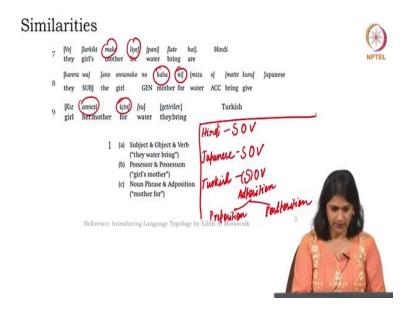**Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach**
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Lecture – 57
Word Order Typology – Part 1

Hello everyone, welcome to this session of my NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics. We are talking about language typology and crosslinguistic studies in the world's languages. We have had a couple of examples discussed yesterday where you see languages which are not genetically related, without any cultural similarity, also without any language contact, might show certain kind of similarities at the word order level.

On the basis of the data that we had, we had three languages; we had Hindi, Japanese and Turkish. There we found out that the word order is same in all the three languages; it is always subject, object, and verb. Then as far as the possessor-possessum relation is concerned, in all the three languages the possessor occurs before then the possessum. Similar is the case with the position of noun phrase and adposition. Noun phrase always occurs before the adposition and we have had data from all the three languages.

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So, what is so interesting about it? If we recall what we were discussing and why Hindi, Japanese and Turkish, these three languages have been considered. The idea here is that these languages do not have any shared linguistic environment. They also do not have any shared origin or contact or cultural environment.

In spite of the lack of language contact or shared origin or cultural similarity, we see that Hindi which belongs to an Indo-European language family, Turkish which is a Turkik language and Japanese which is an isolate, they have not been in close contact.

But besides being not related to each other and without having any close contact, also without having any natural or cultural condition, any kind of similarity in any of these domains. What is a striking thing? The striking thing is that the word order is the same as far as possessor-possessum relation is concerned, subject, verb, object is concerned and adposition and noun phrase is concerned.

So, the concern here is that there must be some kind of similarity or some kind of trigger which helps us or which we need to understand in spite of not having any kind of cultural, geographical, or regional or genealogical similarity, these languages also show certain crosslinguistic similarities.

Structurally we can think about certain styles or certain phenomena which are going to be available across languages. We are going to go into these discussions when I discuss language and linguistic universals maybe after a couple of sessions.
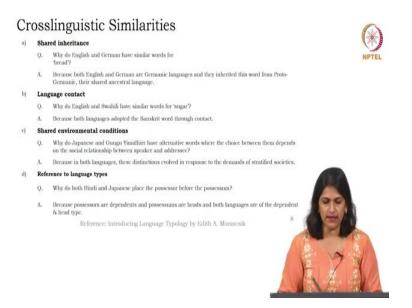
So, this was the story of Hindi, Japanese and Turkish, one Indo European language or Indo Aryan if I can say, then there is a Turkik language and Japanese which is considered to be an isolate, all of them have certain shared features. On the other hand we had languages like Arabic and Rapa Nui; these two are also genetically unrelated. So, the correlation between Rapa Nui and Arabic, I do not think you would find out any kind of difference between these two languages.

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Similarities

10 (a) Verb & Subject & Object   Arabic
axaδa aşşinijjuna   almala
took   the.Chinese the.money
'The Chinese took the money.'
(b) Possessum & Possessor
bajtu arraʒuli
house man.GEN
'the house of the man'
(c) Adposition & Noun Phrase
ila bosʃon
to Boston
'to Boston'

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

However, if you look at the word order, the same possessor-possessum relation, Arabic and Rapa Nui, they would come under one type; Hindi, Japanese and Turkish, they are going to come under the other category or the other type. So, type 1 and type 2.

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Crosslinguistic Similarities

a) **Shared inheritance**
Q.   Why do English and German have similar words for 'bread'?
A.   Because both English and German are Germanic languages and they inherited this word from Proto-Germanic, their shared ancestral language.

b) **Language contact**
Q.   Why do English and Swahili have similar words for 'sugar'?
A.   Because both languages adopted the Sanskrit word through contact.

c) **Shared environmental conditions**
Q.   Why do Japanese and Guugu Yimidhirr have alternative words where the choice between them depends on the social relationship between speaker and addressee?
A.   Because in both languages, these distinctions evolved in response to the demands of stratified societies.

d) **Reference to language types**
Q.   Why do both Hindi and Japanese place the possessor before the possessum?
A.   Because possessors are dependents and possessums are heads and both languages are of the dependent & head type.

Reference: Introducing Language Typology by Edith A. Moravcsik

With these informations on the empirical and linguistic data that we have, now let us find out how should we understand the crosslinguistic similarities. So, when I say there is a crosslinguistic similarity, what do you understand by that? What do I aim at and what could

be the possible reasons for crosslinguistic similarities in the world's languages? If you can recall I was talking about four major reasons which could lead to or which could trigger or which could be the reason of crosslinguistic similarity. The first one is shared inheritance.

When you say shared inheritance, two languages that I would like you to think about are English and German. Both English and German belong to the Germanic family of languages. Why would we consider them having the shared inheritance? Because both the languages, both English and German, they inherited a lot of words from the proto Germanic language which is considered to be having a shared ancestral language.

So, proto Germanic which is an ancestral language for both English and German, which is why the word for bread is the same in English and German. So, if you look at the inheritance or if you look at how the languages have been branched out from a bigger node or from a bigger domain or from a bigger tree. Then you can find out that English and German would be sister languages. Why they would be considered as sister languages? Because of the shared ancestral language that they have which is proto Germanic. So, the first reason of the crosslinguistic similarities that we have listed here is shared inheritance; the first point.

What is the second point? The second point is language contact. As I have just mentioned a while ago because of the geographical proximity or the regional proximity among languages, you might see some sort of similarity emerging within the languages.

So, in this connection, I would like to draw your attention to languages like English and Swahili. They do not have any shared ancestry as such, but what is so similar? Because they have certain kind of language contact and since both the languages have adopted the words like let us say sugar. Sugar is the word which is the same for English as well as Swahili, primarily because of their connection with Sanskrit. So, because of the language contact both Swahili and English will have certain kind of similarity.

The second reason of crosslinguistic similarity is what? It is language contact. If we try to explain crosslinguistic similarities, we have to list down the multiple reasons that we have in hand. Now, let us move to the third one. What is the third one? The third reason of linguistic similarity or crosslinguistic similarity would be shared environmental conditions.

When you say shared environmental conditions, then let us find out how the languages can have similarities because of the sharing cultural or environmental conditions that they have. So, I will just tell you the names of the languages which have crosslinguistic similarities because of the environmental conditions and that is Japanese and Guugu Yimidhirr.

So, these are the two languages which have what? They have the alternate words where the choice between them depends on the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. So, what do they do? What is so striking or what is so important to discuss about these two languages?

These two languages Japanese and Guugu Yimidhirr they have alternative words and they can choose either of them depending on the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Maybe I will give you an example from Hindi that will be easier for you to understand. I am talking about a family relation or kinship relation, as we say in linguistics.

In the kinship relation there are certain cultures where your father's elder brother would be addressed as [FL]; that means, big father, father's elder brother that is the kinship relation. That is a term we use for this kinship relation. Then the second one is there are certain other places especially in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh there is a term called [FL].

So, [FL] is the word which is used to address father's older brother. It depends on the cultural choice or it depends on the cultural environment where the speakers have two different words and they can alternatively use it. If it is a state like Rajasthan then it could be [FL] or Uttar Pradesh it could be [FL].

And if it is a place like some parts of Uttaranchal I think, or some parts of Bihar, a lot of people also address father's older brother as [FL]. That means, this cultural environment or the environmental conditions that people use to communicate between the speaker and addressee, it depends on the cultural condition that they have.

So, crosslinguistically if we bring in the examples from the world's languages, then when the Japanese the other one is Guugu Yimidhirr, these languages have alternative words, where the speakers have the liberty or depending on the environmental condition, depending on the social relation between the speaker and the addressee, they choose the words. So, then why

does it happen, that is the question. And why does it happen? It happens because of the distinctions evolved in response to the demands of the stratified societies.

What do we mean by stratified societies? Where there are many levels or many varieties or this is not homogeneous, but the heterogeneous societies where honorification has been at different levels, or addressing has been at different levels. Considering both Japanese and Guugu Yimidhirr, in both languages there is a distinction in response to the demands of the stratified societies, the speakers have the liberty to choose either of the words as far as the speaker and addressee is concerned. So, that is about the shared environmental conditions. This is the third point.

And what is the fourth point? The fourth point is depending on the types of language. So, if I read it then it will be by reference to language types. And these language types would help us to understand in spite of having no language contact, no shared genealogy and let us say no similarity in the cultural components, how come languages have certain kind of similarity at the structural level.

So, here, I would bring in the examples of Hindi and Japanese. Let us recall the data that we had for the possessor and possessum. I told you in Hindi and Japanese, in both the languages the possessor occurs before the possessum. So, whether the possessor is different from English or it is similar to English, you think about it and let us know. But I think I gave you the example, the girl's mother.

When I say girl's mother, who is the possessor? It is the girl. And who is the possessum? It is the mother. So, in both Hindi and Japanese, the possessor comes before the possessum. That is a similarity which we have between these two languages in spite of not having any kind of shared genealogy, cultural components, or language contact. Now the question arises, why does it happen, why do you think this kind of a similarity occurs? The reason is that the possessors are dependents and the possessums are heads and both languages are of the dependent and head type.

So, if you look at the type, if you look at the category of a particular language, then both Hindi and Japanese belong to one type, and what is the type? Dependent and head. And this

dependent and in this type of dependent and head category, it is the dependent that occurs before the head. So, the head is the possessum and then the dependent is the possessor.

So, how does it work? It goes with the dependent and head type. So, these are the four; kind of if I put it together or if I try to rephrase, or if I would help you to recall what we have discussed as far as crosslinguistic similarities are concerned, we realized that or we listed that there are four major reasons. The first reason, because of the shared inheritance we get the crosslinguistic similarities. Examples English and German for the word bread.

Second, language contact .English and Swahili they have similar word for sugar and that is the example which we need to think about when we are trying to discuss crosslinguistic similarity because of language contact. And third reason, shared environmental conditions and here we have languages like Japanese and Guugu Yimidhirr.

So, they have the speakers here, they have the liberty to choose alternative words on the basis of or depending on the situation or depending on the condition that they are involved in. And the fourth type, reference to language types, in spite of not having any kind of cultural similarity, language contact and shared genealogy, languages like English and Japanese will belong to one particular type and that type here we have discussed dependent and head relation. In both the languages the dependent occurs first and the head comes later.
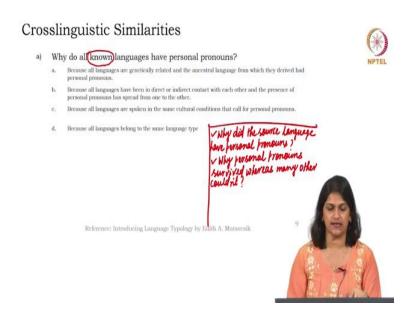
There could be more reasons to it. My suggestion for you would be to read Moravcsik's book Introducing language typology, published by Cambridge University press for better information or to know more about the data points that have been discussed over there. But these are the primary reasons or these are the primary explanations which can be invoked if we try to find out the crosslinguistic similarities.

So, now since we realized that there are certain things called language crosslinguistic similarities, now the question that strikes to our mind is that, do these similarities hold true for all languages? Do you think all this possessor-possession relation that we were talking about, dependent head relation that we are talking about, do you think these are going to be the same for all languages? Or if this is not saying because we have already discussed there are some differences, is there any similarity that is found across the languages or is there any

linguistic phenomenon that you can identify which is going to be the same in all the languages?

That would be called as universals or the linguistic universals in that sense. There are two language universals and linguistic universals are sometimes different, but to put it considering the courses linguistic typology, I am going to talk about the language universals here. What should be our next question or what should be our agenda of discussion? Let us find out if there is anything or any feature which is available in all languages.

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One point that you should remember, one thing which is found across languages is personal pronouns. I would not say all languages rather, I would say following Moravcsik's claims, all known languages as of now. No linguist claims that all the languages in the world have been identified or discovered or found out, may or may not be true. There could be languages which the linguists have not come across. There could be languages which are spoken by super tiny, small minority communities somewhere in the world, somewhere in the globe.

So, let us focus on the term all known languages, this is what I would circle for you, this is important. Instead of saying all languages we would rather say all known languages. So, at least one linguistic universal that you need to remember is the availability of personal pronouns in all the languages.

So, what should we infer from here? I am raising a question here for all my participants, why do all known languages have personal pronouns? Can you think about the answers? If it is a question we should try to answer it. And how has the answer been discussed here? If we follow the genetics like the reasons of crosslinguistic similarity, we will apply one by one, what could be the possible explanations?

Let us recall what was the first reason of crosslinguistic similarity? Shared genealogy or shared inheritance. What was the second reason? Language contact. What was the third reason? Cultural conditions and what has the four what is the what is the fourth reason? Language type.

So now, if the question is why all languages have personal pronouns, there could be any of this or all of the answers might hold true, it could be somebody might answer or somebody might tell that all languages have personal pronouns because all languages are genetically related and the ancestral language from which they are derived they had personal pronouns. That is the reason number 1 because shared genealogy is one of the first and the foremost reasons that triggers similarity.

So, going by that, our argument is that all languages are genetically related and the ancestral language from which all the languages have been derived, they have personal pronouns. That is why all the languages in the world have personal pronouns. This is one set of argument. What is the second set of argument? The second set of argument is all languages have been in direct or indirect contact with each other and the presence of the personal pronouns has spread from one to the other.

That is the second reason; that means, what are we claiming? We are claiming that besides having a common or shared ancestral relation, all languages in the world might have had either direct or indirect contact. And because of the direct and indirect contact with each other, the presence of the personal pronoun has spread from one language to the other. That is how we have got personal pronouns in all the known languages of the word. That is the second thing. Third thing or the third reason depending on the cultural conditions.

Because all languages are spoken in the same cultural conditions, which calls for personal pronouns, the languages in the world have it, do you think this will hold true? Do you think

all languages are spoken in the same cultural condition? We will think about it later, but this could be one potential reason. And what is the fourth one? All languages belong to the same language type, because it depends on the language type or because of the typological similarity, we have the crosslinguistic similarities. Now let us evaluate the possible explanation. So, these are the four probable explanations. Since we have the probable explanations, now we will try to explain what are the possible explanations out of these.

What does the first one say/? Let us look at it. The first one says there is a single source for all human languages, going by the logic of shared inheritance. If an ancient language has a personal pronoun, all of the daughter languages have retained it. Do you think this is a possible hypothesis? What is your take on this? Do you think all languages that share similar or the same genealogical ancestry? If we stick to this hypothesis then it will have two questions.

What are these two questions? Following the first argument that we had, all the languages have a shared genealogy. The first hypothesis is that all the languages have a shared inheritance or there is a proto language for proto or a mother language from where all the daughter languages have evolved.

If that is the case, then there are two questions that we need to answer. What is the first question, why did the source language have personal pronouns? Don't you think this is a question worth pondering over? Why did the source language have a personal pronoun, why not anything else or why not x y z. We assume that the the source language had personal pronouns then the question is how come only the personal pronouns; obviously, with many other linguistic phenomena, survived the millennia, millions of years?

So, how come it is only the personal pronoun, along with some others definitely, survived the millennia, but many others could not? These are the two questions which I do not think we can answer. The first hypothesis has its own challenges, but it is not impossible.

The linguists would argue that there could be a proto language from where all the languages in the world have evolved and if that has been something that we would accept then we also have to answer these two questions. Now, what is the second hypothesis? The second hypothesis is that perhaps the personal pronouns first evolved in one language, and the idea

then spread to the other languages. This could be the second hypothesis. But because of the language contact and other issues, then it spread to the other languages. This is the second hypothesis.
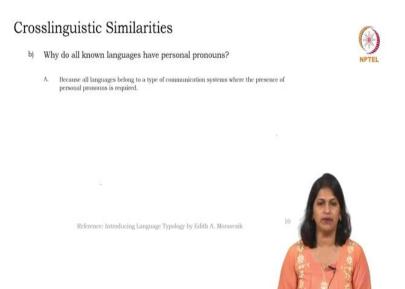
What is the third hypothesis? The third hypothesis is that because of the similar cultural conditions for all languages in a sense. It is true that all languages share some of their environment at least one similarity or one shared relation is that, all the languages are spoken in a human community. Considering languages are spoken in a human community, the environment remains same because of the similarity in the cultural environment, personal pronouns spread from one language to the other.

So, these are different hypotheses that we can actually consider to answer such kind of questions. And what is the fourth explanation? The fourth explanation is that all languages have personal pronouns, we must say that they form a single type; that means, all the languages in the world can belong to one type.

So, these four possibilities or these four hypotheses are not impossible, but it is difficult to answer certain emerging questions when you hypothesize one of these. Linguists are working on this, and on the basis of the four possible explanations, we can also go to the fifth one; the fifth one which I did not discuss in this slide.

The fifth one would be why do all known languages have personal pronouns? That Is the main question that we are trying to understand.
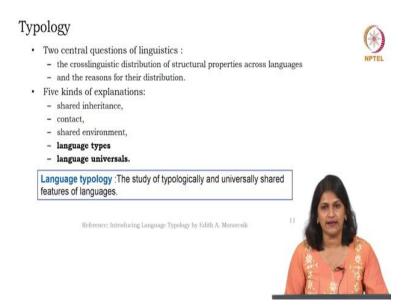
So, the fifth one is that because all languages belong to a type of communication system, where the presence of personal pronouns is required.

So, the concern here is that because languages belong to a type of communication system where the presence of the personal pronoun is absolutely mandatorily required; because of this requirement, we have languages in the world which have personal pronouns.

These are a few answers that linguists would give you to approach to or to think about the crosslinguistic similarity in typology literature. (Refer Slide Time: 29:27)

If I put it in a brief manner or in a more condensed form then I would say typologically crosslinguistic similarities are immersed, because of these possible explanations and we have tried to understand how a personal pronoun like I, you, so these kind of for me or him or her so, these sort of pronouns, why do we find these things available across languages? The hypothesis could be any of these five that we have discussed.

But one thing you need to remember is that because of the availability of this phenomenon, that is personal pronouns across languages, we call it language universal. So, from here onwards, I am going to take up issues related to language universals.

Keywords: shared inheritance, language contact, shared environmental conditions, cultural conditions, language types, language universals, personal pronoun, proto language