


Basics of Language Science
Professor Rajesh Kumar
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Lecture 6
Language of Continuum

We have been talking about the fundamentals of language these days. And I will continue the same discussion further. What we have looked at so far is what is language? What is linguistics? How do we study language and what is it that we study? And we have been looking at language from its external perspective, we talked about differences between language and a language or languages, and then we talked about E-language and I-language.

These days, what we are discussing is a certain way to fundamental aspects of language for us to be aware of the whole idea of language, what we speak, what other people speak, how many languages we speak in India, how many languages are spoken around the world, and so on. So, let me introduce you to one more aspect in such a direction, which is related to what we were discussing last time. Let us look at this.

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- Language is a rule-governed system.
- Linguists/linguistics makes such rules explicit with scientific investigation.
- A famous anthropologist Heath writes:
 - Language increasingly will be a natural part of the research domains of fields ranging from computer science to industrial sociology. In the days ahead the foundational knowledge about language that has come from linguistics will be like certain principles of mathematics, physics, and biology.



We have also looked at or we have mentioned that linguists or the whole domain of study of language makes underlying rules, systematic rules explicit to the community, to whoever wants to understand about language and such rules are part of the system. In that direction, I found something very interesting. One of the very famous anthropologists writes about the research in the area of language, this was published in an annual review of anthropology. As I

have told you, language is also studied by anthropologists. Have you heard this word anthropologists before? What do they study?

Student: Civilizations, humans being,

Teacher: Humans, they study society, culture, behaviour, and many other things from the perspective of humans. We are also studying something about humans, but we are looking at just one aspect of that, which is language. And there is an interaction between the two or an intersection between the two, which is so natural, that is called anthropological linguistics, or linguistic anthropology. Those things are separate, all I want you to understand is, anthropologists are aware of these things.

And what she writes is language increasingly will be a natural part of the research domain, in the fields ranging from computer science to industrial sociology. As a matter of an interesting thing, she wrote this thing in 1984. Now, this is not a recent publication, around 1984, it was very difficult to imagine this breadth of language research. In fact, just a few years ago, or in the decade before, people had even started looking at interactions or intersections between language and computers.

So, she was familiar with that. And then she talks about the domains of research, that it is going to be relevant for all kinds of people. That also means by beginning from computer science, to industrial sociology. And then, in the days ahead, the foundational knowledge about language that has come from linguistics will be like certain principles of mathematics, physics, and biology. Do you understand this part? It simply means that a lot of things that have come from the study of language, or probably will come from a study of language, or going to be like general knowledge. If we know about Newton's law, that is not any more knowledge of physics.

Of course, that is part of physics. But that is not any more knowledge of physics. It is general knowledge, you get my point. Similarly, if we know how to calculate, how to add, or how to subtract, or multiply 10, can someone claim that I know mathematics? That is not mathematics? That is general knowledge. That is precisely what she is talking about, it is going to be very fascinating in the days to come. And these things are going to be very significant for people studying a variety of things in different domains.

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Some Questions

- How many languages does India speak?
- How many languages are there in the world?
- Keeping E-language in mind, where does one language stop and the other begins?
- What are the names of different language families?
- What is the difference between language and dialect.
- What do we mean by a variety of a language?

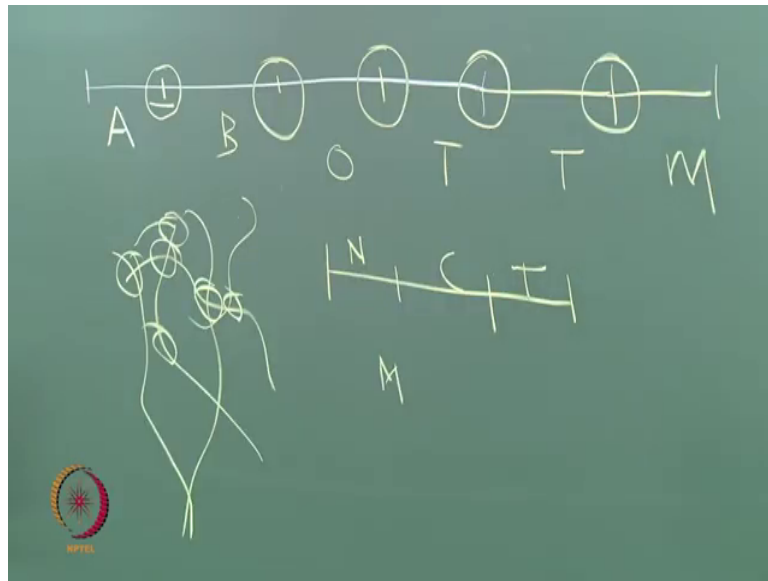


These are the questions we were looking at. I have modified some of the questions for us to look at. And so, we speak around 1500-1600 languages in India, that is a huge number of languages, which is approximately 25 to 30 percent of total languages spoken all over the world, that is a huge number. It is not very surprising for us, because we have one-sixth of the world population too. But it is still 25 to 30 percent of languages of the world spoken in this geography is a big thing, if that is what makes this place hugely diverse, and linguistically diverse geography.

The next question that I want to address is keeping E-language in mind, where does one stop and the other begins? That is where does one language stop and the other begins? Let me clarify this question to you. Do we know that, let me put it this way. We have two languages, let us say Telugu and Tamil, do you know any point in between these two states where these two languages are spoken? And when I say state, I am just mentioning the names of the state where one stops and the other begins.

Is there any boundary line, where on the other side of the boundary line people speak only Telugu and this side of the boundary line people who speak only Tamil? There is nothing as such. If that is true, then this is true for all the languages of the world, then how do we count them? See this thing, another aspect that I want to draw your attention to is the names that we give to languages are for the sake of convenience and when we go farther, then the two languages are more separable from one another. Now, imagine a situation where I want to use this board.

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Imagine a situation where I want to give you separate examples of let us say this is Assamese. And then this is Bengali, this is Oriya, and this is Telugu. Are you familiar with the map of India, the geography of India? Now, look at this carefully. As you see, there is no point on the line where one stops and the other begins. But do we still know that after Assam, we find in West Bengal, where people speak Bengali there must be an area on that line, where people speak both of them? If we look at it more carefully, do people of this land speak one or the other or both or something else? Get this question?

Similarly, people here at the borders of West Bengal and Orissa, do people speak Bengali, Oriya both or something else. And likewise, here and then we can have the same continuum for many things where we have Tamil or we have, let us say Malayalam, get this thing? Now, the point is language happens to be a continuum. We can cut on the same continuum chunks and say these people speak Assamese, these people speak Bengali, these people speak Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam. If we are looking at some other continuum, we can say Marathi, Gujarati, Marathi,

Student: Kannada, Malayalam,

Teacher: Kannada, Malayalam. There is an interesting story on that continuum. The convergence area, these parts are called convergence areas. One of the convergence areas of Marathi and Kannada has resulted into a new language. Does anyone know the name of that?

Student: Konkani.

Teacher: Konkani? This language is no more a mixture of the two, people do not look at it as a mixture of the two. However, that is how it emerged. There was a chunk, there was an area. And I do not mean it in a disrespectful way, where people do not know what these guys are speaking, are they speaking Marathi or Kannada. And nobody would ask these questions. And those people did not need to explain this to anyone. And this gives birth to something new, which is called Konkani.

Now again, this name has nothing to do with this, that area is called Konkan area. People speaking either one of the two or both of them, or a combination of the two or something else. They started calling their language Konkani. And That is one of the official languages of this country now.

Whether it becomes official or not, whether it becomes respectable or not. But this is the story of all the languages. Is this point clear to everybody? And as a smart engineer, I want you to know one more thing. Actually, this continuum does not look like this, as it looks on the board. I am calling it a continuum. But it is not as neat looking as it may be. It could also look like, let us say because we do not touch languages. I do not know how to draw that. But this drawing is still perfect.

As long as we are talking about languages. We do not know the names of these languages. Or for that matter, let us say we know, but all of them have different areas of such areas. And they could still be a continuum. Where, all I am trying to say is no matter how neat you want this continuum to look, how ugly you want it to look but the story does not change, this has to do, this has something to do with 1652 languages. Where, we are comfortable with the names of 1650 or 1700 whatever the numbers maybe, but in that number, we are not taking care of these things. And I want you to be aware that whether we count them or not they exist.

Therefore, to some extent, it is almost impossible to even count the total number of languages. If you start looking at people and then you ask people with some kind of force, they will tell you I speak either Telugu or Tamil but they may be speaking something else. And this kind of situation for that matter exists within languages too, right now we are talking about areas of convergence across two languages. But this exists within the language too, where if you are familiar with this thing, you will understand what I mean, if we talk about Malayalam, we have northern Malayalam, central Malayalam, and Travancore Malayalam. Do you familiar, anyone here who is familiar with these terms? Anyone here familiar with

these terms? Anybody who speaks Malayalam here. You speak Malayalam, great, are you familiar with these terms?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: There is something called northern Malayalam spoken in northern parts, central Malayalam, and then Travancore Malayalam. Now, the fact that this distinction exists within the language, they must exist on the basis of something, and right now, we are not discussing that something, that something could be on the basis of social structure, on the basis of reasonable structure or some differences within the language and the levels of sounds or a structure or something, maybe all of them, but this distinction exists.

And if you study more of these things as part of E-language and bring in lots of socio-psychological, socio-political into this thing, then you come to know that Travancore Malayalam is more prestigious than the rest of the two. And again, the same thing happens to everything else, if we are talking about Marathi, then there could be lots of different varieties of Marathi broadly speaking there are Pune Marathi and Nagpur Marathi.

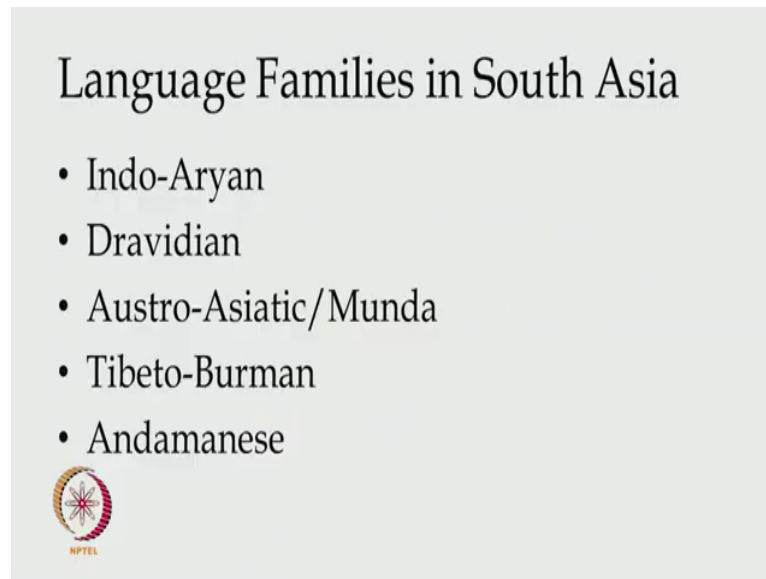
Pune Marathi is more prestigious than Nagpur Marathi. And the reason why I am mentioning these things to you is people who speak Nagpur Marathi, they do not feel good about it. When you tell them Pune Marathi is more prestigious. Likewise, people who speak northern Malayalam or central Malayalam would not feel great if you tell them Travancore Malayalam is more prestigious, and for that matter is not what I am saying is that this is more prestigious than the other, they decide these things among themselves.

And again, there are a variety of reasons I repeat this thing to you, I am talking about these things only for us to be familiar and sensitive about these things when we get into the details of I-language, we have these things in our mind as well. So, do you see the story or the picture is the same within the language also?

Now, so how do we count them, it is just not even possible. Still, the 1652 number comes from them which is an output of a project on linguistic Survey of India done by George Grierson which was completed in 1930. And that book, that survey, that project report is published in 18 volumes, this thick volume, and that is still one of the most authentic sources on different types of languages.


And we refer back and forth to these things because they talk about people, their lifestyle, structure, and the sounds of all those languages. So, it is a type of encyclopaedia or dictionary for all these languages and that is how we know 1652. Another part of that is all these languages are from 5 different language families of Indian and the names of these families are okay, I will come back to this slide again. I want you to see it.

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Language Families in South Asia

- Indo-Aryan
- Dravidian
- Austro-Asiatic/Munda
- Tibeto-Burman
- Andamanese



Yeah, these are the names of language families of India. Indo-Aryan family of languages, Dravidian family of languages, Austro-Asiatic or Munda, Tibeto-Berman, and Andamanese. The family of languages within this group of Andamanese is spoken in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Are we familiar with this Andaman and Nicobar Islands?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: That is part of us. Similarly, there are other groups of islands that are part of us. Can you tell me the name?

Student: Lakshadweep

Teacher: Lakshadweep, great. Do you know the name of languages spoken in Lakshadweep?

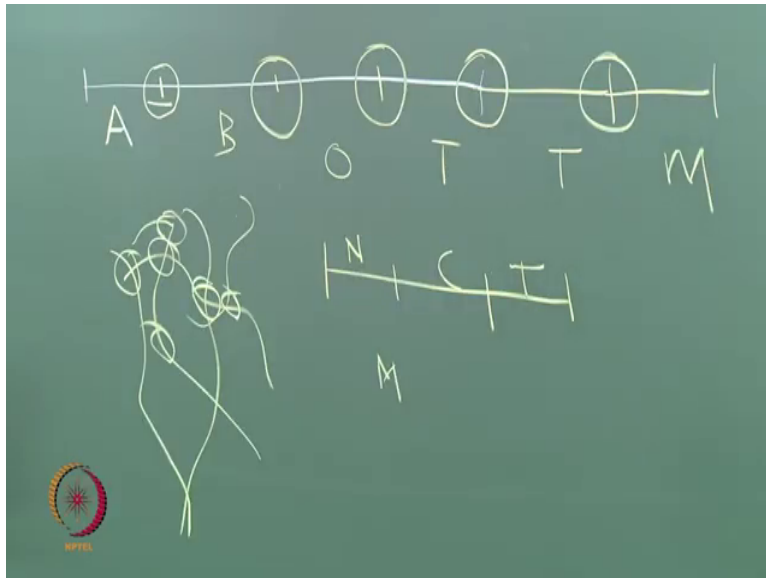
Student: Lakshadweepi

Teacher: Sorry,

Student: Malayalam.

Teacher: Malayalam is one of them. There are many others but Malayalam is one of them. And now when we say, many others are many languages I want you to keep this picture in mind.

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This is the real picture of language, spoken either in India or you replace these names that becomes true for anywhere in the world. And this picture that you see about central-northern Malayalam, Central Malayalam, and Travancore Malayalam or Pune Marathi or Nagpur Marathi or let us say Punjabi Hindi, Delhi Hindi, Lucknow Hindi, Varanasi Hindi, Patna Hindi, Kolkata Hindi, and go all the way to Agartala. This story of Hindi or Marathi or Bengali or Tamil or Malayalam that we see is true for English too, is true for all the languages French, German, Greek.

So, this is what I mean when I say this is the actual picture of language that is beyond languages within the language. And this is what I mean when I say it is almost difficult to count. However, for our convenience, we still broadly divide them into Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and all. Coming back to the family of languages. So, there is a set of languages spoken in Andaman and Nicobar Islands until very recently, this family was not known to many people.

So, people will either think these languages belong to Indo-Aryan family of languages or the Dravidian family of languages, which, in other words, means, who cares? But very recently, a

group of scholars from one of the famous universities of India, they went there to study these things and found substantial evidence to point out that these languages belong neither to Indo-Aryan family of languages, nor to Dravidian family of languages and they have their own distinct classification system, they have their own system.

And then they also found that there are a lot of languages spoken in that area, it is not just 1 or 2, it is more than 50 to 60 varieties or 60 different languages spoken there. Since I began with Andamanese. Now, let me go to Tibeto-Berman, this term, Tibeto-Berman has very little to do with either Tibet or Burma. It is just the name of languages spoken in a particular area. And these languages under this category are spoken in the north-eastern states of our country. And hills are foothills of the Himalayas. These are Tibeto-Berman languages. And again, any idea how many languages could be? Do you know how many states are there in his North-eastern parts?

Student: 7

Teacher: So, I am sure you know the names as well. So, if we talk about languages, then what would be the languages from that part? That you can predict or you know, so give me one name of one state.

Student: Assam

Teacher: Assam. What another?

Student: Manipur

Teacher: Manipur. So, what is the language of Manipur?

Student: Manipuri

Teacher: Is Manipuri. There are other names but Manipuri, another state?

Student: Meghalaya

Teacher: Meghalaya, language? Do not know, that is okay. Other states?

Student: Arunachal Pradesh

Teacher: Arunachal Pradesh languages or language? Do not know, that is fine? Another?

Student: Tripura

Teacher: Tripura, language or languages?

Student: Tripuri

Teacher: No, there is nothing called Tripuri.

Student: Sikkim,

Teacher: The Sikkim is not in that seven. Sikkim is on the other side.

Student: Mizoram,

Teacher: Mizoram, language?

Student: Mizo.

Teacher: Mizo, you see that. So, there are some languages that we know the names of some we do not, but the total number of languages to your surprise. The total number is more than 500. More than 500 and most of those names are also representatives of not the state names, but representatives of their tribes. And therefore, they are also called tribal languages. But I want you to know that calling a group of languages, tribal languages is not insensitive or apolitical as long as you do not associate specific meanings to them as long as they are just names, they are okay.

Now, Austro-Asiatic languages, this group of languages is spoken in what we know is more in Chhattisgarh and little bit outer circles of Chhattisgarh, which is Jharkhand, western part of West Bengal, northern parts of Orissa, even more in Orissa, some parts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. That will be the pocket where Austro-Asiatic languages or languages of Munda group are spoken.

We have the Dravidian languages, which you know, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and these are not just 4 of them. There are lots of other languages spoken in this area. A couple of Dravidian languages are spoken in the Austro-Asiatic region also. And languages of the Dravidian family are spoken in the Hindu-Kush range of mountains. Do you know where the Hindu-Kush range of mountains are? In modern geography, where is Hindu-Kush located?

Student: Pakistan,

Teacher: Pakistan, North-western Pakistan and Afghanistan border very nice. So, some of the languages of that region are also called Tibeto-Berber sorry Dravidian languages. Now rest of the languages that you see beginning from Kashmiri, Dogri, to Hindi, Punjabi, Haryanvi, Odia, Bangla, all of them are Indo-Aryan languages and they are approximately 7 to 800 of them. And to wind that part up a couple of interesting facts. Do you know the major languages of Sri Lanka?

Student: Tamil and Sinhalese

Teacher: Tamil and Sinhalese, Tamil is Dravidian and Sinhalese is Indo-Aryan. Sinhalese is spoken in Sri Lanka is not Dravidian. And I am telling you this interesting fact just so that you do not associate these things to Geography. And also, we see patches of remedial languages in Hindu Kush. And in the Central Austro-Asiatic parts, there could be reasons behind this, some speakers congregated in one area, some speakers migrated from one place to the other. This could be the reasons for that, but we do not have substantial evidence to document or show those things. Proof for that is not available. Biggest state of Northeast?

Student: Assam,

Teacher: Assam, language Assamese. Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language. Assamese is not Dravidian, is not Tibeto-Berber. Now, one more thing. Somebody was talking about Meghalaya. There are two languages spoken in Meghalaya, I mean, there are many, but 2 prominent languages one is out of the two, one is Khasi, anyone has heard this name before Khasi? No. Have you ever heard his name? The language Khasi is interesting, because you remember the formal classification that I just told you, verb initial, verb medial, verb-final. English is?

Student: Verb medial,

Teacher: Verb medial, and Tamil is?

Student: Verb final,

Teacher: Verb final. In fact, all these 1652 languages that you found are verb-final languages. All of them are verb-final, except Khasi. So, all the languages spoken in India are verb-final languages except for that one, Khasi, which happens to be a verb medial language. So, these are some of the things we should know about our languages that are spoken around the world,

and languages that we speak. There is one language which is missing from our discussion and I want to conclude this discussion with that, which is Sanskrit. Have you heard this name?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: Who speaks Sanskrit?

Student: No, one.

Teacher: Do you know anybody who speaks Sanskrit

Student: ((??)) (30:03)

Teacher: But do they not speak Kashmiri?

Student: There is a village in Karnataka, where they speak Sanskrit.

Teacher: There is one village in Karnataka where they speak Sanskrit. Let me refine my question and I have nothing to reject or deny these things. Do you know anybody around you who grew up speaking Sanskrit? Like you grew up speaking which language?

Student: Malayalam

Teacher: Malayalam, you?

Student: Tamil

Teacher: Tamil, you?

Student: Hindi

Teacher: It sounds a little bit difficult to believe.

Student: Why?

Teacher: Do you speak any language other than Hindi?

Student: English, and Hindi.

Teacher: That is it, where are you from?

Student: Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

Teacher: I will talk to you about that. Sounds difficult, the reason why I am saying so, there is nothing sarcastic about this please do not take it otherwise. Hindi is spoken, do you know where India is spoken in India?

Student: Uttar Pradesh

Teacher: If we talk about Malayalam, we know where it is spoken, if we talk about Tamil, we know where it is spoken. If we talk about Hindi, where is it spoken?

Student: Northern Plains

Teacher: Give me the names, let us be specific.

Student: Madhya Pradesh

Teacher: Beginning from Madhya Pradesh, is it spoken in Rajasthan?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: Delhi?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: UP?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: Bihar?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: Haryana, Punjab? Now, let me rephrase the question, is it not spoken in Maharashtra?

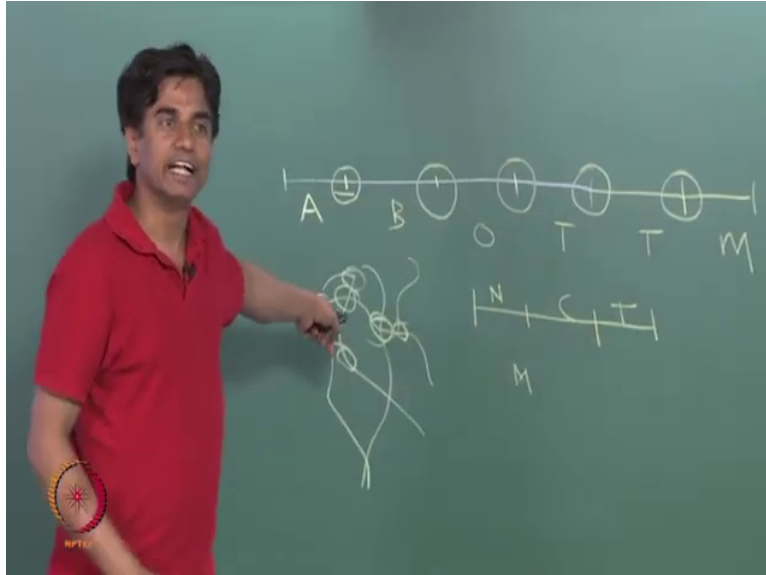
Student: It is spoken.

Teacher: It is spoken, is it, is Punjabi not spoken in Delhi?

Student: It is spoken.

Teacher: If we say, Hindi is spoken in Haryana, is Haryanvi not spoken in Haryana? You can raise a question. What are you talking about? I am talking about this.

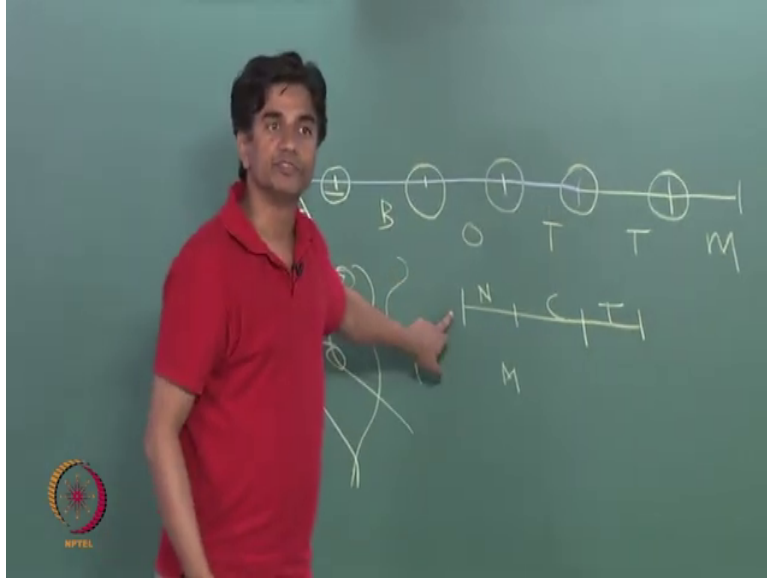
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And I am also talking about Hindi that is spoken particularly nowhere and specifically everywhere. The only difference is Hindi spoken in Delhi is way different from Hindi spoken in Mumbai or for that matter in Kolkata. The reason why I said, why I stopped there and I asked him, if there are other languages in that situation, it is difficult to say, am I really speaking Hindi?

Or if I am speaking Hindi, which Hindi? Among Hindi speakers, if I can categorically figure out that you are speaking Kolkata Hindi or you are speaking Bombay Hindi, or you are speaking Hindi from Delhi, then with all seriousness that this question deserves, we need to see that there are striking differences within the language as well, more striking than probably this one.

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So, are we really talking about Hindi? Where is this spoken? And trust me, I told you, right yesterday, that I am not attaching either any kind of sarcasm or emotional affiliations with these things. I am only talking purely in terms of the scientific aspects of these languages. And on the basis of evidence, and I hope you agree with these things that I am telling you.

We do not need a microscope to see these things. We do not need a laboratory to figure out these distinctions. This is why, if I can tell you at this point, it is said about the study of language that the laboratory for the study of language begins where other laboratories end, which is the rest of the society.

Talking about Sanskrit. So, do you know anybody? So, you know yourself and you know other people who grew up speaking Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi also. But do you know anyone who grew up speaking Sanskrit? No. Some people may be speaking Kashmiri Pandit or Pandit from anywhere else. They may think they are speaking Sanskrit but do they really speak Sanskrit? No.

Now again, this is not a matter of fun, this is the reason why it is said that Sanskrit is a dead language. Which does not mean there is no document available in Sanskrit, that simply means no one speaks Sanskrit and this is the story of not Sanskrit alone. This is also the story of Latin, no one speaks Latin anymore, both of them used to be very prestigious and famous languages at one point in time. What do you think is common between the death of both?

Student: ((??)) (35:10)

Teacher: Exactly and many things associated with that I do not want to go into that direction. The speakers of those languages Sanskrit at one point would not allow others to learn that language. Are you familiar with this? Sanskrit people who taught Sanskrit through whatever they taught, they would not allow everyone to go to school.

If you stop or if you do things like that, to languages, the languages do not like that. And on the other part, other side of the same story, languages that you see with wider spread or with maximum number of speakers are the languages that are flexible, that are welcoming in incorporating everything else.

So, if you look at the book, one of the reasons why English is so famous and spoken all over the world is not just because English was the language of the British Empire, and British Empire was spread all over the world. Of course, that was one of the reasons but the other reason which is more convincing and scientific is, if you examine the vocabulary list of English, it has borrowed and neutralized and internalized vocabulary from all parts of the world.

So much so, that sometimes even we talk that several words that you may be familiar with as words of Hindi, like Jungle, Dharna, Dhoti, Rasgulla, are good words of English they are part of Oxford English Dictionary. And this happens only as part of its acceptability that is what helps spread it. And that is the reason for the other side of the story is the reason for the death of Sanskrit. This bit of anecdote that I wanted to say Sanskrit is not part of any one of these families. Sanskrit is neither Indo-Aryan nor Dravidian, definitely not Munda, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Berman, or Andamanese.

Student: Sanskrit was spoken mostly by Aryan.

Teacher: Sanskrit was spoken by Aryan, true.

Student: ((??)) (37:49) Indo-Aryan.

Teacher: No, again Aryan, the word Aryan does refer to Aryans that we know, but Sanskrit was, Sanskrit not was, is part of Indo-European family of languages. Okay. And with these names, if we go up in the tree structure in the structure of families, then we go all the way to Indo-European, and Sanskrit is part of Indo-European like Latin. Therefore, Sanskrit is closer


to English than to any one of our languages. And, the rest of the story is part of history and historical discussions, whether it was the language of Aryans, whether Aryans came from somewhere else, and then they settled in India, therefore, they brought Sanskrit, all these things are part of historical discussions.

I am not familiar with those things, I can talk to you about what I feel, but then that is not authentic for a discussion related to our knowledge of language or knowledge about languages. Important is Sanskrit is not part of this, Sanskrit is Indo-European. And then I just wanted you to be familiar with the idea of why these languages or why these two languages are almost dormant, or what we call dead in colloquial terms. Let us look at one more thing.

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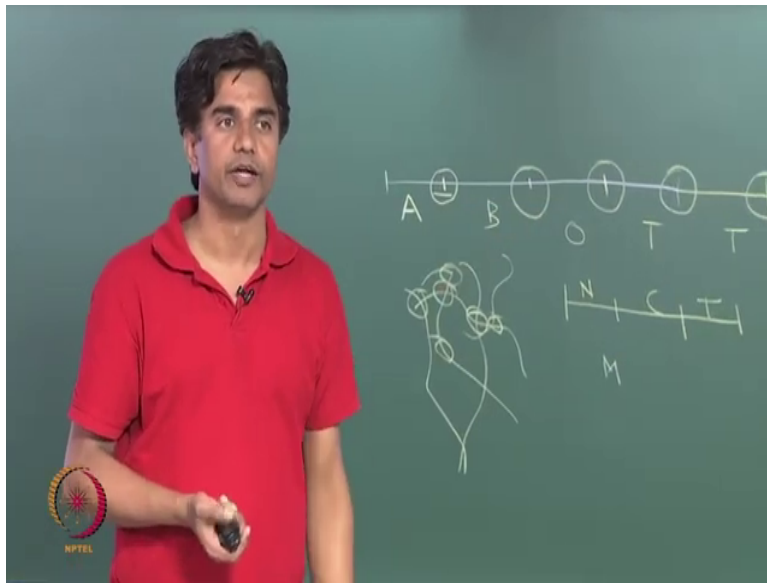
Some Questions

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So, we talked about different names of language families. And now, in the remaining time quickly, we want to talk about language and dialect. So far, we have been using the term language or languages with a clear distinction between what they mean, what we mean by language, and what we mean by languages.

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And I discussed this thing to you whether this means simplifying the picture of language or complicating the story of language, in fact, both mean the same thing. Now, with this thing in mind, with a total number of languages of the world in mind with languages that we speak in mind, what do you think? We mean, when we say dialect? I am sure you have heard this word before, and you have some idea about it.

So, would you like to share your ideas with me? Please do not be worried about being wrong, or not being accurate. I am only asking you. I do have some of them, I will show them to you. But I am asking you to see whether you have heard these terms and where you have heard these terms and what you mean by these terms or what you have been thinking about these terms, so far. That the term is dialect

Student: Languages form with some variations from the major language.

Teacher: Languages forms with some variations from the major language, fine. Let me take a couple of them and then we talk about something else.

Student: We generally follow the seen script, usually language and its dialect have the same script.

Teacher: Have the same script. So, it has something to do with the script.

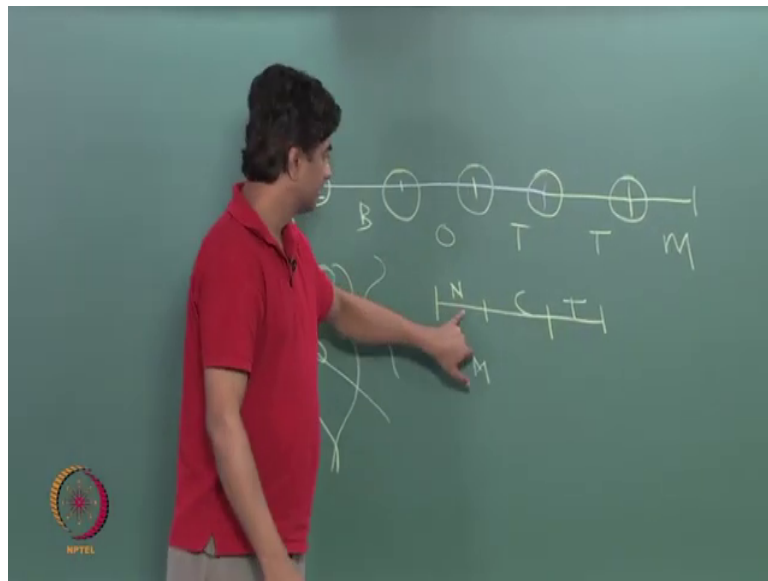
Student: Yeah.

Teacher: All right. Let us take that also

Student: Two people speaking different dialects, dialect can still have a conversation and talk but people who will speak different languages, two people they will not be able to converse or have long or complex conversations.

Teacher: So, in accordance to that, what you are saying is these are dialects.

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That is northern Malayalam, central Malayalam and Travancore Malayalam are dialects of Malayalam, but not Telugu or Tamil is dialect of Assamese. That is right. We will talk about that also. Anything else? Anyone else? No, nobody wants to say anything. Do you agree with these things that these people are saying?

Student: Yes,

Teacher: Yes, largely Yes?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And what they are saying is absolutely fine. There is and I do not think they are completely wrong either. We just need to define them a little bit.

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Dialect

- a particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group
- a variety of a language that is a characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers
- a regional speech patterns,
- dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class



See, I also have the similar things I found from different sources. Some people believe a particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or a social group is a dialect. A variety of languages that is a characteristic of a particular group of languages, languages speakers, is dialect, a regional speech pattern is a dialect, dialect may also be defined by other factors such as social class, regional status, and all other things.

Student: ((??)) (43:30) Slang

Teacher: Slang. Are you asking me this question? What is Slang?

Student: ((??)) (43:38) Travancore Malayalam, I am saying it is completely different.

Teacher: Completely different. What?

Student: They are not completely different. They must have a different Slang or Accent.

Teacher: Wait a minute. These are different terms. Accents, Slang, mean completely different things. slang is probably the term which is used for a language or for a type of language. In more of a derogatory term. Derogatory way, okay? Not derogatory, but in a derogatory sense. And also, that could be the common term between only a few speakers are a group of some speakers for example, if there are certain terms that are used only on the campus of IIT Madras. You can say this is IIT M slang. Now, I want you to understand what I said. Is that true or not?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Yes, that is true, but that is not really derogatory as derogatory, like some bad words. So, what I mean is, they are not bad words, but they are specific to a group. That group could be smaller and bigger. Technically, there are other names for that, but this is what we know is slang. And then there could be more elaboration of that what we are, what the other term that you said accent, that this term accent is also used in some derogatory sense. For example, if I say he speaks English with an accent.

What is that supposed to mean? Does it mean that he speaks very good English? No, definitely not. You may not know what it means, but you know for sure that this does not mean something nice. Am I right? So, accent is also one of the terms, but accent is used to determine sound quality or sound system to decide whether a particular person's speech or speech of a particular group is close to a standard variety or way too far away from standard variety. And that is only related to the sound system. That is called an accent. Again, both are used in some sort of derogatory stance.

Now, what you are referring to these three varieties of one language is precisely not different slang. These are three different varieties of the same language, then again, you can ask this question. So, what is the difference between a dialect and its variety? So, let us first take a look at dialect. And give me 3-4 more minutes and I will be done. And if we need, we can discuss these things more later but I will since I started this thing, I will be done with this thing. See, like I told you in the beginning, keep this picture in mind. It is even difficult.

And I am repeating this again. With the help of this picture, it helps us understand that it is even difficult to count languages. Can we write any language in any script? I am only asking about possibilities. Not that we have to do, a possibility, can we use English with Roman script? We use, we write Hindi with Devanagari script. Trust me, Roman script was not designed for English.

Likewise, Devanagari script was not designed for Hindi. Devanagari script was a script of Sanskrit where language died and a script was retained because it was adopted by other languages. Therefore, a language keeping or maintaining its writing system is no standard of language. Remember, I have been telling you the object of inquiry is a spoken language. You must be familiar with people who can speak but they do not know how to write. Do you know such people?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Can we say that they do not know language. We do not, we cannot say such things. Ability to write is an additional thing that does not come with learning language. Remember that Darwinian quote, I have told you, you have seen that we see instinctive tendencies when we see someone as a child is speaking, but the ability to read, write, and brew is not an instinctive tendency. See that, therefore the capacity to write something is an additional learning thing.

And we can learn to write anything. As long as the discussion of a script is concerned. We can write any language in any script. And what is the big deal about it? So, script is not a parameter for language for distinction between language and dialect. At the same time, you have not mentioned but some people mentioned, that availability of literature that is novels, dramas, poetry, if a language has these things, then that is language and some other part other things that do not have these things may be dialects.

Again, there is no parameter, it is just a matter of coincidence that Shakespeare wrote in English, Kalidas wrote with Sanskrit, and Tulsidas wrote with Awadhi, Sant Gyaneshwar wrote in Marathi, and Tiruvallur wrote in Tamil, it just a matter of coincidence. Therefore, availability of literature in any language is no parameter for distinction between language and dialect.

In a strict technical sense, in a strict scientific examination, there is absolutely no distinction between what we call a language and what we call a dialect. If we want to call these three as three different varieties, that is okay because these three varieties of language may have more similarities among one another than dialects. And I am reiterating this thing again, that there is no distinction, no scientific distinction, no technical distinction between a language and a dialect.

Not even a number of speakers. Some languages have a huge number of speakers. Some languages have very few numbers of speakers, just now I gave you examples of Indo-European languages and Andamanese languages. So, that is not even a parameter for distinction between language and society, language and dialect. That is simply the two concepts, two ideas are socio-politically motivated ideas.