerned for the word order. So, initial stage generalization 2, point a initial stage. The most common word order change in major constituent starts with SOV. So, SOV is the initial stage and object initial orders are not initial stages. Initial stage is when when you talk about, there are two things.

Now, let us see how to account for the generalization number 2 as we did it for articles. So, now is the time to find out whether we can go, we can follow the similar path for or similar sort of an approach for word order. We just realized that there has been historical evidence or there has been empirical evidence which helps us to to claim that SOV should be the default order or should be the initial stage and the rest of the word orders have been derived from that.

Of these, SVO and SOV are the most frequently occurred ones, and OVS and OSV are the least frequently occurred ones. Now let us try to put this in a generalization format following the four points – initial stage, final stage, intermediate stage and conditions. This is how we

worked for the articles. So, generalization 2 is that when it is the initial stage, the most common word order change in major sentence constituents that starts with SOV. SOV changes the most. That is the most common word order that change in major sentence constituent.

Object initial orders like OVS and OSV are not the initial stages, they have always been the final stage; they can never be the initial ones. How about the intermediate stages? SVO is a necessary intermediate stage to V initial orders. So, from SOV the intermediary is SVO and the final one could be VOS and definitely SOV is in frequent intermediate.

Go back to the arrow marking connections between the word orders, what is the final stage? The final stage OVS and OSV; they do not result in anything else. That is like the end point. OVS and OSV may be the final changes or final stages in a change from SOV. So, SOV is the initial, OSV is the final, the rest of the things have happened in the intermediate level.

What could be the possible reason, why such changes are happening? The conditions are SOV may be a final stage in a change from SVO; if SOV is either borrowed from another language or it is the result of grammaticalization. What could be the possible reason for such conditions? Unlike articles, which were more about language contact, there are specific reasons for it; either this has been an instance of borrowing or it can be the instance of grammaticalization.

Grammaticalization means the changes have happened at the grammatical unit level or it could be simply the words have been borrowed from one language to the other; whether they have geographical contact or not, we are not really focusing much on that. So, these are the two reasons why the word orders are changing.

With this, I would stop the discussion on developmental and diachronic changes. There is more to add into the discussion and we are going to talk about it in the next sessions. My suggestion for you would be please check both the set of generalizations because this seems to be a little complex, but at least I tried to make it as simple as possible. I hope you would be able to understand that if you check the book once and find out more data related to these

claims. So, one set of generalization involves evolving articles, the other set of generalization involves evolving the word order pattern.

We will talk about more in the coming sessions as far as typology and language change is concerned.

Thank you.