PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY

(A Central University)

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

LINGUISTICS AND STYLISTICS

(Paper Code: MAEG2005)

MA (English) – II Year

DDE – WHERE INNOVATION IS A WAY OF LIFE

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MASTER OF ARTS

In

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LINGUISTICS AND STYLISTICS

LINGUISTICS AND STYLISTICS

Unit – I Phonology

1. Description and classification of speech sounds.
2. Description and classification of Vowels and Consonants in English.
3. The phoneme, the syllable and the accentual patterns in English

Unit – II Morphology

1. The patterns of Language: the Morpheme & the Word
2. Form and Meaning

Unit – III Syntax

1. Groups: Nominal, Verbal, Adverbial and Adjectival.
2. Clauses and Sentences
3. IC Analysis

Unit – IV Semantics

1. Theories of meaning.
2. Association, Connotation, Collocation.
3. Semantic Field.
4. Varieties of English.

Unit – V Stylistics

1. Elements of Style
2. Style and Literary Meaning.
3. Principles of Stylistic Analysis.

Suggested Reading:

David Crystal, Linguistics (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1971)
J.F.Wallwork, Language and Linguistics: An Introduction to the Study of Language. (London: Heinemann Educational Books,1969)
E.C.Traugott & M.L.Pratt, Linguistics for Students of Literature (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1980)
S.K.Verma & N.Krishnaswamy, Modern Linguistics: An Introduction (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989)
G.Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman, 1969)

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Dr. Hany Babu

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LESSON 1

DESCRIPTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF SPEECH SOUNDS

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LESSON 1

DESCRIPTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF SPEECH SOUNDS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit is about how we produce and classify speech sounds. We will look at the organs (in our body) which are involved in the production of speech sounds. We will also learn about how speech sounds are classified into consonants and vowels and examine the criteria that are used to describe consonant and vowel sounds of a particular language. In other words, in this unit, we will see how sounds are classified on the basis of their articulation.

There are several details that we are going to ignore in this Unit. You must remember that this is a beginner's course and our aim is not to train you to become a phonetician but simply to make you aware of some of the important aspects of the phonetics of English. We are giving you a very brief account (just a bare minimum) of all the facts. Many details have been left out. We also believe that, no course on the phonetics of English can be complete without the teacher and the audio support.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

-describe how speech sounds are produced

-distinguish between consonant and vowel sounds

-identify three criteria for describing the speech sounds

1.3 PRODUCTION OF SPEECH SOUNDS

We can compare the act of speaking with the act of playing a wind instrument like flute which I am sure you must have played as a child. To begin with, when we want to play the flute to produce a sound, we have to blow air from our **lungs** through the mouthpiece. The sounds that we produce when we speak also need to be powered by the air from the lungs. In fact, the physical act of speaking can be likened to "playing" our mouths and **larynxes** with the air coming out of the lungs. The larynx is of course the voice box in our throat; commonly known as the Adam's apple in the throat of men.

At this point you might like to ask why we are not speaking every time we breathe in and out. After all, breathing involves taking air into our lungs and taking it out. Let us go back to our example of the flute. In order to play a tune, we need to blow extra air through the mouthpiece. Moreover, we need to move our fingers over the different holes of the flute. If we leave all the holes uncovered, air will come out through all the holes and we will simply get a sound with a single note. Specifically, when we want to produce music we have to cover some holes with our fingers and leave some other holes open. By opening and closing different holes at different times we can produce different sounds or notes. In other words, by effectively putting obstacles to the exit of air through those holes we produce music. Similarly, in order to produce various speech sounds we have to interfere in various ways with the flow of air on its way out of the larynx, and the mouth. We will now look at some of the ways in which we "play" our vocal organs (the larynx, the mouth, the lungs are all part of our vocal organs).

A picture is worth a thousand words, and therefore we will adopt the practice of illustrating many of our statements with drawings.

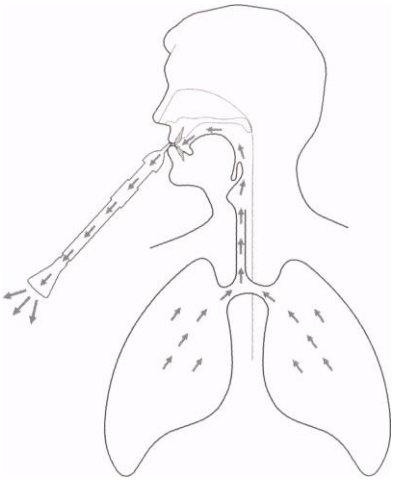

Fig. 1: Playing an instrument

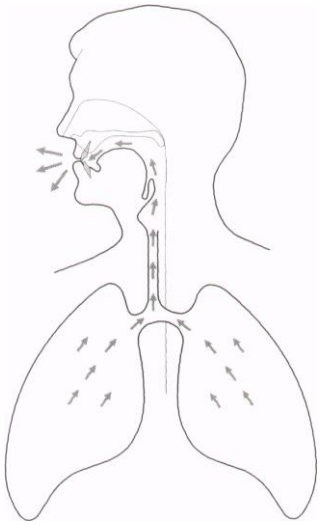

Fig 2: Speaking

1.4 DESCRIPTION OF ORGANS OF SPEECH

The term ***organs of speech*** is used to refer to the parts of the body in the **larynx** and the **vocal tract** that are involved in the production of speech. It is a misleading term in the sense that it suggests that we have special physical organs of speaking. This is not so: all our so-called 'organs of speech' have primary biological functions relating to our respiratory system and the processing of food. This section contains a highly simplified account of the speech production process.

A crucial requirement for the production of sound, as we have seen above, is a mechanism to create a difference in the air pressure at different locations in the larynx and the vocal tract. Before we begin to speak, we breathe in, taking in sufficient air to produce an utterance of reasonable length. Instead of simply pushing the air out from our lungs and forcing them to contract (which is what we would do if we were breathing normally), we slow down the exhalation process by slowly easing up the muscular tension of the lungs. This artificially extended period of pressure from our lungs is used to produce speech. Look at Figure 3 very closely.

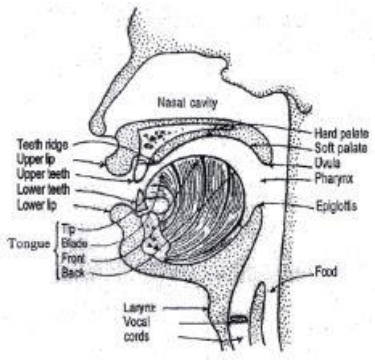

Fig. 3: Organs of Speech

After being exhaled from the lungs, the air-stream passes through the larynx (the Adam's apple). The **larynx** is a valve, which can be opened and closed by two thick flaps that run from back to front inside the larynx. The primary function of these flaps are to prevent food or water from entering the lungs, (as the flaps are tightly shut) but, because they also have a function in speech, they are known as **vocal cords**. The opening between them is called the **glottis.** No air can pass through the glottis when it is closed, while it can flow freely when it is open.

The vocal cords are used in various ways to produce sounds. We are going to talk about only two ways here. There are many consonants that are produced with the glottis held open, as in ordinary breathing. Such sounds are called **voiceless.** Sounds like [f], [p], and [s] are voiceless sounds. When the glottis is closed or kept loosely together the vocal cords vibrate due to the increased sub-glottal pressure, sounds produced during this phase are called **voiced** sounds. Sounds like [m], [l], [r], [j] and vowels are the voiced sounds of English. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the two different positions of the glottis.

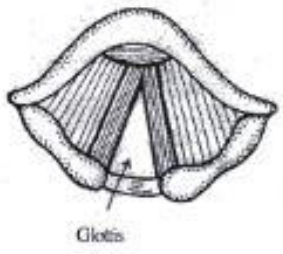

Fig. 4: Vocal cords wide apart and glottis fully open for the production of *Voiceless* sounds

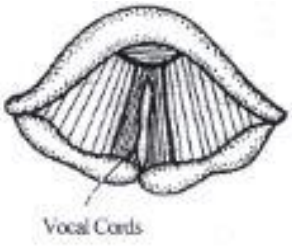

Fig. 5: Vocal cords kept loosely together---position for vibration during the production of *Voiced* sounds

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—1

Say whether the following statements are true or false:

1. The air escapes from the lungs into the outer atmosphere through the glottis.
2. The glottis is shut completely during normal breathing.
3. The vocal cords are situated in the larynx.
4. The glottis is wide open during the production of voiced sounds.
5. The state of the glottis is the same during the production of voiceless sounds and during normal breathing.
6. The vocal cords are joined together at both the ends.
7. The glottis is completely shut while swallowing food or drink.
8. The space between the vocal cords is called the glottis.

The space from the larynx onwards, which extends all the way to the lips, is called the **vocal tract**. It consists of the pharynx, the oral cavity, and the nasal cavity. The **pharynx** is the part that extends up from the larynx to the velum. The **velum** or the **soft palate** is the valve which closes the entrance to the nasal cavity, when it is pressed up, but opens the cavity when it is allowed to hang down as in normal breathing.

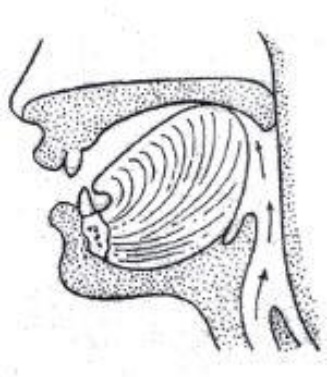

Fig. 6: Soft Palate in the *raised* position

The pear-shaped little blob of flesh which we can be seen hanging down at the back of our throat or at the extreme end of the roof of the mouth is called the **uvula**. When the soft palate is raised, the uvula touches the back wall of the pharynx and the passage into the nose is closed. The air then cannot escape through the nose at all. Sounds during the production of which the air escapes through the mouth are called **oral** sounds. Sounds like [p], [t], [g], [i], [u], [o] etc. are oral sounds.

If the soft palate is lowered the passage into the nose is opened, and if the passage into the mouth is also blocked (either by closing the lips or by making the tongue touch some part of the roof of the mouth) the air from the lungs will escape only through the nose. Sounds during the production of which the air escapes only through the nose are called **nasal** sounds. Sound like [m], [n], etc are nasal sounds in English.

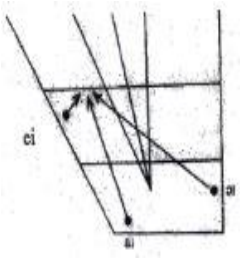

Fig. 7: Soft palate or velum *lowered*

There are certain sounds during the articulation of which the soft palate is lowered, thus opening the nasal passage of air, but the oral passage of air is also not blocked. Thus both the oral and the nasal passages are open. The air from the lungs, therefore, escapes simultaneously through the nose and the mouth. Such sounds are called ***nasalized sounds***. The vowels in Hindi words like [a:kh] (‘eye’), [u:t] (‘camel’) are examples of nasalized sounds.

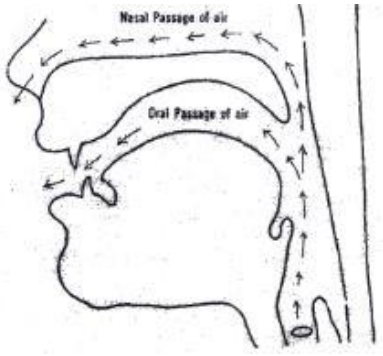

Fig. 8: Production of *nasalized* sounds

The **mouth** or the **oral cavity** is the most important part of the vocal tract, because it is here that most modifications and articulatory contacts are made. The roof of the mouth is formed by the soft palate and the **hard palate**, which lies to the front of the soft palate. With a curled back tongue, it is possible to feel the hard palate arching back to where the soft palate begins. Immediately behind the front teeth is the **alveolar ridge** which is touched by the tongue during the production of *ta-ta*. Then there are the **front teeth** and the **upper lip**. Below these parts are the more active organs of speech: the **lower lip** and the **tongue**. The area immediately behind the **tip** of the tongue is called the **blade**. The part of the tongue opposite to the hard palate is called **front**, the part opposite to the soft palate is called **back**. The lips also play an important part in the production of sounds.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—2

Say whether the following statements are true or false:

1. The soft palate is not capable of independent movement.

2. The soft palate plays an important role in opening and closing the oral passage of air.
3. The soft palate is also called the velum.
4. If the soft palate is raised the air cannot escape through the nose.
5. The part of the tongue opposite the hard palate is called the back part of the tongue.
6. All sounds in all languages have to be either purely oral or purely nasal.
7. The area immediately behind the upper teeth is called the teeth ridge.
8. Sounds produced when the air escapes simultaneously through the nose and the mouth are called nasalized sounds.

1.5 CLASSIFICATION OF SPEECH SOUNDS

Speech sounds of all languages of the world are classified into ***vowels*** and ***consonants***. In the following sections we shall discuss in detail the different ways in which these sounds are classified and described.

We will also be giving examples to illustrate all the points. All examples will be given from English. In this unit, we are going to concentrate on how consonants and vowels are articulated.

1.5.1 CONSONANTS

The crucial difference between consonant and vowel sounds, in terms of production, is that whenever we produce a consonant sound the air which comes out from the lungs escapes either with friction or is blocked at some point in our oral cavity. On the other hand, when we produce vowel sounds, the air escapes through the mouth freely and we do not have any stoppage or friction. The sound that is

represented by the letters *sh* in the word *show* is a consonant and the sound that is represented by the letter *ow* in the same word is a vowel.

When we say words like *poor, show, kite, fat, sip,* etc., in the production of letters like *p, k, t,* the air-stream in the oral cavity is blocked (for a short period) at some point in our mouth, similarly, for the production of sounds like *sh, f, s,* the air-stream escapes with friction. All these sounds are consonants but each one of them is different from the other.

In this section, we shall see in some detail how different types of consonants are produced and classified. To describe a consonant sound, we need to know certain things regarding its production:

(a) The air-stream mechanism---is it provided by lungs or some other organs? Is it forced out or drawn inwards?
(b) The state of the glottis--- do the vocal cords vibrate or not?
(c) The position of the soft palate---is it raised or lowered?
(d) The active articulator and the passive articulator---at what point does the articulation take place?
(e) The stricture involved---what is the manner of articulation for the production of a particular sound?

Let us examine these in some detail.

(a) *The air-stream mechanism*: All sounds of English are produced with a pulmonic, egressive air-stream mechanism. In other words, for the production of all the sounds of English the air from the ***lungs*** (therefore,

pulmonic) is ***pushed out*** (therefore, egressive). Generally there is no need to ask this question every time we describe a sound because languages follow a fixed pattern. English and most Indian languages, for example, always produce sounds with a pulmonic, egressive air-stream mechanism.

(b) *The state of the glottis*: All speech sounds can be classified as either voiceless or voiced. If during the production of a sound the vocal cords are wide apart and the glottis open, the produced sound is called a voiceless sound. On the other hand, if the vocal cords are kept loosely together and they vibrate ***voiced*** sounds are produced. It is possible for trained phoneticians to find out which sound is voiced or voiceless simply by putting their fingers on the Adam's apple (vocal cords). It will be difficult for you to do this right now as you are beginning students of phonetics. You will have to learn which sounds are voiced and which ones are voiceless.

(c) *The position of the soft palate*: Speech sounds can be classified as oral or nasal depending on the position of the soft palate. When the soft palate is raised and the nasal passage of air is shut off (velic closure) ***oral*** sounds are produced. If, on the other hand, the soft palate is lowered to open the nasal passage of air simultaneously with an oral closure at some point in the oral cavity, ***nasal*** sounds are produced. It is quite easy to make out whether a sound is an oral sound or a nasal sound simply by producing the sound.

(d) *The active and the passive articulator*: Some articulators like the lower lip and the tongue, move during the production of speech sounds. These are called ***active*** articulators. Some articulators like the upper teeth and the hard

and the soft palate do not move during the production of speech sounds. These are called ***passive*** articulators.

The active articulators always move in the direction of the passive articulators. You might wonder why upper lip and the soft palate are called passive articulators even though they are capable of independent movement. The reason is that whenever either of these is involved in the production of a sound it is always the other (active) articulator (the lower lip in the case of upper lip or the back of the tongue in the case of soft palate) that moves towards them. Upper lip and the soft palate are therefore considered passive articulators.

The place of articulation is always determined by the passive articulator. Thus, if the tip and the blade of the tongue (the active articulators) are raised towards the teeth ridge (the passive articulator), then the place of articulation for that particular sound is *teeth ridge*. We shall look at this in some detail in the following section.

(e) The stricture involved: The term stricture refers to the way in which the air passage is restricted by the various organs of speech (to produce a symphony/speech sound). This is known as the manner of articulation for the production of a speech sound. To take an example, for the production of the sound [p], there is a stricture of complete oral closure and sudden release. In other words, first, the lung-air is blocked in the mouth. The active and the passive articulators (the two lips in this one) are in firm contact, thereby blocking off the air-passage completely. Second, the oral closure is

released suddenly and the air escapes with a small explosive noise. The manner of articulation for the production of the sound [p] is therefore said to be *plosive.*

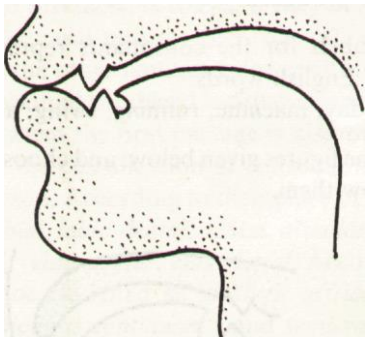

Fig. 9: Articulation of bilabial plosives

All consonant sounds can be described by using a ***three-term label*** which tells us about the **manner** in which the consonant is produced, the **place** (in the oral cavity) at which it is produced, and the **state of the glottis** (open or loosely held) during its production. Right now we will only name each one of them and look at them in detail in Unit 2. Before you read about the three term labels needed to describe a consonant, here is a self-assessment question for you.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION-3

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

1. A consonant during the articulation of which the glottis is open is called a ---------- consonant.
2. Articulators which do not move during the production of speech sounds are called----------articulators.
3. Articulators which move during the production of speech sounds are called---------- articulators.
4. All English sounds are produced with a ----------, ----------air-stream mechanism.
5. The ----------articulators determine the place of articulation of a sound.

A consonant, as we have seen above, is usually described taking into account whether it is voiced or voiceless, its place of articulation, and its manner of articulation. The ***manner of articulation*** specifies the kind of closure or narrowing involved in the production of a sound. No consonant sound is fully identified, or described, without stating the manner of articulation. The difference between the sounds [d] and [z] will not be clear if we do not refer to their manner of articulation. Both the sounds are produced at the same place of articulation (alveole in this case) and both the sounds are voiced (the vocal cords vibrate and are held loosely). The only difference between these two sounds is their manner of articulation; [d] is a plosive sound while [z] is a fricative sound. In this section we shall only name the different ways (manners) in which consonants can be produced. In Unit 2 we shall

look at each manner of articulation in detail in relation to consonant sounds of English.

Depending on whether there is a complete closure, a partial closure in the oral cavity, or only a narrowing of the two articulators that causes friction, or when there is no audible friction, consonants can be classified as **plosives, affricates, fricatives, nasals, flaps, laterals, frictionless continuants and semi vowels**. These are the different manners or ways or **strictures** in which consonants can be articulated.

The ***place of articulation*** specifies the place where the sound is produced in the oral cavity. The label used is generally an adjective derived from the name of the passive articulator. In this section, as stated above, we shall only name the different *places of articulation* involved in the production of consonants. The oral cavity can be divided into different places of articulation as **bilabial, labio-dental, dental, alveolar, post alveolar, palato-alveolar, retroflex, palatal, velar, uvular** and **glottal.** Consonants may be classified on the basis of the place where they are articulated. The sound /p/ for example, involves the two lips for its articulation. We can therefore describe /p/ as a bilabial sound. Notice how the sound /k/ is articulated at the back of the oral cavity. The region is known as velum and therefore the sound is described as a velar sound.

As explained earlier, the glottis is the opening between the vocal cords. All sounds are classified as either voiceless or voiced depending on the ***state of the glottis***.

In addition to these consonant sounds all vowel sounds are also voiced sounds. In the following section we shall look at the three term labels needed to describe a vowel sound.

1.5.2 VOWELS

At the beginning of this unit we had seen how vowels are different from consonants. In particular we had seen how during the production of vowels, there is no obstruction or narrowing in the vocal tract and the air escapes freely. Vowels are articulated with the stricture of ***open approximation***, just like the semi-vowels or the frictionless continuant sounds we have discussed in the previous section. Such a description of vowels, however, does not help us in distinguishing one vowel from another.

Differences in vowels are generally of two types: difference of ***quality*** and difference of ***quantity.*** To take an example, the difference in quantity is the difference in the length of the vowel. Thus the only difference between words like *bit* /bIt/ and *beat* /bi:t/ is that of vowel length or *quantity*. *Bit* is pronounced with a short vowel whereas *beat* is pronounced with a long vowel. The difference in quality is the difference in the type of vowel and it is this difference that we will be concentrating on in this unit. This is the difference that we perceive in words like *read* /ri:d/ and *rude* /ru:d/. The difference between the two words lies in the *quality* of the vowel that is used to pronounce these two words.

If during the production of vowels the lung-air flows out freely, the question that one could ask is how do we produce different types of vowel sounds? What do we

do in our oral cavity to produce distinct sounds like [I], [U], [a:], [e], etc.? The answer is that we modify the air-stream that is being pushed out of the lungs. The next question to ask is: How do we modify the air stream? We modify the air-stream by raising our tongue to different heights in our oral cavity.

Have a look at the diagram given below. You will notice that four different heights of the tongue are marked in the oral cavity. These are the four heights to which the tongue can rise without blocking the air. If you recall, we had said earlier that for the production of the vowel sounds the lung-air must escape freely and in order for the air to escape freely the tongue should not completely block the air. Hence in the diagram given below, Point 1 is the highest point to which the tongue can rise without blocking off the air. Point 4 is the lowest point, also known as the position of rest for the tongue. The area between these two points has been hypothetically divided into three portions marked by Points 2 and 3. During the articulation of different sounds the tongue takes up different positions in the mouth and consequently the cavity of the mouth through which the lung-air passes is different for different sounds. We shall talk about these points in some detail a little later.

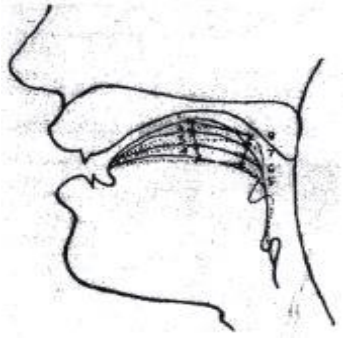

Fig. 10: Different heights of the tongue

To come back to our original point about the production of vowels, we can now compare the oral cavity to a resonating chamber, where with slight modification with the help of the tongue and the lips we can produce different types of vowel sounds. For the identification, classification and description of vowel sounds, therefore, we must describe

(a) The height of the tongue---i. e. The height to which it is raised.
(b) The part of the tongue---i.e. Which part of the tongue (front, central, or back) has been raised?
(c) The position of the lips--- i.e. Are they rounded or unrounded?

In the following section we shall look at each one of them in some detail. It is important to note that, since in the production of vowels there is no contact of the tongue with the roof of the mouth, the sense of touch cannot help us in identifying the sounds. We have to depend, to a large extent, on our auditory perception alone to identify the vowel sounds.

SELF- ASESSMENT QUESTION-4

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

1. Vowels are articulated with the stricture of --------- ----------.
2. Differences in vowels are generally of two kinds: ---------- and ----------.
3. The tongue can raise up to ------different heights.
4. Vowels can be described taking into account----------, ----------, and ----------.
5. For the production of the vowels there is ---------contact of the tongue with the roof of the mouth.

The active articulator during the production of all vowel sounds is either the **front** or the **back** of the tongue or the part that lies between the front and the back of the tongue which is called **centre** of the tongue. The tongue is thus divided into three parts: the front, the back and the centre. For the production of different vowel sounds, it is one of these ***parts of the tongue*** which is raised towards the palate. For the production of the vowel /i/ the front part of the tongue is raised whereas for the production of the vowel /u/ the back part of the tongue is raised.

If we go back to Fig. 10, we notice that there are four ***heights of tongue*** i.e. the tongue can be raised to different heights without obstructing the lung-air. These four heights are the heights to which tongue can rise and are given four names: **close, half-close, half-open and open**. You must remember that all the three different parts of the tongue (front, back and central) can rise to any of these four imaginary heights.

We can therefore, in principle have the following positions: front half-close, central half-close and back half-close positions and front half-open, central half-open and back half-open positions.

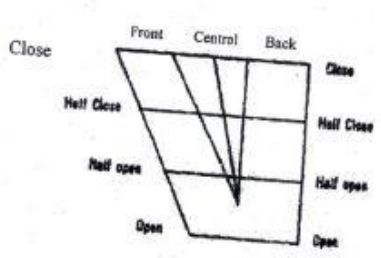

Fig. 11: Quadrilateral triangle

Fig. 11 illustrates these positions in an imaginary quadrilateral triangle, which is formed in our mouth for the articulation of all the vowel sounds.

Yet another criterion we take into account for the classification of vowels is the ***position of the lips.*** According to this vowels are grouped under two categories: **rounded** and **unrounded.**

Rounded vowels are those during the articulation of which the lips are rounded. Unrounded vowels are those during the articulation of which the lips are not rounded but are spread or neutral. In English the vowels [u], [u:], [o], and [o:] are the only rounded vowels. All others (i. e. [I], [i:], [e], [ə] , [3:], [a:], [æ] and [^]) are unrounded.

To conclude, we can now describe a vowel using the following three criteria:

(i) The part of the tongue that is raised during its articulation (front, central, or back)
(ii) The height to which the tongue is raised (close, half-close, half-open, or open), and
(iii) The position of the lips (rounded or unrounded).

These are also known as the three-term labels for the description of vowel sounds. Hence when we say that a particular vowel is a close front unrounded vowel what we mean is that for the articulation of that particular vowel, the following things happen:

(i) The front part of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate
(ii) It is raised to the close position, and
(iii) The lips are unrounded during its articulation.

The quadrilateral triangle in Fig. 10 gives us only two pieces of information regarding a vowel---the part of the tongue raised and the height to which it is raised. It does not give us any information regarding the position of the lips.

Given below is a list of phonetic symbols used to **transcribe** the vowel and consonant sounds of English. You will find that these symbols are used in all the dictionaries to transcribe the words.

Consonants

[p] as in ***p****en* /pen/
[b] as in ***b****all* /bכ:l/
[t] as in ***t****en* /ten/
[d] as in ***d****en* /den/
[k] as in ***k****ill* /kIl/
[g] as in ***g****un* /g ^n/

[tʃ] as in ***ch****ur****ch*** / tʃ ə tʃ/
[d3] as in ***ju****d****ge*** / d3 ^ d3/

[f] as in ***f****an /f* æ n/
[v] as in ***v****an* /v æ n/

Vowels

[I] as in *h****i****m* /hIm/
[i:] as in *s****ee*** /si:/
[e] as in *s****e****t* /set/
[{æ] as in *s****a****t* /s æ t/

[U] as in p***u***ll /pUl/
[u:] as in p***oo***l /pu:l/
[Oכ:] as in c***au******gh***t /k:כ :t/
[Θɒ] as in c***o***t /kɒ t/

[ə] as in ***a***bout /≅ə baut/
[3:] as in b***i***rd /b3:d/

[θ]as in ***th****in* / θ In/

[Δ]as in **th**at /Δ æ t/

[s] as in ***s****ee* /si:/

[z] as in ***z****oo* /zu:/

[ʃ] as in ***sh****e* /Σʃi: /

[Z] as in *gara****g****e* / ∀g{ra:Z/

[h] as in ***h****en* /hen/

[m] as in ***m****e* /mi:/

[n] as in ***n****ot* /nΘt/

[N]as in *r****ing*** /rIN/

[r] as in ***r****at* /r{t/

[l] as in ***l****ove* /l^ v/

[j] as in ***yes*** /jes/

[w] as in ***w****et* /wet/

[^] as in b***u***t /b^t/

[eII] as in b***ai***l /beI/

[aI] as in b***i***le /baI/

[ɔ I] as in b***oi***l /bɔ I /

[ə u] as in g***o*** /g ə uY/

[auY] as in c***ow*** /kauY/

[e ə ≅] as in p***ai***r /p e ə /

[u ə] as in p***oo***r /p u ə/

[I ə] as in p***ee***r /p I ə/

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—5

Write the following words by using the phonetic symbols we have given above. You might need to look up a dictionary in case of doubt.

1. Carrier	2. Courier
3. Colleague	4. Cough
5. Dais	6. Debut
7. Decease	8. Disease
9. Elite	10. Entrepreneur

1.6 Summary

In this unit, we introduced you to the distinction between normal breathing and speaking. We began by comparing the process of speaking to that of playing an instrument. We looked at the important organs of speech and noted the functions performed by each of them. We also familiarized you with the terminology and criteria used to describe consonant and vowel sounds. We concluded by giving you a list of phonetic symbols that are used to transcribe the sounds of English.

1.7 ANSWER KEY

Answer to self -assessment question - 1

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False

5. True

6. False

7. True

8. True

Answer to self -assessment question - 2

1. False

2. True

3. True

4. True

5. False

6. False

7. True

8. True

Answer to self-assessment question -3

1. voiceless
2. passive
3. active
4. pulmonic, egressive
5. passive

Answer to self-assessment question - 4

1. open approximation

2. quality, quantity

3. four

4. height of the tongue, part of the tongue, position of the lips

5. no

Answer to self –assessment - 5

1. / ∀k{rI≅(r) 2. ∀ku: ri≅ (r)

3. /∀kΘli:g/ 4. /kΘf /

5. /∀deIIs / 6. /∀debu: /

7. / dI∀si:s/ 8. / dI∀zi:z /

9. /∀eIli:t/ 10. /Θntr≅pr≅∀n3: /

1.8 REFERENCES

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LESSON 2

DESCRIPTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF VOWELS AND CONSONANTS IN ENGLISH

Contents

LESSON: 2

DESCRIPTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF VOWELS AND CONSONANTS IN ENGLISH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit I we saw that for the production of speech sounds we need a pulmonic, egressive air-stream mechanism. We also saw in detail the various organs of speech that were responsible for converting the lung-air into speech sounds before it escaped into the atmosphere.

In this unit, we are going to see how sounds are classified on the basis of their articulation with special reference to speech sounds of English.

Once again, you must remember that this is a beginner's course and our aim is not to train you to become a phonetician but simply to make you aware of some of the important aspects of the phonetics of English. We are giving you a very brief account (just a bare minimum) of all the facts. Many details have been left out. We also believe that, no course on the phonetics of English can be complete without the teacher and the audio support.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

-classify sounds on the basis of their production

-distinguish between consonants and vowels

-describe sounds by using three term labels

2.3. CONSONANT OF ENGLISH

In Unit 1 we have already seen how consonants are produced. In this section we are going to learn how consonants can be described. We are going to describe all the consonant sounds of English. We had seen (in Unit 1, section 1.5.1) that all consonant sounds can be described by using ***three-term labels*** which tell us about the ***manner*** in which the consonant are produced, the ***place*** (in the oral cavity) at which they are produced, and the ***state of the glottis*** (open or loosely held) during their production. Let us look at each one of these with respect to the consonant sounds of English.

2.3.1 DESCRIBING A CONSONANT---MANNER OF ARTICULATION

The ***manner of articulation*** specifies the kind of closure or narrowing involved in the production of a sound. No consonant sound is fully identified, or described, without stating the manner of articulation.

Depending on whether there is a complete closure, a partial closure in the oral cavity, or only a narrowing of the two articulators that causes friction, or when there is no audible friction, consonants can be classified as **plosives, affricates, fricatives, nasals, flaps, lateral, frictionless continuants and semi vowels**. These are the different manners or ways or **strictures** in which consonants can be articulated. These strictures are briefly described below.

(i) Plosives*:* For the production of plosive sounds the stricture is of **complete closure and sudden release.** In other words, the active and the passive articulators come into firm contact with each other in the oral cavity. As a result, the air pressure is built up behind the closure. (Simultaneously, there is a velic closure. The soft palate is raised and the nasal passage is blocked). The closure is then suddenly removed, causing in the process, a sudden release of the blocked air with some explosive noise. *Sounds produced with the stricture of complete closure and sudden release are called* ***plosives***.

In English sounds [p, b, t, d, k, g] are called plosives. For example, for the production of the sound [p], as explained earlier, first, the lung-air is completely blocked in the oral cavity by the active (lower lip) and the passive (upper lip) articulators, which are in firm contact at the lips. Second, the oral closure is released suddenly and the air escapes with a small explosive noise.

(ii) Affricates: As in the case of plosives, for the production of affricates, the air coming out from the lungs is completely blocked resulting in the building up of pressure behind the closure. However, unlike the plosives, in the case of affricates the oral closure is released ***slowly*** and not suddenly. Because of

this slow separation of the articulators, affricates are characterized by some audible friction, but not by an explosive noise as heard in the case of plosives. *Sounds that are produced with a stricture of complete closure and slow release are called* ***affricates.*** In English the sounds /tΣ / and /dZ / are affricates.

(iii) *Nasals:* In the production of plosives and affricates there is complete closure for both the oral and the nasal passage. In the production of nasal sounds, on the other hand, there is a closure of only the oral passage, while the nasal passage remains open. The active and the passive articulators are in firm contact with each other (at the lips, for example, for the production of [m]).The lung-air can thus pass freely through the nasal passage. *Sounds that are articulated with the stricture of complete oral closure are called* ***nasals.*** In English the sounds [n, m, and N], are treated as nasal sounds.

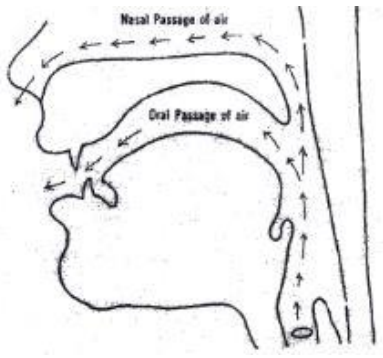

Fig. 1: Articulation of Nasal consonant

(iv) *Rolls:* Unlike the plosives, nasals and the affricates, no closure is involved in the production of rolls. During the production of a roll, the soft palate is raised and the nasal passage is shut. The active articulator strikes several times against the passive articulator (the tip of the tongue taps against the alveolar ridge), as a result, the air escapes between the active and passive articulators intermittently. Such a stricture is called intermittent closure. Most Scottish people pronounce the letter *r* in English words like *rat*, or *red* as a roll. A roll is also known as a *trill. Sounds that are produced with a stricture of intermittent closure are called* ***trills*** *or* ***rolled*** *consonants.*

(v) *Flap:* The only difference between a roll and a flap is that a roll consists of several taps but a flap has a single tap. Here the active articulator strikes (the tongue) against the passive articulator (the alveolar ridge) just once. English people pronounce the letter *r* in *very* as a flap. A flap is also known as a ***tap***.

(vi) *Lateral:* A lateral sound is produced only when there is a partial closure at some point in the mouth, so that the air-stream can escape from one or both sides of the contact. The only lateral sound in English is [l]. For the production of this sound, the active articulator (the tongue) and the passive articulator (the teeth ridge) are in firm contact with each other. The soft palate is raised and therefore the nasal passage is shut. The sides of the tongue are also lowered resulting in a gap between the side of the tongue and the upper molar teeth. The air thus escapes from the sides of the tongue without any friction. Hence, *sounds, which are articulated with the stricture of complete closure in the centre of the vocal tract but with the air escaping along the sides of the tongue without any friction, are called* ***laterals.***

(vii) *Fricative:* For the production of fricatives, there is no closure anywhere in the vocal tract. The active articulator comes very close to the passive articulator, leaving a very narrow gap between the two. When the air coming out from the lungs passes through this gap, it causes audible friction. The air during the production of fricatives can pass continuously; the sound can be therefore produced continuously. In English sounds [f, v, s, z, Σ, Z, T, Δ and h], are called fricatives. All *sounds, which are articulated with a stricture of close approximation, are called* ***fricatives.***

In English, there are two more classes of consonant sounds, which are pronounced like vowels but are grouped under consonants. In English, the sounds [j] and [w] and the sound [r] (when it occurs initially as in *rat, run)* are produced like vowel sounds but they ***function*** like consonants in the language. These are, therefore, treated as consonants and classified as semi-vowels and frictionless continuant, respectively. All the three sounds are produced with the stricture of open approximation.

(viii) *Frictionless continuant:* For the production of British English (and not Scottish English) sound [r], in the oral cavity, the active articulator (the tongue) is brought close to the passive articulator (the teeth ridge) but the gap between the two articulators is wide (and not narrow as in the case of fricatives) and the air escapes with no audible friction. *Sounds, which are produced with the stricture of open approximation, are called* ***frictionless continuants***.

(ix) *Semi-vowels:* The sounds [j] and [w] are known as semi vowels in English. They are called semi vowels because they are produced like vowels but they function like a consonant in the language. When we say that a sound functions like a consonant in a language what we mean is that for the purpose of all rule application these sounds behave like other consonant sounds. Take for example, the sound [w] in English. The word *wet* in English is a monosyllabic (a word with only one syllable) word. A syllable, as we will see later, is made up of vowels and consonants. There can be no syllable without a vowel but there can be syllables without consonants. Hence, in English we have a word like *I* /aI/ which has no consonants at all. Similarly, there are words like *at* /{t/ and *cry* /kraI/, which do not have a consonant either at the beginning or at the end respectively. We can, however, never find a word, which has only consonants. This shows that it is important for a syllable to have vowel sounds. The consonant sounds can be optional at least as far as English is concerned. The optional consonants in English always occur either at the beginning of a syllable (as shown in *cry*) or at the end of a syllable (as in *at*) or both at the beginning and the end of a syllable as in a word like *cat* /k{t/. The two semi-vowels [j] and [w] always occur at the beginning of the syllable in English. Notice that I am saying at the beginning of a syllable and not a word. There is a difference between a syllable and a word. Thus, in English we find words like *yes* /jes/ and *wet* /wet/, the two sounds [j] and [w] occur where other consonants can occur. We could for example, have words like *mess* /mes/ or *pet* /pet/, where [m] and [p] occur at the beginning of a syllable just as [j] and [w] occur at the beginning of a syllable. It is for this reason we say that the two sounds, [j]

and [w] although produced like vowels, function like consonants in English. The same can be said for the sound [r] described above.

For the production of the two semi-vowels in English, the two articulators come together but there is a wide gap between them; as a result the air escapes without any friction. They are produced exactly like the frictionless continuant sound [r] in English. *Sounds, which are produced with the stricture of open approximation, are called* ***semi-vowels.*** These sounds are also known as *approximants.*

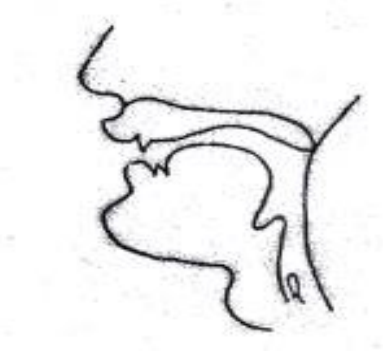

Fig. 2: Articulation of Semi –vowel

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION – 1

Give an example for each of the following:

1. a semi-vowel
2. a frictionless continuant sound
3. a lateral sound
4. an approximant sound
5. a fricative sound

2.3.2 DESCRIBING A CONSONANT---PLACE OF ARTICULATION

A consonant, as we have seen above, is usually described taking into account whether it is voiced or voiceless, its place of articulation, and its manner of articulation. *Manner of articulation* as we have seen above refers to the stricture involved and *plosive, affricate, nasal*, etc. are labels given to consonants according to their manner of articulation.

In this section we shall look at the place of articulation involved in the production of consonants. Consonant may be classified as follows on the basis of the ***place of articulation:***

(i) *Bilabial*: For the production of all bilabial sounds the two lips are the articulators. Sounds like [p], [b], [m], and [w] are bilabial in English.
(ii) *Labio-dental*: When during the production of a sound the active articulator is the lower lip and the passive articulator the upper teeth, the sound is said to be a labio-dental sound. In English [f] and [v] are the two labio-dental sounds.

(iii) *Dental:* For the production of dental sounds the active articulator is the tip of the tongue and the passive articulator the upper teeth. In English there are only two dental sounds. These are [T] and [Δ]. They occur as initial sounds in words like *think* /TINk/ and *those* /Δ≅Yz/.

(iv) *Alveolar:* When the active articulator is the tip of the tongue and the passive articulator the teeth ridge, alveolar sounds are produced. There are many alveolar sounds in English. These are [t], [d], [s], [z], [n], [r], and [l].

(v) *Post-alveolar*: There is only one post alveolar sound in English- the letter r in words like *try, dry, or rail*. For the production of this sound, the active articulator is the tip or the blade of the tongue and the passive articulator is the part of the roof of the mouth that lies immediately behind the teeth ridge.

(vi) *Palato-alveolar*: Palato-alveolar sounds are produced with the tip or blade of the tongue as the active articulator and the teeth ridge as the passive articulator. At the same time the front of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate. The affricate sounds [tΣ] and [dZ] and the fricative sounds [Σ] and [Z] are the only palato-alveolar sounds in English.

(vii) *Retroflex:* For the production of retroflex sounds the curled back tip of the tongue is the active articulator and the back part of the teeth ridge or the hard palate is the passive articulator. There are no retroflex sounds in British English.

(viii) *Palatal*: Palatal sounds are produced when the active articulator is the front of the tongue, and the passive articulator the hard palate. In English, the sound [j] is the only palatal sound.

(ix) *Velar*: When the back of the tongue is the active articulator and the soft palate is the passive articulator velar sounds are produced. In English, the sounds [k], [g], and [N] are the velar sounds.

(x) *Uvular*: Just like the velar sounds where the active articulator is the back of the tongue, here too, the active articulator is the back of the tongue but the passive

articulator is the uvula. No (British) English sound is produced at this place in the oral cavity.

(xi) *Glottal*: Glottal sounds are produced at the glottis and the vocal cords are the two articulators. The sounds are produced by an obstruction, or a narrowing causing friction, but not by vibration, between the vocal cords. The initial sound /h/ in words like *hen* or *hat* is a glottal fricative sound found in English.

There is another glottal sound in English. Some speakers use a glottal stop in place of [p], [t], or [k] at the end of words. The symbol for a glottal stop is [?]. Hence a word like *tip* would be pronounced as /tI?/. The glottal stop sounds like a mild cough!

This completes an account of the main places of articulation for consonants. In the next section we shall discuss the state of the glottis.

SELF- ASESSMENT QUESTION-2

Give an example for each of the following:

1. A nasal sound.
2. A sound produced with the glottis open i. e. not vibrating.
3. A glottal fricative sound.
4. A bilabial semi-vowel.
5. A voiceless fricative sound.

2.3.3 DESCRIBING A CONSONANT---STATE OF GLOTTIS

As explained earlier, the glottis is the opening between the vocal folds. All sounds are classified as either voiceless or voiced depending on the state of the glottis. In Unit 1 we have already listed all the voiced and the voiceless sounds of English.

In addition to these consonant sounds all vowel sounds are also voiced sounds.

SELF- ASESSMENT QUESTION-3

Say whether the following statements are true or false:

1. No speech sounds can be produced if the vocal cords do not vibrate.
2. In English, [w], and [j] are voiced sounds.
3. State of glottis is one of the criteria for describing the consonant sounds of a language.
4. The sound [h] is a glottal sound.
5. For the production of [v], [z], [b], [m], and [j] the vocal cords are wide apart.

All consonants can be now described by using three term labels which refer to (a) the state of the glottis, (b) the place of articulation, and (c) the manner of articulation. The three terms should be arranged in the order in which they are listed above. Some consonants are described below using the three-term labels:

i. The sound [d] in English can now be described as a *voiced alveolar plosive*.
ii. The sound [l] can be described as a *voiced alveolar lateral*.
iii. The sound [n] can be described as a *voiced alveolar nasal.*

iv. The sound [f] can be described as a *voiceless labio-dental fricative.*

v. The sound [h] can be described as a *voiceless glottal fricative.*

In this section we have seen that the consonants are best described in terms of their articulation. If the vocal cords vibrate, the sound produced is *voiced*; if they do not, it is *voiceless*. If the soft palate is raised, the nasal passage gets shut off, and therefore the sound produced is *oral*; if, on the other hand, it is lowered, the nasal passage remains open and the sound produced is either *nasal* (when the oral passage is blocked) or *nasalized* (when the oral passage is also open). Remember, that we do not need to talk of the oral sounds. All sounds which are not nasal are oral sounds. Only nasal sounds are described as nasals.

For the identification or labelling of a consonant in English only three bits of information can suffice: (i) voice or voiceless ness, (ii) place of articulation, and (iii) manner of articulation.

Given below is a three-term description of all the ***consonant*** sounds of English.

[p] is a voiceless bilabial plosive
[b] is a voiced bilabial plosive
[t] is a voiceless alveolar plosive
[d] is a voiced alveolar plosive
[k] is a voiceless velar plosive
[g] is a voiced velar plosive.

[tΣ] is a voiceless palato-alveolar affricate

[dZ] is a voiced palato-alveolar affricate

[f] is a voiceless labio-dental fricative

[v] is a voiced labio-dental fricative

[T] is a voiceless dental fricative

[Δ] is a voiced dental fricative

[s] is a voiceless alveolar fricative.

[z] is a voiced alveolar fricative.

[Σ] is a voiceless palato-alveolar fricative

[Z] is a voiced palato-alveolar fricative

[h] is a voiceless glottal fricative.

[r] is a voiced post-alveolar frictionless continuant

[l] is a voiced alveolar lateral

[j] is a voiced palatal semi-vowel

[w] is a voiced bilabial semi-vowel.

[n] is a voiced alveolar nasal

[m] is a voiced bilabial nasal

[N] is a voiced velar nasal.

SELF- ASESSMENT QUESTION-4

Say whether the following statements are true or false:

1. During the articulation of English consonants [p, t, k] the vocal cords vibrate.
2. Both [f] and [v] are fricative consonants.
3. The front of the tongue touches the hard palate during the articulation of [l].
4. The sound [h] is articulated in the glottis.
5. Both [w] and [j] are produced like vowels but function like consonants in English.

2.4 VOWELS OF ENGLISH

In Unit 1 we had seen how vowels are different from consonants. In particular we had seen how during the production of vowels, there is no obstruction or narrowing in the vocal tract and the air escapes freely. Vowels are articulated with the stricture of ***open approximation***, just like the semi-vowels or the frictionless continuant sounds we have discussed in the previous section. Such a description of vowels, however, does not help us in distinguishing one vowel from another. For the identification, classification and description of vowel sounds, therefore, we must describe

(a) The height of the tongue---i. e. The height to which it is raised.
(b) The part of the tongue---i.e. Which part of the tongue (front, central, or back) has been raised?
(c) The position of the lips--- i.e. Are they rounded or unrounded?

In the following section we shall look at each one of them in some detail.

2.4.1 DESCRIPTION OF VOWELS---PART OF THE TONGUE

The active articulator during the production of all vowel sounds is either the ***front*** or the ***back*** of the tongue or the part that lies between the front and the back of the tongue which is called ***centre*** of the tongue. We raise the front part of the tongue during the production of the (British) English vowel sounds: [I], [i:], [e], and [{]. These are therefore described as the front vowels of English. ***Front vowels*** *are those during the articulation of which the* ***front*** *part of the tongue is raised in the direction of the* ***hard palate***. You must remember that the tongue should not completely block the lung-air during the production of vowel sounds. The moment the lung-air is blocked, a consonant sound will be produced. The vowels in the English words *see, sit, set,* and *sat* are some examples of front vowels.

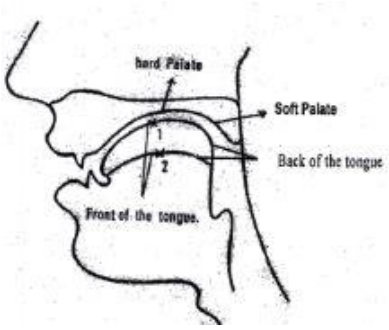

Fig. 3: Front of the tongue rising towards the palate

We raise the back part of the tongue during the production of the (British) English vowel sounds: [Y], [u:], [O:], [Θ] and [a:]. During the articulation of these sounds the back part (and not the front) of the tongue is raised toward the soft (and not the hard)

palate. These are therefore, described as the back vowels of English. ***Back vowels*** *are those during the articulation of which the* ***back*** *part of the tongue is raised in the direction of the* ***soft palate****.* The vowels in English words *could, cool, caught, cot,* and *cart* are some examples of back vowels.

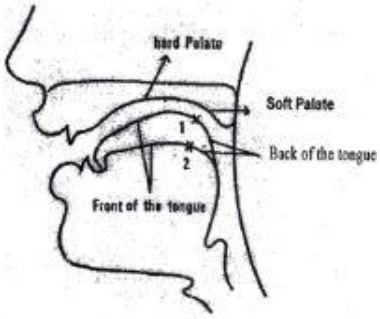

Fig. 4: Back of the tongue rising towards the palate

We raise the centre part of the tongue during the production of the (British) English vowel sounds: [ɜ], [3:], and [ɔ]. During the articulation of these sounds the centre part (and not the front or the back) of the tongue is raised towards a point between the hard and the soft palate. These are therefore described as the central vowels of English. ***Central vowels*** *are those during the articulation of which the centre of the tongue is raised in the direction of that part of the roof of the mouth that lies between the hard and the soft palate.* The vowels in the English words *hut, heard* and the initial sound in *about* are some examples of central vowels.

The above description thus leads us to the conclusion that vowels can be classified into **front, back** and **central**; taking into account the **part of the tongue** that is highest in the mouth during their articulation.

2.4.2 DESCRIPTION OF VOWELS---HEIGHT OF THE TONGUE

If we go back to Unit 1 (Fig. 10), we notice that there are four heights to which the tongue can be raised without obstructing the lung-air. Point 1 in Fig.10 (of Unit 1), reproduced here as Fig. 5 is the highest point to which the tongue can be raised. That is to say, if we raise the tongue higher than that, the space between the two articulators will become so narrow that the air will escape with friction producing a consonant and a not a vowel. The vowels for the articulation of which the tongue rises to the position marked as Point 1 in the diagram are called ***close*** vowels. They are called close because during their articulation, the tongue is very close to the roof of the mouth.

At this point, you must remember that, the tongue is divided into three parts: front, back and central. Vowels produced with either the front or the back or the central part of the tongue can be considered as close vowels. Hence for example, for the articulation of sound [i:], the front part of the tongue is raised towards the point marked as 1. It is therefore not just a front vowel but also a close vowel. Similarly, for the articulation of the vowel [u:], the back part of the tongue rises towards the point marked as 1. It is therefore, a back, close vowel. In principle, therefore, we can have front close vowels, central close vowels and back close vowels. In English there are no central close vowels.

Sound [i:] is the only ***front close vowel*** and sound [u:] is the only ***back close vowel***.

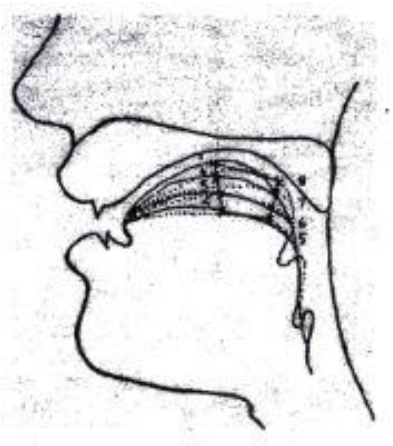

Fig. 5: Different heights of the tongue

The point marked as 4 in Fig.5 is the position of rest for the tongue. The tongue cannot go down beyond that point. The tongue is as far away from the roof of the mouth as is possible. This is therefore called the open position. Vowels articulated when the tongue is in the open position are called ***open*** vowels. Again, we can have front open vowels, central open vowels and back open vowels. In English there is only one vowel sound [a:], which is described as ***back open vowel***. There are no front or central open vowels in English.

The positions marked 2 and 3 in Fig. 5 are the two imaginary points between the close and the open position (the two extreme points) of the tongue. Point 2 is thus referred to as the ***half-close position*** and point 3 as the ***half-open position*** for describing the vowel sounds. Point 2 is called the half-close position since the tongue is between the close and open positions, but closer to the close position than to the open position. Similarly,

point 3 is called the half-open position since the tongue is between the close and open positions, but closer to the open position than to the close position. We can therefore, in principle have the following positions: front half-close, central half-close and back half-close positions and front half-open, central half-open and back half-open positions.

The area joining the 8 points in Fig.5 is called the vowel area. We can produce vowel sounds if the tongue is raised or lowered somewhere within this area. The vowels articulated at these tongue positions are called **Cardinal Vowels**. The symbols used to describe these eight positions are slightly different from the symbols we use to describe the vowel sounds of English. These 8 Points or the cardinal vowels are **theoretical points**. They are useful because we can use them as **convenient reference points** to describe the vowel sounds of any language. The vowel sounds of a given language may or may not occur exactly at point 1, or point 5 or 6. They may occur at just below the point 4 position or just above the point 5 position as is the case with English vowel sounds [{] and [Θ] respectively.

In English the vowels [I] and [Y] occur at ***just above half-close position***. They are therefore described as *front,* just above the half-close position and *back,* just above the half-close position, respectively. This is shown in Fig. 6.

The qualitative difference between the two vowels is thus captured by describing the ***part of the tongue*** and the ***height of the tongue*** during their articulation.

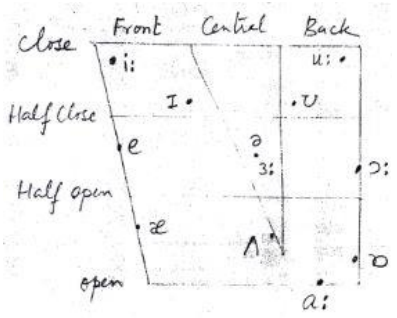

Fig. 6: Vowel diagram

2.4.3 DESCRIPTION OF VOWELS---POSITION OF THE LIPS

Yet another criterion we take into account for the classification of vowels is the *position of the lips.* According to this, vowels are grouped under two categories: ***rounded*** and ***unrounded.*** We have already discussed these in Unit 1.

To conclude, we can now describe a vowel using the following three criteria:

(i) The part of the tongue raised during its articulation (front, central, or back)

(ii) The height to which the tongue is raised (close, half-close, half-open, or open), and

(iii) The position of the lips (rounded or unrounded).

The vowel diagram in Fig. 6 gives us only two pieces of information regarding a vowel---the part of the tongue raised and the height to which it is raised. It does not give us any information regarding the position of the lips.

We can describe all the pure vowels of English as follows:

[i:] is a front close unrounded vowel.

[I] is a front just above half-close unrounded vowel.

[e] is a front just below half-close unrounded vowel.

[{] is a front just below half-open unrounded vowel.

[u:] is a back close rounded vowel.

[Y] is a back just above half-close rounded vowel.

[O:] is a back between half-close and half-open rounded vowel.

[Θ] is a back just above open rounded vowel.

[a:] is a back open unrounded vowel.

[≅] is a central between half-close and half-open unrounded vowel.

[3:] is a central between half-close and half-open unrounded vowel.

[ς] is a central between half-open and open unrounded vowel.

SELF- ASESSMENT QUESTION-5

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

1. [a] is a back open ----------vowel.

2. For the articulation of all vowels the------of the mouth is the passive articulator.

3. [I] is a front----------unrounded vowel.

4. [ς] is a -------- between half-open and open unrounded vowel.

5. There are no ------or ------- open vowels in English.

2.5 DIPHTHONGS

We have used the word pure vowels above. Does that mean there are some other kinds of vowels as well? The answer is, yes. There are two types of vowels in English: pure vowels (or monophthongs) and diphthongs. All the vowels that we have looked at so far are the pure vowels of English. *Diphthongs are those vowels during the articulation of which the tongue moves from one position to another*. Take for example, the two English words *see* /si:/ and *dine* /daIn/. Notice that during the production of the vowel [i:] in *see* we can prolong the vowel indefinitely. But during the production of the vowel sound in *dine* we notice a change in the quality of the vowel. We begin with the sound [a] but we end with the sound [I]. In other words, *the vowel at the beginning does not sound the same as the vowel at the end*. Such vowels of changing quality are called ***diphthongs.*** A diphthong may be described as a vowel glide, that is, the tongue first takes the position for the articulation of one vowel and then moves (or glides) towards the position required for the articulation of another vowel. Pure vowels or monophthongs are thus vowels, which do not change their quality.

Another important thing to note about diphthongs is that they always occur within a single syllable. Thus the diphthong in the word *arrive* /ə-raIv/ occurs in the second syllable. (Syllable division is shown with a hyphen). If the diphthong does not occur in a single syllable then the two vowel sound are said to be a sequence of two pure vowel as is seen the word *vehicle* /vi:- I-kl/, the two consecutive vowel sounds in this word occur in two different syllables.

A diphthong can be diagrammatically represented using the vowel quadrilateral as shown below in Fig. 7. The starting point is usually marked with a dot and the direction in which the tongue moves is marked with an arrow.

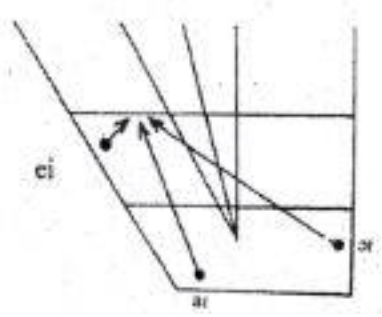

Fig. 7: Some vowel glides of English

For the description of a diphthong we use the same three-term label that is used for the description of pure vowels. The difference is that here instead of describing one vowel we have to describe two vowels. Once again, we do not know anything about the position of the lips from this diagram. In English there are only eight diphthongs: [eI], [aI], [OI], [e≅], [Y≅], [I ≅], [≅Y], and [aY].

We can describe the diphthongs as follows:

For the production of the diphthong [eI] the tongue glides from the front just below the half-close unrounded position to the front just above the half-close rounded position. (See Fig. 7).

For the production of the diphthong [aI] the tongue glides from the front open unrounded position to the front just above the half-close rounded position.

For the production of the diphthong [OI] the tongue glides from the back just below the half-open rounded position to the front just above the half-close rounded position.

For the production of the diphthong [e≅] the tongue glides from the front just below the half-close unrounded position to the central between the half-close and half-open unrounded position.

For the production of the diphthong [Y≅] the tongue glides from the back just above the half-close rounded position to the central between the half-close and half-open unrounded position.

For the production of the diphthong [I≅] the tongue glides from the front just above the half-close unrounded position to the central between the half-close and half-open unrounded position.

For the production of the diphthong [≅Y] the tongue glides from the centre between the half-close and half-open unrounded position to the back just above the half-close rounded position.

For the production of the diphthong [aY] the tongue glides from the back open unrounded position to the back just above the half-close rounded position.

SELF-ASESSMENT QUESTION-6

1. A diphthong is a---------- glide occupying --------syllable.
2. Vowels can be classified into ---------- and ---------, taking into account their changing or unchanging quality.
3. Pure vowels are vowels of ----------quality.

4. The diphthong [eI] is a glide from the front ----------unrounded position to front just above half-close ----------position.

5. There are in all ------pure vowels and----------diphthongs in English.

2.6 SUMMARY

This was quite a big unit and we looked at the ways in which consonant and vowel sounds can be described. We classified all the consonant and vowel (both pure and diphthong) sounds of English. Three-term labels for the description of consonants, pure vowels and diphthongs were discussed in detail. The unit primarily described how these sounds are produced. Little attention was given to how these sounds actually *function* in English language.

2.7 ANSWER KEY

Answer to self-assessment question -1

1. /w/
2. / r /
3. / l /
4. / I /
5. / s /

Answer to self-assessment question -2

1. [n] or [m], or [N]
2. [p] or any voiceless sound
3. [h]

4. [w]

5. [f] or [s], or [Σ], or [T]

Answer to self-assessment question -3

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False

Answer to self-assessment question -4

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. True

Answer to self-assessment question -5

1. unrounded
2. roof
3. just above half-close
4. central
5. front, central

Answer to self-assessment question-6

1. vowel, one
2. diphthong, monophthong
3. unchanging
4. just below half-close, unrounded
5. 12, 8

2.8 REFERENCES

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LESSON 3

THE PHONEME, THE SYLLABLE AND THE ACCENTUAL PATTERNS IN ENGLISH

Contents

LESSON 3

THE PHONEME, THE SYLLABLE AND THE ACCENTUAL PATTERNS IN ENGLISH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1 we saw that for the production of speech sounds we need a pulmonic, egressive air-stream mechanism. We also studied in detail the various organs of speech that are responsible for converting the lung-air into speech sounds before it escapes into the atmosphere. In Unit 2 we saw how sounds of English are classified on the basis of their production. We also described all the sounds of English language by using different sets of three-term labels for consonants and vowels.

In this unit we are going to look at the definition of a *phoneme* and understand the difference between a phoneme and a sound. We are then going to leave the sounds behind and look at some units that are bigger than the sounds----the *syllable* and the word. In English each syllable of a word is pronounced with a varying degree of *prominence*. The syllables which stand out or are said with greater prominence are said to be *accented*, or to receive the *accent*. In this unit we will try to understand the notion of *word accent* and the crucial role it plays in the phonology of English.

A word of caution, (at the risk of repeating myself), before you begin to read this unit. In this course our aim is to make you aware of some of the important aspects

of the phonetics of English. We are giving you a very brief account (just the bare minimum) of all the facts. Many details have been left out. Real-life speech is a much more complicated affair.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

-describe what a phoneme is

-explain what a syllable is

-explain the necessity for learning the word accentual patterns of English

-predict to a large extent the word accentual patterns of English

-mark accent in connected speech

3.3 THE PHONEME

Human beings are capable of producing an infinite number of speech sounds. However, when we look at the sounds of a language we find that not all the sounds that we are capable of producing are part of that language. Every language makes its own selection of speech sounds from this vast repertoire of sounds. For example, we find that in Bangla the sound /a / does not exist and most Bengali speakers pronounce a word like /*ka:jal/ 'a name'* as /*ka:jol/*. Similarly, an Assamese does not distinguish between short /I/ and long / i:/ and we find that many speakers from Assam cannot distinguish between words like *fill* and *feel.* Thus the selection of sounds that a particular language makes is called the sound system of that language. English, therefore, has 44 sounds, Hindi 46, Tamil 41 and Kannada 47.

What is most interesting about the sounds of a language is that all sounds are ***distinct*** from each other. That is, all the sounds that a language selects make meaningful difference between words and convey distinctions of meaning in communication between two individuals speaking that language. In English, for example, we can say that the sounds /p/ and / b/ are two distinct sounds because if we substitute one sound with the other the meaning of the word changes. Take two words such as *pat* and *bat.* If we substitute the sound /p/ of *pat* with the sound /b/ (in the same position ie at the beginning of the word) the meaning of the word changes. The difference between the two words /p/ and /b/ is said to be ***contrastive*** in this position. Phonetically also the two sounds are different. /p/ is a voiceless, bilabial plosive whereas /b/ is a voiced bilabial plosive. Any two dissimilar sounds which can occur in the same position (here, word initially, for example) and are contrastive are called ***phonemes.*** Let us try to substitute the sound /p/ in *pat* with some other sounds in the same position. We find that we can have words such as *mat, sat, cat, fat, hat, rat*, etc. the sounds /m/, /s/, /k/, /f/, /h/, and /r/ are all phonemes because according to our definition , given above, they are all phonetically dissimilar (i.e. have different three-term labels) and contrast with /p/ in the same environment.

Notice how I am going on repeating the phrase 'in the same position'. It is important to have the substitution in the same environment in order to claim that one sound contrasts with the other. If for instance, I substitute the *first* sound of *pat* (i.e. /p/) with the *last* sound of /*pad*/ (i.e. /d/) then the contrast will be not between /p/ and /d/ but between /t/ and /d/. We will be only able to say that in English the two sounds /t/ and /d/ contrast with each other because the substitution of one sound

with the other changes the meaning of the word from *pat* to *pad.* In other words, what we are trying to say is that when we talk about phonemes of a language, we should be able to show examples of each phoneme in a contrastive position as we had shown above with the example of *pat, mat, sat, cat, fat, hat, rat*, etc. A pair of words that shows contrastive sounds is called a ***minimal pair.*** Thus the two words *pat* and *bat* form a minimal pair just as *pat* and *pad* do. The difference between the two pairs is that in the case of *pat* and *bat* the contrast is seen in the *initial* position whereas in the case of *pat* and *pad* the contrast is seen in the last position. You must have noticed another interesting thing about these pairs; in both the pairs except for the contrasting sounds, all other sounds are the same. In a pair like *pat* and *bat*, the second and the third sounds are the same. The difference is only in the case of the first sound or the initial position.

Remember, that in English sometimes there is difference between the way you pronounce a word and write the same word. For example, the word *bird* is pronounced as /b3:d/ i.e. without the /r/ sound and the vowel sound /3:/ is a long vowel and not the short vowel /I/ as it appears in the spelling. When we talk of the phonemes of a language, we are talking about the sounds of that language, i.e. the way we *pronounce* the words and not the spellings of the words in that language. There is a difference between the sounds (pronunciation) and the alphabets (orthography) of a language.

Look at some more examples of contrasting sounds of English: *man* vs *men*, *bat* vs *but*, where only the middle sound is different. Hence, what we have shown is that sounds can contrast in any of the three positions: initial, medial and final. In order for a sound to become contrastive all other /r/ sounds of the (minimal) pair should

be the same. Whenever a sound is contrastive in a language, it is known as a phoneme of that language.

In Unit 1 & 2 we have listed all the phonemes of English while discussing the consonant and the vowel sounds of English. Thus, as you can see that the consonants and vowel sounds of a language are nothing but the phonemes of that language. We call them phonemes because each one of those sounds can form a minimal pair with another sound i.e. each one of those sounds is contrastive in nature.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION –1

Give one example each of a minimal pair from English where the contrast is in the initial, medial and final position.

Remember you may have to transcribe the words using the phonetic symbols otherwise you may go wrong. In English, as you know, we pronounce many words in one way but write them in another way. You can take the help of a dictionary to see the correct pronunciation of a word.

3.4 THE SYLLABLE

Words, as you already know are made up of sounds. The words *two* /tu:/ and *see* /si:/ are made up of two sounds each. The words *cat* /k{t/ and *back* /b{k/ are made up of three sounds each. Similarly, the words *sent* /sent/ and *build* /bIld/ are made up of four sounds each. The words *blank* /bl{Nk/ and *slant* /sla:nt/ are made up of five sounds each. What is common to all these words is that they are all

monosyllabic words. In other words, all of them have only one *vowel*. But there are a number of words in every language which have more than one syllable. The English words *teacher* /ti:-tΣ≅/ and *student* /stju:-dent/ are both ***disyllabic*** words (the two syllables are separated here with a hyphen), while the words *prominence* /prΘ-mI-n≅ns/ and *quality* /kwΘ-l≅-tI/ are ***trisyllabic*** words. Similarly, words such as *pronunciation* /pr≅-nçn-si-eI- Σn/ and *international* /In-t≅-n{Σ-nl/ are ***polysyllabic*** words.

By now, you must have guessed that it is the number of vowel sounds present in a word that decides the number of syllables a word has. Thus *teacher* and *student* have two vowel sounds each, while *prominence* and *quality* have three vowel sounds each and are therefore called disyllabic and trisyllabic words respectively. Remember, that it is difficult to count the number of vowels or syllables a word has until you speak or transcribe the word. The word *teacher* for example has three letters which we consider as vowels in English orthography but it has only two vowel sounds when we pronounce it or in its phonetic alphabet.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION --2

State the number of syllables in each of the following words:

1. notification
2. loud
3. marriage
4. marry
5. examination
6. political
7. responsibility
8. photographer

9. advertisement
10. anti-establishmentarianism

3.5 WORD ACCENT

Word accent is the ***relative degree of prominence*** with which the different syllables of a word are pronounced. Monosyllabic words, therefore, when said in isolation (i.e. not in connected speech) are said to have no accent. This is also the reason why accent is not marked on monosyllabic words in dictionaries.

The prominence of a particular syllable in a word could be due to ***stress.*** In order to stress a syllable, we use greater breath force or muscular energy during the articulation of that particular syllable in comparison to other syllables in that word. But often the prominence on a syllable is not just because of the stress; it could be because of the ***length*** and the ***quality*** of the vowel in that syllable (we have seen these in the Unit 2), and the ***pitch change*** on that syllable (pitch will be discussed later). The accented syllable is also heard by the listener as ***louder*** than the other syllables. Generally all these work together to render a syllable more prominent than its neighbouring syllables. It is for this reason that the term 'word accent' is sometimes preferred to 'word stress'.

In English, word accent plays a dominant role. All ***content*** or ***lexical*** words of English are said to receive accent. Content words are nouns, main verbs other than *be*, adjectives, adverbs, the words *yes* and *no* and demonstrative and interrogative pronouns. Generally, these words are more important than others in conveying the

meaning of a sentence. Words that generally receive no accent are called ***form*** or ***grammatical*** words i.e. words, which perform a grammatical function rather than carry meaning. These are pronouns (other than demonstrative and interrogative), prepositions, helping or auxiliary verbs, articles, and conjunctions. Later on, we will consider the crucial role played by the form words in maintaining the ***rhythm*** of English.

Every (content) word in English has a certain characteristic accentual pattern shared by the native speaker and hearer alike. Any change in this pattern may deform the word beyond recognition. (It has been found that when Indians pronounce a word like *develop* with accent on the first syllable (instead of the second), native speakers of English perceive the word as *double up*!). In fact the characteristic accentual pattern of the word is as much a part of its identity as its sound (vowels and consonants) sequence. No one can, therefore, learn the pronunciation of an English word (of more than one syllable) without learning its accent, or accentual pattern.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION --3

Identify the content and the form words in the following sentence.

Rhythm is a kind of periodicity, which would mean the recurrence of certain patterns of colour, design, or sound at regular intervals of space or time. Rhythm in a piece of drawing or embroidery refers to the even spacing of a certain motif or design.

3.5.1 DEGREES OF WORD ACCENT

We said earlier that in a polysyllabic word, one of the syllables receives greater prominence than the others. However, in several polysyllabic English words, more than one syllable is accented or prominent. For example, the English word *education* /e-dZY-keI-Σn/ has the highest degree of prominence on the third syllable. The first syllable receives the next degree of accent. Next in line are the second and the last syllable respectively. In practice only two degrees of accent are recognized since it serves no purpose to go beyond the second degree. So the word education has two prominent syllables---/keI/ and /e/. Since the highest degree of accent is on the third syllable the listener will hear the syllable /keI/ as the most prominent syllable. The third syllable is said to carry the ***primary accent,*** and the first syllable the **secondary accent.** The remaining two syllables are said to be the *weak* syllables or *unaccented* syllables.

Primary accent is marked with a vertical bar above and in front of the syllable in question. Secondary accent is marked with a vertical bar below and in front of the syllable to which it refers. A few examples of some polysyllabic words of English are given below:

organization	/ %O:-g≅-naI- ∀zeI-Σn/
examination	/Ig-%z{–mI-∀neI- Σn/
comprehensible	/ %kΘm-prI-∀hen-s≅-bl/
international	/%In-t≅-∀n{-Σ≅-nl/
conventionality	/k≅n-%ven-Σ≅-∀n{-lI-tI/

What we have said so far is that in an English word of more than one syllable, one of the syllables stands out from the rest and this syllable is said to receive the accent. In addition, there are several polysyllabic words in which more than one syllable may be prominent. In such a case the syllable that receives the highest degree of prominence is said to receive the primary accent and the syllable which receives the second highest degree of prominence is said to receive the secondary accent. All other syllables in the word are said to be unaccented.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION --4

Identify the syllable which has the primary accent in the following polysyllabic words. You may need to use a dictionary.

1. recommendation
2. meteorological
3. autobiography
4. accommodation
5. intelligentsia

3.5.2 PLACEMENT OF WORD ACCENT

Learning of word accent presents a number of problems for a non-native speaker of English. There is no easy 'formula' that s/he can learn in order to accent the right syllable. In some languages, it is very easy; the accent is always on the first syllable (as in Czech and Finnish) or on the last but one syllable (as in Polish). Such languages are said to have a 'fixed' word accent. In English, however, no simple

rule of this kind can be given. The only thing that is ‘fixed’ about the English word accent is that every (content) word has its own ‘fixed’ accentual pattern. That is, a given word is always accented on the same syllable wherever it occurs in a sentence. The accent is also ‘free’ in English in the sense that it is not associated with a particular syllable of a word. Some words are accented on the first syllable, some on the second, others on the third syllable, and so on.

Some examples of words with accent on different syllables are given below:

Accent on the first syllable

∀doctor	/ ∀dΘkt≅/
∀wisdom	/ ∀wIzd≅m/
∀advertise	/ ∀{dv≅taIz/

Accent on the second syllable

become	/bI-∀kç m/
below	/bI-∀l≅Y/
herself	/h≅-∀self/

Accent on the third syllable

application	/ {p-lI-∀keI-Σn/
disappoint	/dIs-≅-∀pOInt/
understand	/çn-d≅-∀st{nd/

Accent on the fourth syllable

academician	/≅-%k{-d≅-∀mI-Σn/

inferiority	/In-%fI≅-ri-∀Θ-r≅-tI/
responsibility	/rI-%spΘn-s≅-∀bI-l≅ -tI/

Accent on the last syllable

payee	/peI-∀i:/
engineer	/en-dZI-∀nI≅/
guarantee	/g{-r≅n-∀ti:/

Since the accent in English words is not associated with a particular syllable, it may seem that a non –native speaker of English will have to learn it almost word by word. But things are really not as bad as they might seem. Studies have been made and quite a number of regularities in word accentual patterns in English have been observed. These regularities are sometimes subject to such few exceptions that one can safely call them 'rules' of word accent. In the following sections we shall talk about some of these rules.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION -- 5

Mark the primary accent on the following words:

1. extinguish
2. appropriate
3. demonstrate
4. refusal
5. describe.
6. suppose
7. within
8. towards

9. opposition 10. therefore

3.5.3 FUNCTIONS OF WORD ACCENT

There are a number of disyllabic words in English in which word accent depends upon whether the words **function** as nouns/adjectives or as verbs.

If these words are used as **nouns or adjectives**, the accent is on the *first* syllable and if they are used as **verbs** then the accent is on the *second* syllable. To illustrate this, some of the important pairs of such words are given below:

Word	*Noun/adjective*	*verb*
absent	/ ∀{bs≅nt/	/ ≅b∀sent/
conduct	/∀kΘnd≅kt/	/k≅n∀dʂkt/
contrast	/ ∀kΘntra:st/	/k≅n∀tra:st/
desert	/ ∀dez≅t/	/dI∀z3:t/
object	/ ∀ΘbdZIkt/	/≅b∀dZekt/

It must be remembered that not all disyllabic words, which can be used as nouns and verbs, undergo such a shift in accentual pattern. There are words like, ∀*limit,* ∀ *order, re*∀*mark,* ∀ *visit,* etc. which are accented on the same syllable whether they are used as nouns or as verbs.

Word accent also sometimes helps distinguish ***compound*** words from ***noun phrases*** and verb-plus-adverbial collocations, as is illustrated in the following pairs of words:

Compound	*Noun phrases*
∀blackbird	∀black ∀bird
∀crossword	∀cross ∀word
∀dropout	∀drop ∀out
∀grandmother	∀grand ∀mother
∀put-on	∀put ∀on
∀pushover	∀push ∀over

Sometimes variations in word accent are associated with the ***morphological*** structure of the word. If a word is made from another word by adding a suffix or a prefix, the word accent shifts accordingly as longer words are derived from smaller words. Consider for example the changing accentual pattern of the following words:

∀democrat	de∀mocracy	demo∀cratic
∀politics	po∀litical	poli∀tician
∀photograph	pho∀tographer	photo∀graphical
∀hypocrite	hy∀pocricy	hypo∀critical
∀mechanism	me∀chanical	mechani∀zation

There are a few compound words with *–ever* and *-self* as the second element in which the second element receives the primary accent. A few examples are given below:

her∀self how∀ever
him∀self what∀ever
my∀self when∀ever

There are some compound words in which the primary accent falls on the second element and the secondary accent falls on the first element. A few examples are:

%bad-∀tempered %home-∀made
%country-∀house %post-∀graduate
%good-∀looking %vice-∀chancellor

All these examples might make you feel that word accent is often irregular and unpredictable in English, but there are a few useful rules of word accent in English. We shall now examine the 'rule' of word accent in the following section. But before that you must do the following activity.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION --6

Mark primary accent on the following sets of compound words:

1. airport
2. thanks-giving

3. watercolour 4. lipstick 5. fellow-feeling

3.5.4 REGULARIRIES OF WORD ACCENT

For the purpose of marking word accent, syllables are given some names. The last syllable is called the *ultimate* syllable, the second last syllable is called the *penultimate* syllable and the third last is called the *ante-penultimate*. Syllables are generally counted from the end (and not from the beginning) of a word; although one does find reference to the first syllable as the *initial* syllable. Some of the rules for marking accent that one can safely rely on are given below:

Rule 1: Words with weak prefixes take the accent on the root. For example:

a∀lone
a ∀round
be∀low
be ∀come
re ∀mind
re∀lease

Rule 2: The inflectional suffixes *–ed, -es, -ing* do not affect the accent. For example;

∀box	∀boxes
dis∀ease	dis∀eases
∀guide	∀guided
re∀late	re∀lated
∀light	∀lighting
∀reason	∀reasoning

Rule 3: The derivational suffixes *-age, -en, -ess, -ful, -hood, -ice, -ish, -less, -ly, -or, -ship, -ure, -zen*, etc. do not affect the accent. For example:

∀wreck	∀wreckage
∀marry	∀marriage
∀bright	∀brighten
∀light	∀lighten
∀actor	∀actress
∀tiger	∀tigress
∀beauty	∀beautiful
∀duty	∀dutiful
∀brother	∀brotherhood
∀coward	∀cowardice
∀fever	∀feverish
∀bottom	∀bottomless
∀certain	∀certainly
col∀lect	col∀lector

∀scholar ∀scholarship

ex∀pose ex∀posure

∀city ∀citizen

Rule 4: Words ending in *-ic, ical, -ically, -ial, -ially,- ious* suffix have the primary accent on the syllable preceding the suffix. For example:

apolo∀getic

pa∀thetic

bio∀logical

e∀lectrical

∀chemically

eco∀nomically

com∀mercial

me∀morial

com∀mercially

confi∀dentially

Rule 5: Words ending in *–ion* suffix have the primary accent on the penultimate syllable. For example:

admi∀ration

deco∀ration

combi∀nation

Rule 6: Words ending in *-ity* suffix have the primary accent on the ante-penultimate syllable. For example

a∀bility

elec∀tricity

ca∀pacity

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION -- 7

Bearing in mind the rules of word accent, mark the primary accent in the following words:

1. simplification
2. possibility
3. inductive
4. photography
5. cordial
6. autocracy
7. academic
8. ornamental
9. magician
10. capacity

3.6 ACCENT AND RHYTHMN IN CONNECTED SPEECH

So far we have looked at words as they are pronounced in isolation. We saw that in all the disyllabic, trisyllabic and polysyllabic words it is one syllable that stands out as the most prominent syllable. In much the same way, some words always stand out from the rest in an utterance comprising two or more words. These words are more prominent than others. Their relative prominence is studied under the accentual features of connected speech. In this section we shall examine how words are pronounced in connected speech.

As we have said above, not all words in connected speech receive equal prominence. Some words are more prominent than others. Such words are said to be accented. Look at the following examples, in which the words that are accented are marked with a vertical bar placed before them:

1. ∀Meet me at ∀ten.
2. She ∀came.
3. ∀Sing a ∀song.
4. ∀Ram and ∀Shyam are ∀brothers.
5. He ∀promised he'd ac∀cept the invi∀tation.
6. Did ∀anyone re∀member to ∀lock the ∀door?
7. ∀No, ∀thanks.
8. ∀Yes, he ∀will.
9. It's ∀no ∀trouble at ∀all.
10. I've ∀found my ∀book.

If you look at these sentences carefully, you will notice that the words which have been accented are generally the *content* words. Words which have not been accented are the *form* words.

You must also note that when words of more than one syllable are accented in connected speech, they receive the accent at the same place where they would have been accented when said in isolation. In the sentences given above words like *re∀member, invi∀tation, ac∀cept, ∀anyone,* etc. receive the accent only on the syllables which receive the accent when these words are said in isolation. In other words, those syllables, which do not receive the accent when said in isolation, do not have the potentiality of receiving the accent when they occur in connected speech.

Another very important aspect of connected speech in English is the characteristic English rhythm. Rhythm is a kind of periodicity, in other words, recurrence of certain patterns of colour, design or sound at regular (equal) intervals of time. In music, a certain kind of beat being repeated at equal intervals of time constitutes its rhythm. Rhythm in language refers to a periodic recurrence of patterns of sounds in an utterance. English is said to have *stress-timed rhythm*. This means that in an English utterance, the accented syllables have a tendency to occur at regular intervals of time, irrespective of the number of unaccented syllables intervening between one accented syllable and the next. Consider the following sentences:

1. He ∀did his ∀best to ∀save the ∀girl.
2. I ∀always ∀like a ∀cup of ∀coffee.
3. ∀Ram has ∀just re∀turned from ∀Delhi.

4. ∀Tell him to ∀go to the exami∀nation hall.

5. ∀Do you ∀know that they are in ∀trouble?

If we look carefully at sentences 1-5 we shall notice that the accented syllables do occur somewhat regularly, irrespective of the number of unaccented syllables between one accented syllable and the next. In sentences number 1, 2, and 3, for example, there is only one unaccented syllable between any two accented syllables. In sentences number 4 and 5, on the other hand, there is no regular number of unaccented syllables between two accented syllables. In sentence 4, for example, there are two unaccented syllables between the first two accented syllables, but there are five unaccented syllables between the next two accented syllables.

∀Tell him to ∀go to the exami∀nation hall

1 2 1 2 3 4 5 1 2

It might be difficult for the speaker to say this sentence in such a way that the accented syllables occur at regular intervals of time. In order to say this sentence in accordance with the correct rhythm of English the speaker will have to weaken the pronunciations of certain words (and therefore say them quickly) and prolong those of others. Generally the unaccented syllables, most of which are form words, are weakened and said very fast in order to maintain the rhythm of the language. In the above sentence therefore, the time taken to say the unaccented syllables *him to* should be the same as the time taken to say the unaccented syllables *to the exami-, which* in turn should be the same as the time taken to produce *-tion hall*. This brings us to yet another important aspect of English rhythm---***weak forms.***

It is said that there are roughly 45 words in English which have two or more pronunciations- one strong (or dictionary) pronunciation and one weak pronunciation. Words of this kind are called *weak form* words. It is very important for non-native speakers of English to learn these. The weak forms exhibit reduction of length of sounds, weakening of the vowels in them, and also deleting of vowels and consonants. Given below are some examples of weak forms:

Word	strong form	weak form
a	/eI/	/ ≅/
an	/{n/	/≅n/
the	/Δi:/	/ΔI/ before a vowel
		/Δ≅/ before a consonant
are	/a:/	/≅/
can	/k{n/	/k≅n/
is	/Iz/	/z/, /s/
must	/mçst/	/m≅st/, /m≅s/
at	/{t/	/≅t/
for	/fO:/	/f≅/
of	/Θv/	/≅v/
to	/tu:/	/t≅/ (before a consonant)
		/tY/ (before a vowel)
and	/ {nd/	/≅nd/, /≅n/, /n/
her	/h3:/	/h≅/, / 3:/, /≅/

It should be remembered that the weak forms of preposition are not used when they occur finally in a sentence. The *from* and *to* in sentences like *Where has she come from?* and *Where has she gone to?* are not pronounced as /frΘm/ and /tu:/ but as /fr≅m/ and /t≅/ respectively.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION -- 8

Mark the accented syllables in the following sentences with a vertical bar above and before the accented syllable.

1. Tell him to come here as soon as possible.
2. Let's start as early as we can.
3. Come for a meal to my house tomorrow.
4. Wasn't it extremely kind of him?
5. We'll tell the maid to clean it again.

3.7 SUMMARY

We began this Unit with the discussion of what is a phoneme and a syllable. We then moved on to examine the notion of word accent in English. We saw that word accent is the relative degree of prominence with which different syllables of a word are pronounced. In English, word accent is both free and fixed. Every word of more than one syllable has its own accentual pattern. In connected speech, some words are more prominent than others. These are generally the content words; form words are generally left unaccented. This is done primarily to maintain the stress-timed rhythm of English. The unaccented syllables are also weakened in connected speech

in order to maintain the rhythm. The learning of weak forms is, therefore, extremely necessary.

3.8 ANSWER KEY

Answers to self-assessment question --1

Several possibilities exist. We are giving you only one example of each here.

In the initial position: *bird* and *word* i.e. / b3:d/ vs. /w3:d/

In the medial position: *bird* and *bed* i.e. / b3:d/ vs. /bed/

In the final position: *bird* and *burn* i.e. /b3:d/ vs. /b3:n/

Answers to self-assessment question --2

1. Five syllables
2. One syllable
3. Two syllables
4. Two syllables
5. Five syllables
6. Four syllables
7. Six syllables
8. Four syllables
9. Four syllables
10. Ten syllables

Answers to self-assessment question-- 3

Content words: rhythm, kind, periodicity, mean, recurrence, certain, patterns, colour, design, sound, regular, intervals, space, time, piece, drawing, embroidery, refers, even, spacing, motif, design.

Form words: is, a , of, which, would, the, of, or, at, in, to,

(Words which were repeated have not been included here).

Answers to self-assessment question-- 4

1. fourth syllable
2. fourth syllable
3. fourth syllable
4. fourth syllable
5. fourth syllable

Answers to self-assessment question-- 5

1. ex∀tinguish
2. ap∀propriate
3. ∀demonstrate
4. re∀fusal
5. de∀scribe.
6. sup∀pose
7. wi∀thin
8. to∀wards
9. oppo∀sition
10. ∀therefore

Answers to self-assessment question-- 6

1. ∀airport
2. ∀thanks-giving
3. ∀watercolour
4. ∀lipstick
5. ∀fellow-feeling

Answers to self-assessment question-- 7

1. simplifi∀cation
2. possi∀bility
3. in∀ductive
4. pho∀tography
5. ∀cordial
6. au∀tocracy
7. aca∀demic
8. orna∀mental
9. ma∀gician
10. ca∀pacity

Answers to self-assessment question-- 8

1. ∀Tell him to ∀come here as ∀soon as ∀possible.
2. ∀Let's ∀start as ∀early as we ∀can.
3. ∀Come for a ∀meal to my ∀house to∀morrow.

4. ∀Wasn't it ex∀tremely ∀kind of him?

5. We'll ∀tell the ∀maid to ∀clean it a∀gain.

3.9 REFERENCES

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IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Describe the different organs of speech.
2. How do you distinguish between oral and nasal sounds?
3. What are the different things we need to know for the production of Consonant and vowel sound?
4. what are the three term labels for describing the consonant and vowel sounds?
5. What are the different places of articulation?
6. What is the distinction between vowels and diphthongs?
7. What is a phoneme?
8. What is a syllable?
9. What are the functions of word accent?
10. What is the rhythm of English?

UNIT II
MORPHOLOGY

The study of the internal structure of words is called morphology. Although linguists were always aware of the importance of words, morphology did not emerge as a distinct sub-branch of linguistics until the nineteenth century. We present morphology here from the standpoint of current, mainstream generative grammar.

This Unit is devoted mainly to the problems of English word-formation and the ways in which word-formation interacts with phonology, syntax and the lexicon. In Lesson 1, we discuss in brief the notion of *word* as understood in morphology and the different ways in which we can classify morphemes—the word-building elements. The lesson concludes with how the words can be analyzed by identifying the morphemes on the basis of different roles or functions they perform in the formation of the word. Lesson 2 deals with some of the more common word-building processes found in English and the terminology that is used to describe them. In particular we shall look at the different types of compounds that are possible in English.

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION TO WORD STRUCTURE

CONTENTS

LESSON 1
INTRODUCTION TO WORD STRUCTURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of **words**. The goal of morphology is to provide a theory within which word structure in all languages can be described. The morphological structures of any given language are very complicated. Some languages, such as Eskimo, have words that combine a large number of concepts within a single unit. For example, Smith (1981) has given the following example of a word from Eskimo:

(1) n*iuvittiugiattugiaqaninga* 'his having to go away and be a clerk'

The meaning of different parts of this word (or the morphemes as we will explain later) is given directly below it.

(2) niuvitti	-u	-giattu	-giaqa	-ni	-nga
clerk	be	go to	have to	prepositional nominalizer	his

On the other hand, we have languages such as Chinese with only simple words and compounds. Consider the following example where the aspectual morpheme is realized not by an affix but by the independent word *le.* (Tone marks are not shown as they are not relevant here.)

(3)	ta	ba	shu	mai	le
	he	object marker	book	buy	aspect

This example clearly shows that each word has only one meaning. English on the other hand is quite different from Eskimo and Chinese. Consider an example from

English, where we have words such as *worked* and *cats* which imply a verb + past tense and a noun + plural respectively.

Morphologists try to understand (to put it very simply) the difference between different forms of the same word (for example, the difference between *work, worked, works, working*, etc. in English) or the internal structure of words (for example, the structure of a word like *antidisestablishmentarianism*) within a language or across languages. The goal of morphology is therefore to provide a theory within which word structure in all languages can be described.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

--identify a 'word' as understood in morphology
--identify different morphemes within a word
--distinguish between different types of morphemes

1.3 WHAT IS A WORD?

What constitutes a word is fairly clear intuitively, but when it comes to giving it an exact definition, the concept of a word has proved to be extremely elusive. Part of the difficulty is largely due to the fact that the term 'word' is used in a variety of senses which usually are not clearly distinguished. We could, for example, say that a word is a unit which, in print, is bounded by space on both sides. We can call this an orthographic word as it is linked to the spelling/orthography. However, in a sentence such as

(4) I've home-made butter with me.

Can we call words such as *I've* or *home-made* as one word even though they are made up of two parts? Similarly, are words such as *cook* and *cooks* or *go* and *went* the same word or different? Morphologists have tried to give different names to such 'words'. In the following sections we shall look at some of these terms.

1.3.1 LEXEME

If we were to encounter an unfamiliar 'word' *hockled* we would probably look up this unfamiliar word in a dictionary, not under *hockled*, but under *hockle*. This is because we know that *hockled* is not going to be listed in the dictionary. We also know that words *hockling* and *hockles* also exist. Furthermore, we know that *hockling* and *hockle*, *hockles* and *hockled* are all in a sense different manifestations of the 'same' abstract vocabulary item. In morphology, we use the term **lexeme** to refer to this sense of abstract vocabulary item. The forms *hockling, hockle, hockled* and *hockles* are different **realizations** (or representations or manifestations) of the lexeme HOCKLE (we shall use capital letters for writing lexemes). All the realizations of a lexeme share a core meaning even though they are spelled and pronounced differently. Lexemes are the vocabulary items that are listed in the dictionary. Notice that *hockle* is also a realization of the lexeme HOCKLE. It is this realization which is listed in the dictionary. We can therefore say that a lexeme is an abstract entity.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—1

Which ones of the words given below belong to the same lexeme?

see	jumped	catches
catch	seeing	jumps
jumping	saw	caught
seen	catching	jump

1.3.2 WORD-FORM

Sometimes when we use the term 'word', it is not the abstract vocabulary item with a common core of meaning, the lexeme, that we want to refer to. We may use the term 'word' to refer to a particular physical realization of that lexeme in speech or writing. The particular physical realization of a lexeme is called a **word-form** (remember this is the orthographic word we had talked about earlier) in morphology. Thus we can refer to *see, seen, seeing, sees, saw* as five different word-forms of the lexeme SEE. We can say that the word-form *saw* has three letters, that it is the past tense realization of the lexeme SEE.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—2

What are the different word-forms of the following lexemes? You may need to look at a dictionary to do this activity.

BOY WOMAN TALL SLEEP DANCE

1.3.3 THE GRAMMATICAL WORD

The 'word' can also be seen as a representation of a lexeme that is associated with certain **morpho-syntactic** properties such as noun, adjectives, number, etc. The term **grammatical word** is used to refer to the word in this sense. Grammatical words are usually discussed in terms of their description rather than their forms. Consider for example the use of the word-form *walked* in the following sentences:

(5) a. Ram walked home.

b. Ram has walked home.

The word-form *walked* in both the sentences realizes the lexeme WALK. Yet, *walked* is not the same element in these two sentences. In (5a) *walked* realizes walk + past

tense, while in (5b) it realizes walk + past participle. Thus *walked* in (5a) and (5b) are two different words even though they are the same word-form and realize the same lexeme. They are called different grammatical words because they function differently or their grammatical description is different.

We have so far seen three different kinds of 'words': word-forms, lexemes and grammatical words. In the rest of this unit we shall however use the word in the sense of word-form (or the orthographic word).Word is however not the smallest unit of morphology. In the following section we shall look at units that are even smaller than the word.

1.4 MORPHEME, MORPHS, ALLOMORPHS

Morphology is generally defined as the study of word (internal) structure. Normally we think of words as indivisible units of meaning. This is probably because many words are morphologically simple. For example, *the, tap, shoe, fee, in, horse, hundred,* etc. cannot be divided into smaller units that are themselves meaningful. It is impossible to say what *-rse* means in *horse* or *–red* means in *hundred*. But many words in English are morphologically complex. They can be divided into smaller meaningful units. Consider words like *pen-s* and *un-well,* where, *pen* refers to one piece of a writing instrument and *–s* serves the grammatical function of indicating plurality, similarly, *un-* in *unwell* refers to the grammatical function of indicating negativity.

Such indivisible units of semantic content or grammatical function are referred to as ***morphemes***. By definition, a morpheme cannot be further decomposed into smaller units which are either meaningful or mark a grammatical function like a singular or plural in a noun. (Morphemes are separated with a hyphen in the examples.) Thus word-forms such as *tap, shoe, in*, etc. are said to have one morpheme each while word -forms like *pen-s* and *un-well* have two morphemes each. It is possible to combine several morphemes together to form a complex word. This is seen in long words like *anit-dis-establish-ment-arian-ism, un-faith-ful-ness, photo-graph-ic,*etc.

Sometimes however (discussed in detail below) we find that some morphemes are not

meaningful. Consider a word like *inert* which is said to have two morphemes. When we decompose this word into two morphemes *in-* and *–ert,* we find it difficult to assign meaning to *–ert.* Some linguists therefore argue that words must be meaningful but morphemes need not be.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—3

Study the data given below and identify the morphemes.

1. He parked the car.
2. She parks the car.
3. I am parking the car.
4. The cars are parked.
5. We parked the cars in the park

The analysis of words into morphemes begins with the isolation of ***morphs***. A morph is a physical form representing some morpheme in a language. It is a recurrent distinctive sound or sequence of sounds. Notice that the morpheme like the lexeme is realized by something else. A morpheme like the lexeme is an abstract unit. What we hear or see or say is a morph. A morpheme is thus realized by a morph. Just as we use word-forms to write a sentence we combine morphs to form a complex word or have single morph realizing a morpheme.

(6) **Abstract constructs** **physical realization**

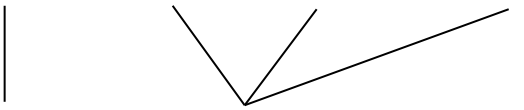
lexeme : SEE	**word-form**: see, seen, seeing, …
morpheme : negative	**morph** : un-, in-, …
plural	: -s, -es
man	: man
wall	: wall

There can be a one-to–one relationship between morphemes and morphs. For instance the word *bird* has only one morpheme which is realized by the morph *bird*. In English, however, it is also possible to have a single morph represent or realize more than one morpheme. For example, the morph *duck* represents the morpheme *duck* 'a bird' as well as the morpheme *duck* 'to bend down in order to avoid something'. Similarly, the (morph) –s ending in English verbs signal three morphemes simultaneously, namely, third person, present tense, and singular number.

(7) a. morpheme: bird

morph: bird

b. morpheme: was is …



morph: be

If morphemes consisted of morphs this would not be possible. A separate morph would be needed to represent each morpheme. This shows how abstract morphemes are as opposed to morphs.

Morphs which realize a particular morpheme and which are conditioned (whether phonologically or lexically or grammatically) are called the ***allomorphs*** of that morpheme. In English, for instance, the past tense morpheme is realized by three different morphs. These are /t/, /d/, and /id/. Because these three morphs realize the same morpheme i. e. the plural morpheme we call them allomorphs of the plural morpheme. The three morphs are phonologically conditioned as follows:

(8) a. The plural morpheme is realized as (the morph) /t/ after a verb ending in any voiceless sound other than /t/.

/mIs/ ~ /mIst/
miss ~ missed

b. The plural morpheme is realized as /d/ after a verb ending in any voiced sound other than /d/.

/kli:n/ ~ /kli:nd/
clean ~ cleaned

c. The plural morpheme is realized as /Id/ after a verb ending in either /t/ or /d/.

/mend/ ~ /mendId/
mend ~ mended

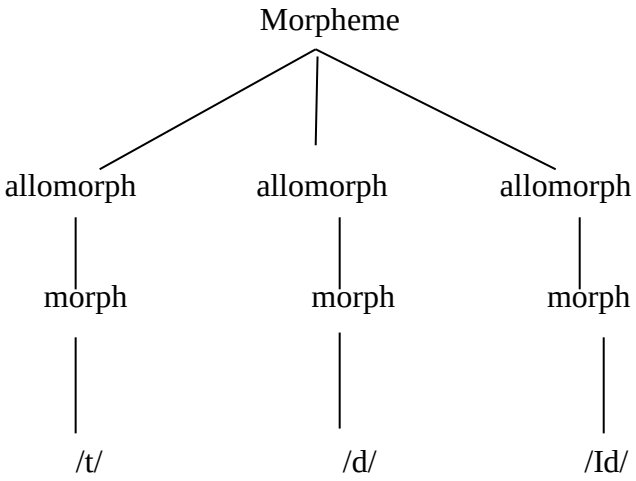
SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—4

Identify the plural morphemes in the following word:

Books, gasses, shoes, buns, goods, combs, tables, chairs, judges, churches.

The relationship between morphemes, morphs and allomorphs can be represented using a diagram in the following way:

(9)



The abstractness of morphemes frequently causes problem of understanding for students who are new to morphology. We shall therefore only use the term morpheme throughout this unit as far as possible. The notion of allomorphs is discussed once again in the following section.

One of the most important issues in morphology is the problem of dividing the words. In other words, how can we recognize a morpheme? In the following sections we will examine the basis on which morphemes are identified.

1.5 ANALYSING A WORD

How do we identify a morpheme? This generally depends on the word in which the morpheme appears. Thus, *un-* represents the negative morpheme in words likes *un-tidy, un-willing,* and *un-like,* but it has no claim to morpheme status when it appears in *uncle* or *under.* It has no semantic or grammatical value in these words. Recurrent parts of words that have the same meaning are isolated and recognized as manifestations of the same morpheme. The negative morpheme *un-* occurs in a large number of words. but this is not the only criterion for identifying a morphemes. Sometimes we find that a morpheme is restricted to few words. This is true of morpheme *–dom*, meaning 'condition, state, dignity', which is found in words like *martyrdom, kingdom, chiefdom,* etc. Sometimes a morpheme may occur in a single word. Thus the morpheme *-ric* meaning 'diocese' is only found in the word *bishopric*.

(Some morphologists do not agree with this and would prefer to treat *bishopric* as an unanalysable word.) Thus one of the ways to identify a morpheme is to use the criterion of ***meaning.***

There are however instances where meaning is somewhat obscure, we have to then consult a good etymological dictionary. Unfortunately this has its own problems. Consider for example, *-fer* in words such as *pre-fer, in-fer, trans-fer,* etc. Dictionary will tell us that *–fer* in Latin means 'bear, bring, and send'. But it is a bit difficult to assign any one of these meanings to these words. For this reason some linguists argue that it is the word in its entirety rather than the morphemes *per se* that must be meaningful. *Thus all words must be meaningful when they occur on their own, but morphemes need not be.* Thus ***a re-current word-building unit*** can also be identified as a morpheme even though we cannot assign it a consistent meaning.

We can also analyse the word by using the principle of ***contrast***. Consider the following sentences:

(10) a. The boy *plays.*
b. The boy *played.*

c. The *boy* is playing
d. The *boys* are playing.

The difference between *played* and *plays* in (10a &b) and *boy* and *boys* in (10c &d) for instance, is the difference in the grammatical function between *played* (past tense) and *plays* (present tense) and between *boy* (singular) and *boys* (plural). Notice how the plural marker and the present tense marker in sentences (10d) and (10a) respectively have the same phonological shape. It is the way they function in the language that tells us that they are two different morphemes; *-s* the plural morpheme in (10d) and *–s* the present tense morpheme in (10a). In these words it is the contrast in their function which helps us in identifying them as separate/ distinct morphemes.

Sometimes morphs (the physical form representing some morpheme) with different phonological shapes represent the same morpheme as we have seen above in the case

of past tense morpheme. We discuss another example here. For instance the plural morpheme in English which is spelled as *–s* or *–es* is realized in speech as /s/, /z/, or /Iz/. The phonological properties of the last sound of the noun to which it is attached determine the
choice:

(11) a. It is realized as /s/ after a noun ending in any voiceless sound other than /s/.

e.g. /k{t/ ~ /k{ts/

cat ~ cats

b. It is realized as /z/ after a noun ending in any voiced sound other than /z/.

e. g. /dΘg/ ~ /dΘgz/

dog ~ dogs

c. It is realized as /iz/ after a noun ending in /s, z, Σ, Z, τΣ/ or /dZ/.

e. g. /hO:s/ ~ /hO:siz/

horse ~ horses

Observe here that once again the difference in form is not associated with a difference in meaning. The three different allomorphs /s/, /z/, and /Iz/ represent the same (plural) morpheme. The technique used here to identify the morpheme is based on the notion of ***distribution*** i. e. the total set of contexts in which a particular linguistic form occurs. In (11a) for instance, the total context for the occurrence of /s/ is nouns ending in voiceless sounds. In other words, in English, whenever a noun ends in a voiceless sound it's plural morpheme is realized as /s /. These morphemes are known as ***phonologically conditioned*** morphemes. We can also have grammatically conditioned and lexically conditioned morphemes.

In English, in certain verbs, the presence of a past tense morpheme requires the selection of a special morph of the verb.

(12) /wi:p/ ~ / wept/ /swi:p/ ~ /swept/

weep ~ wept sweep ~ swept

In (12) the choice of the morph is ***grammatically conditioned.*** In other cases the choice may be lexically conditioned. i. e. the use of a particular morph may be obligatory if a certain word is present. Similarly, the plural of *ox*, for instance is not **oxes* but *oxen*, although all other words that end with a voiceless sound take the expected /iz/ plural form (box /bΘks/ ~ boxes /bΘksiz/). Here the choice of morph –*en* is ***lexically conditioned.*** It is dependent on the presence of the specific word (noun) *ox.*

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—5

Examine the words given below and

(a) identify the morphemes

(b) state the syntactic category (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) of the morphemes. (If you are in doubt, consult a good dictionary.)

(c) attach some meaning to each morpheme you identify.

player	caller
kindness	goodness
kitchenette	cigarette
exwife	exminister
misjudge	miskick

1.6 TYPES OF MORPHEME

In this section we shall explain and describe some of the most prominent word-building elements. Words are built by adding morphemes. Most of these morphemes are given names based on either the position they occupy in the word or the role they play in the formation of the word.

1.6.1 ROOTS, STEMS AND BASES

A ***root*** is the absolute core of the word. When there is absolutely nothing attached to the word it is called a root. For example, *see, walk, look, laugh, love, table, pen, book,* etc. are all roots. Roots are always ***free morphemes***. That is, these are words which are capable of being used on their own (without the attachment of another morpheme). We can therefore say a sentence like,

(13) *Look* at that *book* of *love* on the *table* next to the *pen.*

Here *look, book, love, table* and *pen* are roots which are also free morphemes. There are also ***bound morphemes.*** These are morphemes which cannot exist on their own, i. e. they cannot occur as independent words. They acquire a meaning only when they occur in combined or bound form. They do not mean anything in isolation. In English, for example, words such as *permit, predator, sedate, receive* are made up of morphemes which cannot exist on their own as roots or word-forms. We cannot, for instance have roots like *mit, per, pre, dator, se, date, re, ceive.* They do not mean anything. Notice that one could claim that *per, pre, re* have some kind of meaning but those meanings are not applicable in these words. Thus the *re* in *receive* is different from the *re* in *redo.* This is the reason why some linguists feel that only a word and not a morpheme should be a meaningful unit.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—6

Identify the free morphemes and bound morphemes in the following words:

block, immediate, lessons, climbed, institutionalize, languages, regain, deer, remind, immodest, population, authenticity, democratic, photographer, postponement.

The term ***stem*** is used for that part of a word which is in existence before any inflectional affixes (i.e. morphemes for number, and tense, etc.) have been added. In the word-form *books*, the plural inflectional suffix *–s* is added to the simple stem *book*, which is a also bare root, that is, it is the irreducible core of the word. The difference between a root and a stem is as follows:

(14)	***Roots***	***Stems***
	walk	**walk**-ing (the root *walk* in this word-form is called a stem because an inflectional affix has been attached to it)
	boy	**boy**-s (the root *boy* in this word-form is called a stem because an inflectional affix has been attached to it)
	long	**long**-er (the root *long* in this word-form is called a stem because an inflectional affix has been attached to it)

Finally, a ***base*** is that to which any suffix can be added. In other words, all roots are bases. *Bases are called stems only in context of inflectional morphology* (discussed in some detail in the following sections). There is one more difference between roots and bases. We have said bases are that unit to which any suffix can be added. Bases are also those units to which more suffixes can be added after the affixation of one suffix. Thus *beauty* is a base but *beautiful* is also a base in the word-form *beautifully*.

(15) a. beauty
base/root

beautiful + ly
base

b. boy
base/root

boy + s
stem

c. hard
base/root

hardship + s
base/stem

In (15a) beautiful is a base alone and not a base and a stem as hardship is in (15c) because –ly is not an inflection affix whereas –s is an inflectional affix. Stems can have only the inflectional affixes. Bases on the other hand can have any kind of affixes including inflectional affixes.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—7

Identify the roots, bases, and stems in the following examples. (The inflectional affixes are: *-s, -ed, -ing* all other affixes are not inflectional affixes):

king, king-ship, king-s, active, active-ity, active-iti-es, lion, lion-s, faith, faith-ful, pass, pass-ed, laugh, laugh-ing.

1.6.2 AFFIXES

An ***affix*** is a morpheme which occurs only when it is attached to some other morpheme such as a root or a stem or a base. Affixes are therefore, by definition bound morphemes. There are three types of affixes: prefixes, suffixes and infixes.

A ***prefix*** is an affix attached *before* a root or base or stem. For example, in words such as *un- intelligent, il- logical, in- decent,* etc. the morphemes *un-, il-*, and *in-* are prefixes.

A ***suffix*** is an affix attached *after* a root or base or stem like *–ly, -ness, -er*, etc. in *kind-ly, blind-ness* and *smart-er.*

An ***infix*** is an affix inserted into the root itself. Infixes are very common in languages like Arabic and Hebrew. Infixation of some sort happens in contemporary English as well. Thus, *kangaroo* becomes *kanga-bloody-roo* and *guarantee* becomes guaran-friggin-tee, etc.

1.7 SUMMARY

Our aim in this lesson was to show you that while word is the key morphological unit, morphemes are also important theoretical entities. The lesson opened with the discussion of the nature of the word. The next section introduced you to the segmentation of words into the smallest abstract units called morphemes. We studied how the morphemes are classified on the basis of where they occur. The lesson concluded with how the words can be analyzed by identifying the morphemes on the basis of different roles or functions they perform in the formation of the word.

1.8 ANSWERS KEY

Answer to self-assessment question - 1

see, seen, seeing, saw	are realizations of the lexeme	SEE
catch, catches, caught, catching	are realizations of the lexeme	CATCH
jumped, jumps, jumping, jump	are realizations of the lexeme	JUMP

Answer to self-assessment question - 2

lexeme	**word-forms**
BOY	--- boy, boys
WOMAN	---woman, women, womanizing, womanly, womanish
TALL	--- tall, taller, tallest
SLEEP	--- sleep, sleeping, sleeps, slept
DANCE	--- dance, dancing, danced, dances, dancer

Answer to self-assessment question - 3

Morphemes	**recur in**
he	
park (as verb)	2,3,4, and 5
-ed	4 and 5
the	2, 3, 4, 5 (twice)
car	2,3,4 and 5
she	
-s (present tense)	
I	
am	
-ing	
-s (plural)	5
are	
we	
park (as noun)	

Answer to self-assessment question - 4

words	**plural morpheme**
books	/s/
gasses	/Iz/

shoes	/z/
cats	/s/
goods	/z/
combs	/z/
chalk	/s/
chairs	/z/
judges	/Iz/
churches	/iz/

Answer to self-assessment question - 5

(a) The morphemes are:

play, call, -er, kind, good, -ness, kitchen, cigar, -ette, ex-, wife, minister, mis-,.

(b) Syntactic category:

Nouns: kitchen, cigar, wife, minister, -er, -ness, -ette, ex-

Adjectives: kind, good

Verb: play, call, kick, judge, miss-

(c) Meanings:

The following morphemes or the word-forms have the usual meaning that is listed in the dictionary:

play, call, kind, good, kitchen, cigar, wife, minister, kick, judge

The following morphemes mean as follows:

ex- : derives nouns from nouns, it means ‘former’.

-ness : is added to an adjective, to produce a noun meaning ‘having the state or condition

mis- : derives verbs from verbs, it means ‘badly’

-er : this is attached to verbs to derive nouns with the meaning ‘someone who does X’ (where X implies whatever action the verb involves)

-ette : it is the diminutive morpheme attached to a noun which has the meaning ‘smaller in size’.

Answer to self-assessment question - 6

free morphemes	**bound morphemes**
block	
immediate	
lesson	-s
climb	-ed
institution	-al, -ize
language	-s
gain	re-
deer	
remind	
modest	im-
populat(e)	-ion
authentic	-ity
democrat	-ic
photo	-graph, -er
postpone	-ment

Answer to self-assessment question - 7

king, king-ship, king-s, active, active-ity, active-iti-es, lion, lion-s, faith, faith-ful, pass, pass-ed, laugh, laugh-ing.

root	**base**	**stem**
king	king	-----
-----	king-s	king-s
----	king-ship	------

active	active	------
-----	active-ity	-----
------	activity-s	activity-s
lion	lion	-----
-----	lion-s	lion-s
faith	faith	------
-----	faith-ful	------
pass	pass	-----
-----	pass-ed	pass-ed
laugh	laugh	-----
------	laugh-ing	laugh-ing

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LESSON 2

WORD-BUILDING PROCESSES

CONTENTS

LESSON 2

WORD-BUILDING PROCESSES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Lesson 1 we looked at the notion of a 'word' and learnt how to analyze a word. We also studied how different types of morphemes are classified on the basis of where they occur or the function they perform in the formation of a word.

In this Lesson we are going examine some of the dominant word-building processes that exist in English such as inflectional and derivational affixes, compounding, reduplication, conversion, suppletion, blends and acronyms. At this point it is important to point out that we are giving you only a brief introduction to these processes. Each one of these process can be a topic for research in itself.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

--distinguish between different types of morphemes depending on the function they perform
--identify different types of compounds
--describe different word- building processes

2.3 WORD-BUILDING PROCESSES

So far we have discussed ways in which one can identify the different types of morphemes. In this section we shall look at some of the word-building processes that are common in English. A large number of words in English are formed by affixation. There are however, some other strategies also for forming new words in English. Some of these are discussed below.

2.3.1 INFLECTIONAL AND DERIVATIONAL

Affixes can be divided into two major functional categories: ***inflectional*** morphemes and ***derivational*** morphemes. Inflection and derivation are two word-building processes. The distinction between them is however the most debatable issue in morphology. We will therefore introduce you to only the most essential differences between the two. Inflectional and derivational affixes form words in different ways.

Derivational affixes form words

(a) by changing the meaning of the base to which they are attached. For instance, *capable* vs *in-capable* and *logic vs il-logical* (both are adjectives but with opposite meanings).

Or

(b) by changing the word-class that the base belongs to. For instance, the addition of –ly to the adjectives *simple* and *true* produces adverbs, *simpl-ly* and *tru-ly*.

Or

(c) by causing a shift in the grammatical sub-class of a word without moving it into a new word-class. For example, *friend* and *friend-ship* (where a concrete noun becomes an abstract noun), and *pig* and *pig-let* (where a diminutive form of the noun is created.)

Inflectional affixes form words

(a) without changing the meaning of the base to which they are attached. For instance, in *boy* and *boy-s* and *dance* and *danc-ing* the meaning of the affixed form does not change.

Or

(b) without changing the word-class that the base belongs to. For Example, in *girl* and *girl-s* and *dance* and *danc-ed* the grammatical category of the base/stem/root does not change even after the affix is added.

In addition, when both inflectional and derivational suffixes co-occur in the same word-form, the general rule is that the derivational suffixes precede the inflectional ones, so that the following cases are typical: *active, activ-ity* and *active-iti-es* and, *argue, argu-ment* and *argu-ment-s.* This is the reason why we do not find words like *active-es-ity or *argu-es-ment. Here, both the suffixes *–ity* and *–ment* are derivational suffixes while *–s* is an inflectional suffix.

These are not the only possible criteria for distinguishing between inflection and derivation, but they are probably the most important ones.

Some common **derivational** prefixes and suffixes are listed below:

prefix	**word-class of input base**	**meaning of affix**	**word-class of output word**	**example**
in-	adjective	'not'	adjective	in-adequate
un-	verb	'reversive'	verb	un-do
un-	adjective	not'	adjective	un-interesting
dis-	verb	'not'	verb	dis-agree
dis-	adjective	'not'	verb	dis-loyal

re-	verb	'again'	verb	re-write

suffix	**word-class of input base**	**meaning of affix**	**word-class of output word**	**example**
-ship	noun	'state or condition'	noun (abs)	friend-ship
-ness	adjective	'quality'	noun (abs)	sad-ness
-ment	verb	'result of doing the action indicated by the verb'	noun	punish-ment
-ity	adjective	'state or condition'	noun (abs)	authentic-ity
-hood	noun	'status'	noun (abs)	child-hood
-al	verb	'pertaing to'	noun (abs)	pivot-al
-ly	adjective	'manner'	adverb	mad-ly
-er	verb	'agent who does whatever the verb indicates'	noun	
-ful	noun	'having'	adjective	resource-ful
-ic	noun	'pertaining to'	adjective	electron-ic

Some common **inflectional** suffixes are listed below:

Suffix	**word-class of input base**	**meaning/ function**	**word-class of output word**	**example**
-s	noun	'more than one'	noun	boy-s

-s	verb	'third person'	verb	walk-s
-s	verb	'present tense'	verb	play-s
-ed	verb	'past tense'	verb	walk-ed
-ing	verb	'progressive'	verb	walk-ing
-er	adjective	'comparative degree'	adjective	tall-er
-est	adjective	'superlative degree'	adjective	tall-est

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—1

Identify the prefixes and suffixes in the following words. Say whether they are derivational or inflectional. In the case of derivational affixes show how they change (a) the meaning and (b) the word-class of the base.

institutionalized, unimportant, national, goals, beauties, vastness, governments, inaccurate, ex-mayor.

2.3.2 COMPOUNDING

A **compound** word contains at least two bases which are both words, or root morphemes**.** Compounding is a very important way of word-building. Sometimes bare roots are combined to form compounds and sometimes the input base contains an affixed form in a compound. For example,

(13) a .

root	***root***	***compound***
ice	cream	ice-cream
week	end	weekend

b.

far	sight-ed	farsighted
fire	fight-er	firefighter

Generally compounds differ in their syntactic structures but sometimes their formation is motivated by **phonology** as well. Thus some compounds are formed by joining together pre-existing words that **rhyme**, such as:

(14) Black-Jack claptrap night-light

Sometimes rhyming compounds carry a pejorative meaning:

(15) goody-goody pretty-pretty

In some rhyming compounds neither of the bases is a word in its own right, for example:

(16) nitwit titbit namby-pamby
helter-skelter hobnob mumbo-jumbo

Some compounds are made by simply changing the **vowel sound**, for instance:

(17) zigzag tittle-tattle
dilly-dally sing-song
tick-tock wishy-washy

There is a big problem in distinguishing compounds from phrases. Orthographic or writing conventions offer limited help. Some very well established compounds are written as one word, with or without a hyphen (e. g. *weekend* and *ice-cream*). Many other compounds are not identified as such by the orthography. Thus some compounds like *free-trade* are sometimes written with and sometimes without a hyphen (*free trade*). According to some linguists **accent** plays an important role in distinguishing between a compound and a phrase. Consider the following examples where accent on one word forms a compound while accent on both the words forms a phrase:

(18) **compound** **phrase**

∀ice cream	vs	∀ice ∀cream (any cream made of ice)
∀white house		∀white ∀house (any house that is white)
∀green house		∀green house (any house that is green in colour)

Generally compounds in English belong to word-classes noun, verb, or adjective and are made up of at least two constituent bases which are members of the categories noun, verb, adjective, adverb or preposition. If we were to look at compounds syntactically, we can divide them into two types: **endocentric** compounds and **exocentric** compounds. We shall not go into details of this here, but to put it very simply, endocentric compounds are those in which the first word acts as the modifier of the second word. The second element therefore acts as the head of the compound and gets all the inflections of the compound. Let us take a closer look at some of the **noun compounds** of English:

(19) schoolboy (is a kind of boy)
bedroom (is a kind of room), etc.
teapot
wet-suit
sour-dough
oversight
near-sightedness

Notice that a compound noun may contain a first word which is either a noun (*school* in *schoolboy*) or an adjective (*wet* in *wet-suit*) or a preposition (*over* in *oversight)* but the second word has to be a noun.

English has many **compound adjectives** as well. Consider the following examples:

(20) world-wide
user-friendly

good-natured

hard hearted

outspoken
overwhelming

Once again notice that the first word in an adjective compound can be either a noun *(world* in *world-wide*) or an adjective (*good* in *good-natured*) or a preposition (*out* in *outspoken*) but the second word has to be an adjective. (Notice that some of the adjectives in the second word are bound morphemes i. e. they cannot occur in isolation as adjectives, such as *natured, hearted*, etc.) There are also **compound verbs** in English. Consider the following examples:

(21) undersell

overrate

offload

upset

In all these case the first element is either the prepositional or adverbial particle but the second word is always the verb. But the commonest type of compound verb in English is the **phrasal verb** which contains a verb plus a prepositional or adverbial particle as shown below. Some of these verbs (22b) have an idiomatic meaning.

(22) a. look through

take away

put down

b. turn off

hand out

catch up

Another class of compounds technically referred to as **verbal compounds** are those which exhibit transparency in meaning. The interesting thing to note is that there is a similarity between theses compounds and the phrases containing the same words. For instance, in both the compound *hand-written* and the phrase *written by hand*, the *hand* is the *instrument* by which writing is done.

(23) moneylender
gamekeeper
hand-written
guilt-ridden

So far we have been looking at the endocentric compounds of English where the first element generally modifies the second element. This also implies that all inflectional suffixes, if added, are added to the second element of the compound. There are however, a few other endocentric compounds where the first element acts as the head of the compound. That is the inflectional suffixes are added to the first element of the compound. In the following compounds for example, the plural suffix is added to the first element of the compound:

(24)

singular	**plural**
passer-by	passers by
mother-in-law	mothers-in law
grant-in-aid	grants-in-aid

Similarly there are **particle verbs** which constitute the majority of English compounds whose head is on the left. The verb which is the head of the compound comes first and the particle (the second element of the compound) specifies the meanings of the verb in compounds such as:

(25) phone in
drive out
lock out

Being the head the verb itself gets all the inflections of the compound as in

(26) phoned in *phone ined
drive out *drive outs
locks out *lock outs

At the beginning of this section we had said that there are two types of compound: endocentric and exocentric. So far we have seen that majority of the compounds in English are endocentric compounds where the first element modifies the second element. The second element therefore acts as the head of the compound and gets all the inflections of the compound. We also saw that there are a few endocentric compounds in English where the first element acts as the head of the compound and gets all the inflections of the compound. English also has some compounds where the two constituents of the compound do not have a head-modifier semantic relationship. Such compounds are called **exocentric compounds**. They are also often referred to by a Sanskrit name **bahuvrihi** compounds as they are similar to Sanskrit compounds of that name.

(27) greenhouse
lazy-bones
blue-nose

Here the constituents in (27) do not have a head-modifier semantic relationship. A *greenhouse* is not a house that is green. To inflect these words for plural, we attach the inflection in the standard fashion at the very end, e.g. *greenhouses*. The meaning of exocentric compounds is opaque. It is impossible to work out what an exocentric compound means from the meanings of its constituents. This is the reason exocentric

compounds are used less frequently than endocentric compounds. Consider the following compounds:

(28) butterfingers
blockhead
turncoat

Here no element functions as the semantic head of the compound. So, *butterfingers* is neither a kind of finger nor a kind of butter but rather a person who is apparently incapable of holding things without dropping them.

There are some compounds called **copulative compounds** because they have two words which are coupled or conjoined. They are also referred to by the Sanskrit name of **dvanda** compounds. From a semantic point of view the coupled elements are of equal status, with neither element being regarded as the head that dominates the entire word.

They are not semantically opaque. Each element characterizes a separate aspect of the meaning of the entire word. For instance:

(29) boyfriend
Urbana-Champaign
Harper-Collins
North-west

In a compound like *north-west* the northerly and westerly directions are equally important. The twin cities *Urbana – Champaign* in Illinois enjoy equal status.

Some words in English appear to straddle the borderline between compounding and affixation. They are called **neo-classical compounds**. For example, in the word *multi-media* it is not clear whether the word *multi-* is a prefix or a base. Some other examples illustrating the same phenomenon are:

(30) hydrology
multi-lateral
theology
hyper-text

There are some words in English which appear to be bases rather than affixes which never occur as independent words. When such words combine to form a word it is not clear whether they should be regarded as compound. Consider for example words such as:

(31) cranberry
huckleberry
gooseberry
strawberry

As *cranberry* is the most famous example of this set, such words are called **cranberry words.** One could say that the noun preceding the word *berry* is its modifier but in a word like *gooseberry* the word *goose* is not the same as the word that refers to a species of bird. Likewise the meaning of *straw- , huckle-* or *cran-* is not clear. They do not occur in any other word. These morphs seem to appear only in these words.

These in short are some of the most common types of compounds found in English. We have not discussed the syntactic structure of these compounds. In order to decide whether a group of words is a compound or a phrase we need to look at both the semantic and the syntactic properties of the sequence.

2.3.3 CONVERSION

In English, you might have noticed words with the same phonetic form but performing different grammatical functions, such as *head* as a noun and *head* as a verb or *round* as an adjective and *round* as a verb. Consider the following examples:

(32) a. She shook her *head* sadly.
b. Mr Sharma will *head* the inquiry.
c. A *round* table will seat more people than a square one.
d. The next *round* of peace talks will be held in Sind.

In sentences (32 a & b) *head* is used as a noun and a verb respectively. In sentences (32 c & d) *round* is used as an adjective and verb respectively. In both these examples new words are formed without modifying the form of the base. This is called ***conversion.*** Conversion is also referred to as ***zero derivation***.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—2

Identify the words given below (in italics) and divide them into compounds, phrases and examples of conversion.

kind-hearted, foot ball, dark-room, have a *smoke*, give it a *try*, kangaroo court, Chinese restaurant, Japanese lantern,

2.3.4 CLIPPING, BLENDS AND ACRONYMS

Clipping is the process of shortening a word without changing its meaning or grammatical category. As far as is known there is no way of predicting how much of a word will be clipped off in clipping. Some examples of clipping are:

(33) binoc(ular)s,
sci(ence) fi(ction),
high(er) tech(nology)

Sometimes new forms are created by merging two words where they overlap, so that no information is lost, but repetition of letter combinations is avoided. Words created by blending or merging two words are called ***blends.*** Some examples of blends are:

(34) guess + estimate guestimate
tiger + lion tigon
motor + hotel motel

Acronyms are words coined from initial letters of the words in a name, title or phrase. They are more than just abbreviations, because they are actually pronounced as words. Some examples of acronyms are:

(35) AIDS – Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
BASIC- Beginners' All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code
WHO- World Health Organisation

2.3.5 SUPPLETION

Sometimes the word-forms of what appears to be the same lexeme are so different from each other that they cannot be derived by general rules at all. In such cases we talk of ***suppletion***. Suppletion is shown in English in the lexeme GOOD with the two forms *good* and *better*, and in the lexeme GO with the two forms *go* and *went*.

2.3.6 REDUPLICATION

Reduplication is a process where an affix is realized by phonological material borrowed from the base. If the entire base is reduplicated then reduplication resembles compounding. Consider the following words from English:

(36) roly-poly
harum-scarum
brain-drain
goody-goody
pooh-pooh
sing-song
wishy-washy

There are very few examples of reduplication in English but Indian languages are full of reduplication. In Hindi for example we have reduplicated forms like:

(37) khate-khate (the meaning of the base is 'eat')
rote-rote (the meaning of the base is 'cry')
rona-dhona (the meaning of the base is 'cry')
pani-vani (the meaning of the base is 'water')
khushi-vushi (the meaning of the base is 'happiness')

Thus we can see that reduplication is typically used to signal diminutive, intensifying, plural or frequentative meanings.

We can thus see that there are a large number of ways in which words can be formed and there are different names given to different types of morphemes. For the purpose of this course, we have only discussed the more common processes that exist in English.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION—3

Identify the process of word-building reflected through the following words:

teapot, UNICEF, went, smog, doc., walk *round* the car, sob-sob.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this lesson you studied some of the more common processes of word building and the terminology that is used to describe some of these processes. In particular we studied the different types of compounds that are possible in English.

This was just a brief introduction to morphology but in order to study morphology in detail one has to know phonology, syntax and semantics as well.

2.5 ANSWERS KEY

Answers to self-assessment question-- 1

prefixes: un-, in-, ex-
suffixes: -al, ize, -(e)s, -ness, ment
inflectional suffixes: -ed, -(e)s
derivational affixes: -al, -ize, -ness, -ment, in-, ex-, un-

(a) change in the meaning:

-*al* implies ‘pertaining to’
-*ize* implies ‘to become’
-*ness* implies ‘quality’
-*ment* implies ‘result of doing the action indicated by the verb’

in- implies ‘not’

ex- implies ‘former’

un- implies ‘not’

(b) word-class of the base:

-al is suffixed to a verb

-ness is suffixed to an adjective

-ment is suffixed to a verb

-ize is suffixed to a noun

in- and *un*- are prefixed to adjectives

ex- is prefixed to a noun

Answers to self-assessment question-- 2

kind-hearted	compounding
football	compounding
dark-room	compounding
smoke	conversion
try	conversion
kangaroo court	phrase
Chinese restaurant	phrase
Japanese lantern	phrase

Answers to self-assessment question-- 3

teapot:	compounding
UNICEF:	acronym
went:	suppletion
smog:	blending
Doc.:	clipping
round:	conversion
sob-sob	reduplication

2.6 REFERENCES

1. Bauer, L. (1988): *Introducing Linguistic Morphology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

2. Jenson, J. T. (1990): *Morphology: Word Structure in Generative Grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

3. Katamba, F. (1993): *Morphology*. London: Macmillan.

2.7 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Define and give one example each of the following:
   lexeme, word-form, and grammatical word.
2. What are the different ways of identifying morphemes?
3. How can one distinguish between inflectional and derivational suffixes?
4. What are the different types of word-building processes?
5. What are the different types of compounds in English?
6. Which ones of the words given below belong to the same lexeme?

sing	heard	bowl
hear	sang	hearing
bowling	hears	sung
bowled	singing	bowls

7. Study the data given below and identify the morphemes.
   1. He ran to the car.
   2. She parked the car.
   3. I am going to sing.
   4. The children were playing.
   5. We tore the paper.
8. Identify the free morphemes and bound morphemes in the following words:
   building, sail, caught, marginalize, accountant, sheep, reply, remix, generator
9. Identify the roots, bases, and stems in the following examples.

ring, rang, ringing, pick, picked, picking, colour, colourful, colourless, colouring, coloured, colours.

10. Identify the prefixes and suffixes in the following words. Say whether they are derivational or inflectional:
    danced, dancing, dances, papers, playfulness, happiness, faithfully
11. Identify the process of word-building reflected through the following words:
    hotshot, WHO, sang, infotainment, lab.,

UNIT – III

SYNTAX

Objectives

In this unit, we wish to present

a) the subject matter of syntax

b) a preliminary idea of the syntactic analyses of some English sentences, and

c) a description-cum-demonstration of the devices employed in syntactic analyses.

There are three lessons in this unit. They will serve as an introduction to the syntactic theory, known as generative linguistics, as expounded by Noam Chomsky, beginning form the 1950s.

Once the material presented in this unit is read and assimilated, you will get a reasonably good, comprehensive idea of the syntactic structures in the English language. It will also prepare you for reading more about syntax, on your own.

LESSON 1

WORD CLASSES

Contents

Objectives

This lesson explains the principles for setting up different **word classes** in English. It also stresses the importance of the notion of **distribution**, in syntactic studies.

Introduction

Syntax is the component of formal linguistics that studies the structure of clauses and sentences. A sentence is not just a group of words which convey some meaning. The construction of a sentence involves implicit knowledge of a set of grammatical principles and rules. It is the business of syntax to lay bare these principles and rules. In the course of this lesson, you will see that it is not the consideration of meaning alone that determines the well-formed ness of sentences in a language.

1. What are the Building Blocks of Syntax?

As we said, syntax concerns the way the words in a language can be string together to make meaningful sentences. Therefore, we begin by looking at word classes, or what are known as Parts of Speech, in traditional grammars of English. The words in English can be classified into four major categories: *nouns, verbs, adjectives* and *adverbs*. These are sometimes referred to as *content words*: i.e., words that have strong meaning content.

1.	boys	noun
	cried	verb
	brave	adjective
	carefully	adverb

The words illustrated above are all ‘content words’.

English has another kind of words whose main function is grammatical. Some examples of **grammatical words** (also known as 'function words') are the following:

2.	of, in, about, for, on, from, across…	Prepositions
	this, that, these, those	Demonstratives
	a, an, the	Articles
	he, she, you, I, we, they	Pronouns
	and, but, if, although, until….	Conjunctions

The list above contains words that serve different kinds of grammatical functions in a sentence. They do not have the same level of meaning content as the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs possess.

2. Defining Word Classes:

Traditional grammar books define classes like nouns and verbs using meaning criteria. An example of such a definition is:

3. A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing.

It is easy to see that while many a noun in English will be covered by the above definition, there are quite a number of nouns that will be left out. For instance, *courage* is doubtlessly a noun, but it is not the name of a person or place; nor can it be treated as a thing. It is a quality (of mind).

A similar inadequacy in definition can be noticed in the traditional definition of a verb which goes

4. A verb denotes an action or a state.

Consider the word *confession*. It signifies an action, but it is not a verb but a noun formed out of a corresponding verb *confess*. Similarly, defining an adjective as denoting a quality also runs into problems, as already pointed with the example of *courage*. Both the noun *courage* and the adjective *courageous*

denote quality. In short, what we notice here is that word classes are not to be determined on the basis what each word means or denotes/signifies. Rather, one has to devise reliable formal criteria to decide the class membership of words.

3. Formal Criteria:

Let us start with nouns. One defining property of English nouns, in general, is that they appear in two forms: singular and plural. Given a noun in singular, it is generally possible to make a plural form out of the singular.

5. boy boys
   child children
   goose geese
   phenomenon phenomena

While a large majority of words in English form the plural by adding an *–s* or *–es* to the singular form, there are also words that resort to irregular plural formation. Ignoring the question of how the plural form is created (a fact morphology need to pay attention to), we can safely conclude that the ability to have a plural form is something that singles out nouns from the rest of the words. This is what we mean by the employment of strict formal criteria.

Now it may be objected that some nouns, e.g. *water* doesn't have a plural. True. There are nouns which are seen to be 'uncount' and those nouns do not form plurals. This fact needs to be noted by grammar, but note that this does not really weaken the criteria we set up. No word class other than noun can have a singular-plural pair of forms.

A second point related to this is the question of singular/ plural forms of verbs when they are in simple present:

The boy *laughs* The boys *laugh*.

Sometimes, *laughs* as in the above pair of sentences, is described as a singular verb. If that is so, how can we maintain that nouns and only nouns have the singular-plural alternation in forms? The answer to this is that the so called singular/plural forms of the verb are operative only at the sentential level, whereas the alternation in the case of nouns can be stated at the level of words. The two forms of the verb in fact encode the number of the subject noun; they do not tell us anything about the verb in the sentence.

Nouns are also distinguished by their ability to bear case inflections. Case is a grammatical category which is not very well illustrated by English. In South Indian languages like Tamil and Malayalam the nouns take special markings to signal, in what relation they stand with the verb – this is known as case, illustrated below:

6. viiTə ‘house’
viiTTil ‘in (the) house’
viiT-inte ‘of (the) house’

In this example, *–il* shows location, hence is called the locative case marker, and *–inte* is known as the genitive case. In English, the form “house’s” with the apostrophe ‘s’ is an example of case marking. It’s also called possessive case. In many languages, case marking is richer than it is in English. Classical languages like Latin and Sanskrit are highly inflectional; they have an articulate case system, normally known as declensions. Apart from the possessive, in English, it is visible only in pronouns. Thus,’he’ has related case forms *-him* and *his*, and ‘*I’* has *me* and *my*, and so on.

Now, we have separated two formal criteria with regard to nouns: plural marking and case marking which are characteristic only of nouns.

What about verbs? Verbs are inflected for tense: a verb in English has a present tense form and a past tense form.

7.

kill	killed
send	sent
sing	sang
bring	brought
cut	cut

A large number of verbs takes an – *ed* to mark past tense, these are the class of regular verbs. Irregular verbs form the past tense in a variety of ways, including 'no change' as in *cut-cut* pair. From the point of view of syntax, what is significant is that any given verb has these two related tense forms. Only verbs have this property. Hence, tense is a formal category that can be used to pick out verbs from the rest. Viewed in this perspective, English has no future tense. English indicates future time by different means- use of auxiliary modals such as *will* and *shall* and use of *is going to* are two. It is important not to confuse the meaning category 'time' with the grammatical category 'tense'. In English, unlike in the case of past tense, there is no unique future tense form for a given verb; therefore we maintain that English has no future tense. This is a telling example of the reliance on formal criteria in determining categories in syntax. (You will hear more about this in Lesson 2, in connection with the analysis of the English Auxiliary system.)

Similarly, we can appeal to the – *er* suffix in comparatives and – *est* in superlatives as characteristic of adjectives. (adverbs like *fast* can also take – *er* and – *est*).

4. Distribution

So far we have talked about the need to bring in formal principles in determining class membership of words in English. We also stressed that meaning considerations can be misleading and are better avoided. Now we move over to structures above the word level, namely phrases. *A Phrase is a unit that is bigger than a word but smaller than a sentence*. Consider (8) below:

8. all students
   a student
   a bright student
   a bright student of this institution

Each of these is an example of a noun phrase. Each of these can appear in the 'subject slot' (marked by …) of the incomplete sentence (9) below and make it a good sentence:

9. … passed the examination with distinction.

This shared property of all the items in (8) is to be recognized by syntax. It is called 'distribution'. All the items listed have the word *student* in them which we treat as the **head** of the phrase. The other words are **modifiers** of the head. They may or may not be present, but the head is obligatory in a phrase. Further, a phrase is known by its head. All the items in (8) are noun phrases (NP, for short) because each one is headed by a noun, *student*, in this case. We also infer

that the subject position in an English sentence is to be typically filled by a noun phrase.

In fact, we can have a noun phrase contained within another NP, " a student of this institution", for example. Here, the underlined part is itself an NP with the head *institution*. Sometimes, it is possible to have a whole sentence inside an NP.

10. The student who won the gold medal

The underlined part is itself a sentence, yet, we treat the whole expression as a phrase because it behaves exactly like an NP. It can fill the empty subject position in (9).

In deciding what constitutes a phrase we are using distributional criteria. The distribution of an item can be understood as the sum total of positions in which the item can occur. The subject slot in a sentence is one of the positions in which an NP can come, in English. From this we can go to the generalization that whatever expression can go into the subject slot must be an NP. (Later, we will see that there is an exception to this generalization.) An interesting consequence of this is that a single noun without any modifiers will have to be counted as a phrase, sometimes.

11. Students passed the examination with distinction.

This is actually a good thing. We can now identify the following two properties of a phrase:

12. a. A phrase must have one and only one head
    b. A phrase may or may not have modifiers.

We are using the term modifier in a loose way to refer to any material other than the head. A modifier may precede the head or follow the head.

5. More on the Structure of a Noun Phrase

Let us now take a closer look at the elements in a noun phrase. We know that a singular count noun cannot be bare; it has to be preceded by an article.

13. a. A student passed the test
    b. The student passed the test
    c. * student passed test.

Example (13c) is ungrammatical as it lacks an article before the head noun. But it doesn't always have to be an article, other elements like *this*/*that* can also precede the head noun student in the examples above:

14. This/that student passed the test.

This/*that* and the plural forms *these*/*those* are called **demonstratives**.

A third kind of element that can precede a noun is the **possessive**, as in the examples below:

15. Ramaiah's student passed the IIT entrance test.
    His/her/their student passed the test.

However, of these three types of elements, i.e., article, demonstrative and possessive, only one can be present within an NP.

16. *My this book
    *This her book
    *Their the book

All the above sequences are bad, as shown by the asterisk. This indicates that articles, demonstratives and possessives belong to a super category: call it the **Determiner**. We can then account for the impossibility of their co-occurrence

as follows. There is one syntactic slot that precedes a noun, namely the Determiner (Det for short), and there can be at the most one item under a determiner. The same fact can be represented as in (17):

17. Det → ⟨ Art, Dem, Poss ⟩

This is a formalism we are going to use in the lessons in this unit. It is a rule which takes an item on the left side of the arrow and expands it into one or more items on the right hand side of the arrow. In the rule (17), the angled brackets are used for saying 'choose any one at a time'. Notice that we have used the principle of distribution explicitly in arriving at the rule (17).

Now that we have isolated one pre-head (or prenominal, to use more appropriate terminology), namely the determiner, we can write a Phrase Structure Rule (PS rule, henceforth):

18. NP → Det N

Another element that can precede a noun is an adjective: a *bright student*, for example. Using the format for PS rule writing we can have (19):

19. NP → Det Adj **N**

Some of the other elements that may precede the head noun are

20. all, some, three, a few, …

If they occur they come before the adjective; they can be called **quantifiers** as they normally indicate the quantity. Further, if these quantifiers are present there cannot be a determiner before or after it.

21. all/some/ a few bright students,

but not, *the all/some/ three bright students.

So we can modify the NP rule as in (22):

22. NP → Quant Adj **N**

We will not go into the question why there is a ban on the co-occurrence of Dem and Quant inside an NP. We just note it as a fact of English, for the present. An interesting thing about this need to be noted, however. These quantifiers can come before the Det if there is an 'of', as in the following:

23. some of/ a few of /three of the bright students.

We will therefore call this slot before the determiner Pre-Det. Let us see how our NP rule now looks:

24. NP → Pre-Det Det Quant Adj **N**

After having examined the prenominal elements and having assigned them slots, we are ready to explore the post nominal region. A noun in an NP can be followed by a preposition and another NP. See (25):

25. three of the five bright students in this class

in this class is a prepositional phrase, a PP. A PP is headed by a preposition; what follows the head P in a PP is invariably an NP. We now revise (24) as (26):

26. NP → PreDet Det Quant Adj **N** PP

In fact, there can be more than one PP in an NP. It is true of prenominal adjectives, too. One can have a series of adjectives as in *a red, round, beautiful object*. As we have already noted all the modifiers in an NP are optional

elements. Only the head N (shown in bold in the PS rules) is obligatory. We can encode this fact by using simple brackets:

27. NP → (PreDet) (Det) (Quant) (Adj) **N** (PP)

6. The Verb Phrase

Consider next the verb phrase, VP. A verb and its complement make the VP.

28. write a novel
    catch fish
    give a prize to the student

In the examples above, what follows the verb in each case is its **complement**. A complement is that which completes the phrase – without it the construction in question will be deemed incomplete. This point can be made clear by comparing the following verbs with those in (28).

29. sleep
    laugh
    sneeze

Those in (29) are intransitive verbs- they do not take an object. The actions they denote are complete without having to mention an object (or a complement). On the other hand, those in (28) are transitive verbs; they call for an object so as to be complete. Notice that *give* is a ditransitive verb: it takes a direct object (*a prize*) and an indirect object (*the student*).

Apart from the obligatory complements, there can be other elements in a verb phrase. In 'She slept peacefully', *peacefully* is not a complement of *slept* because sleep as we said is intransitive. Leaving out *peacefully* does not render the sentence ungrammatical. Therefore, adverbs like *peacefully* whose presence/absence does not affect the grammaticality of a construction are treated

as **adjuncts**. They do modify the meaning of the VP in that they give additional information about the action denoted by the verb. Adjuncts are so called because they are added on, removing them do not affect the essential structure.

One important thing to note with regard to the VP is that the subject of a sentence is not part of the VP. VP is a syntactic concept: a verb and its complement(s), essentially and adjuncts, if they are present. The subject, as we shall see in the coming lessons more clearly, is tied to the whole proposition, not to the verb. A clause is something that has a subject and a predicate. There are different ways of characterizing these two primary constituents of a clause. We postpone the discussion of this to Lesson 3.

7. Other Phrases

We have already noted that an NP can have one or more adjectives inside it. Strictly, we should say, one or more adjective phrases (AP). Going by the characterization in (12), a word can by itself be a phrase. In 'a smart student' , *smart* is an AP. It can have a modifier as in 'a very smart student', where *very smart* will be the AP. There are some adjectives in English that take a complement.

30. John is proud of his daughter
    Mary is afraid of darkness

In these examples *of his daughter* and *of darkness* are complements, as can be seen by the ungrammaticality once they are left out.

We had made a mention of the prepositional phrase (PP) in connection with the internal structure of the NP. A PP in English is headed by a preposition which takes an NP as its complement.

31. on the table
    near the church

It is possible to have a PP inside a PP.

32. in the box on the table

An adverb also can be head a phrase.

33. She spoke very slowly.

Here, *very slowly* is an Adv P.

Now, to recapitulate, we have seen that the basic grammatical categories of noun, adjective, verb, preposition and adverb project to phrasal level- thus we get NP, AP, VP, PP and AdvP. Each phrase is named after its head. In addition to the head which is unique for each phrase, there could be complements and adjuncts. Often it is the case that a phrase contains within it another phrase. In other words, phrases are iterative.

8. Summary

In this lesson we introduced the notion of word classes, in English. It was shown that traditional grammars had erred in defining categories like noun, verb and adjective, as they relied on meaning. Formal criteria provide a better basis for setting up word classes. The device of the PS rule was introduced and exemplified for the basic lexical categories of English.

9. Self Assessment Questions

1. *Fill in the blanks:*

a) A phrase must have …….. head.

b) A PS rule expands a symbol on the left of the arrow to …… on the right of the arrow.

c) In a PP, the preposition is followed by a …

d) An intransitive verb differs from a transitive verb in that it ……..

f) An NP in English can have pre-modifiers as well as ……

2. *Say whether the following statements are True or False:*

a) English has three tenses- present, past and future.

b) Singular/plural distinction is a reliable criterion that helps pick out nouns.

c) An adjective is a word that denotes a quality.

d) A prepositional phrase can have another PP inside it.

10. Review Questions

1. What is meant by distribution?

2. What are the defining features of a phrase. Distinguish between a maximal phrase and a minimal phrase.

3. What is a PS rule? Discuss with the help of an example.

4. Give two examples of the use of formal criteria in defining word classes.

11. Answer Key

1a .one and only one, 1b. one or more symbols, 1c. NP, 1d. it is not followed by an NP, 1e. post-modifiers.

2a. False, 2b True, 2c. False, 2d. True.

LESSON 2

PHRASE STRUCTURE

Contents

Introduction

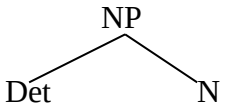
In the previous lesson, we set up some formal criteria to distinguish the basic lexical categories in English, and also demonstrated that each of these five categories can head a phrase. Thus, we have NPs, VPs, AdjPs, PPs and AdvPs. The assumption that led us in setting up these phrasal projections was that it is phrases that take part in the syntactic operations. In this lesson, we will look at the syntactic behaviour of these phrases in greater detail.

Before we start looking at the syntactic operations, we will introduce the device most commonly used in syntactic descriptions, namely, the **tree diagram**. The PS rules that we saw in Lesson 1 can be used to construct a kind of structural representation of a sentence, starting with the constituent phrases, as discussed below.

1. Phrase Structure Trees

It is customary to show the structure of a clause or a sentence by means of phrase structure tree diagrams. The tree diagram is a convenient method of mapping the different constituent elements in a construction. An NP can be represented as follows:

1.



All that this pictorial representation does is to say that a NP expands (or can be rewritten as) into a determiner followed by a head noun. It also encodes the left-to-right linear arrangement of items. The top point at which the two lines join is known as the root of the tree- in fact what you see here is an "upside down tree", with the branches looking downwards and the root at the top. The two nodes that

branch off from the root NP node, i.e., Det and N are known as the ‘daughters’ of NP. The NP node, in turn, is the ‘mother’ of Det and N.

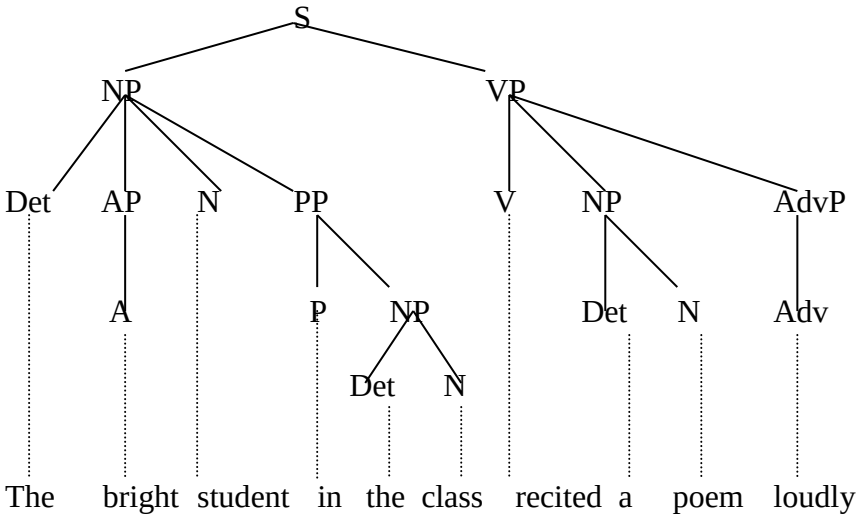
2. Dominance and Precedence

In order to understand the usefulness of this mode of representation let us take a sentence:

2. The bright student in the class recited a poem loudly.

The complete tree diagram for this is as given in (3):

3.



From the diagram, we can infer two kinds of relations that exist between the words that make up the whole sentence: the hierarchical and the linear. Basically, a clause is divided into an NP and a VP. The NP is the subject, and the VP part corresponds to the predicate.(Here we are ignoring the role of Tense, to keep things simle.) As can be seen from the diagram there are three NPs in this clause: the subject NP contains in it another NP *the class* which forms part of the PP. And there is an NP *a poem* that is inside the VP. Therefore, in terms of their hierarchy, the three NPs are not equal. This is one important bit of information that a tree diagram embodies. Also, the fact that the NP *the class*

precedes the NP *a poem* in this clause is something one can straightaway "read off" the tree.

Thus, a tree diagram encodes two things: the dominance relation and the precedence relation among the words in the sentence. Take any two words in (3), say x and y, it is possible to determine the two relations. For any x and y, either x precedes y or y precedes x. With regard to dominance, the possibilities are a) x dominate y, b) y dominates x and c) neither x dominates y nor x is dominated by y. Take the words *class* and *poem*, for instance. We can see that neither dominates the other. All that one needs to do in order to determine domination relation between two nodes in a tree, say x and y, is to start with x and look down the tree. Whatever is connected x by an unbroken line going uniformly down the tree is dominated by x. By this test, we can see that the VP node dominates V as well as the lexical item *recited*.

One implicit claim this analysis makes is that the words in a sentence group themselves into phrases and it phrases that constitute the sentence, not the words themselves. In other words, syntactic behaviour is to be stated in terms of phrases. A phrase behaves as a syntactic unit in that the whole phrase, not parts of it can participate in syntactic operations like substitution, movement and deletion. We will, in Lesson 3, show that this indeed is the case with regard to phrases of the type we have so far introduced.

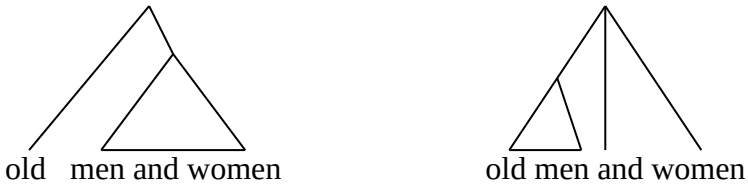
3. Disambiguation Using Tree Diagrams

Another good thing about the tree diagram is that by spelling out the structure of a construction, it helps resolve certain kinds of ambiguities. For example, a phrase like *old men and women* is ambiguous: it lends itself to two different readings. We can represent this phrase in two ways as follows:

4. a. (old (men and women) or b.(old men (and women))

If the structure in question is long, using brackets become cumbersome. One can use tree diagrams, instead. The two trees for this are given in (5) and (6):

5.



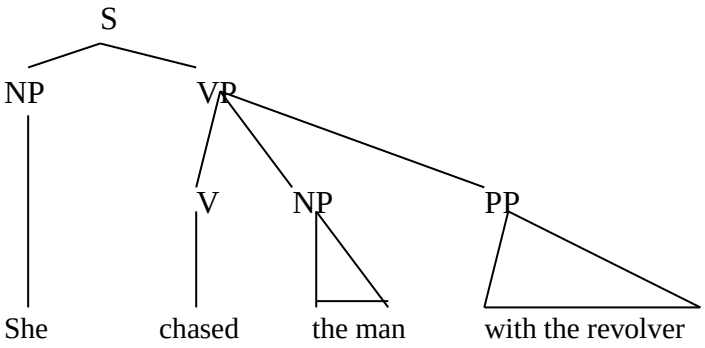
Sometimes, the placement of PPs give rise to ambiguity:

6. She chased the man with a revolver.

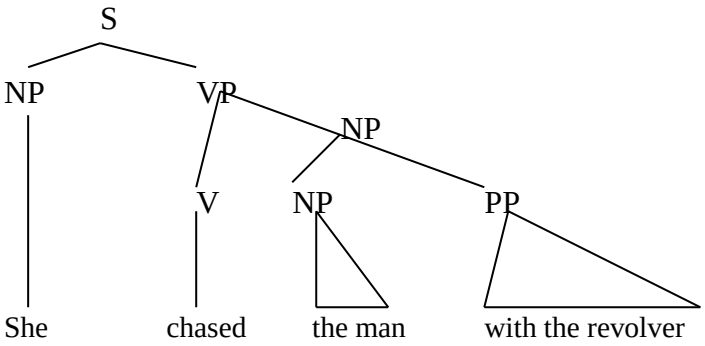
In this sentence, the PP *with a revolver* can be understood as being held by the man or the woman. This structural point can be brought out elegantly by the devise of the tree diagram, in (7).

7.

a.



b.



4. Complements and Adjuncts

In Lesson 1, we had made a mention of the distinction between complements and adjuncts, in connection with the structure of a VP. Now that we have seen how the devise of a tree diagram can be used for expressing structural differences, let us explore how complements and adjuncts can be differentiated.

This in turn necessitates isolation of syntactic criteria, that will help to distinguish between complements and adjuncts. If a certain NP or PP is obligatory in a VP then it can be deduced that it is a complement, if not, it is an adjunct. That is not all- a complement of a verb is said to be closer to the head verb than is an adjunct. Consider the examples in (8):

8. a) *read in the library a book
   b) read a book in the library

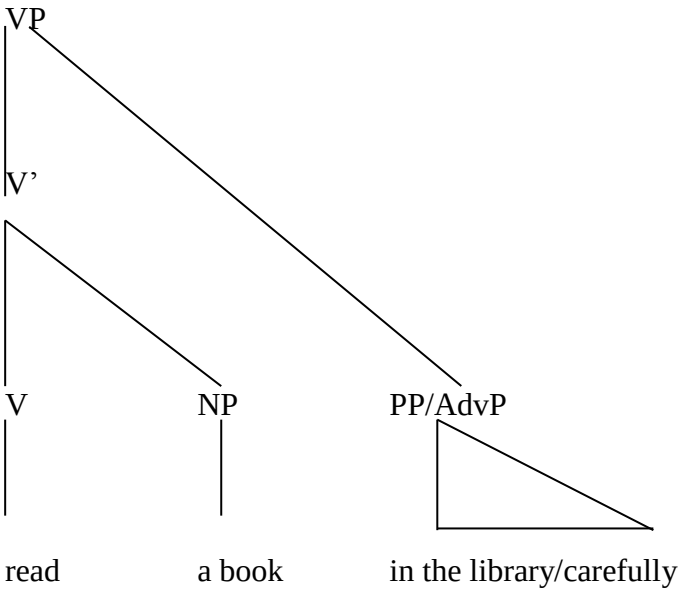
9. a) *read carefully a book
   b) read a book carefully

The PP *in the library* and the Adv P *carefully* are adjuncts, and they ought to follow, rather than precede, the complement NP *a book*. What this tells us is that the head and its complements are more closely integrated, compared to the head and the adjuncts. This fact can be given a formal treatment by introducing a separate, intermediate level in the grouping of words within a phrase.

5. An Intermediate Projection

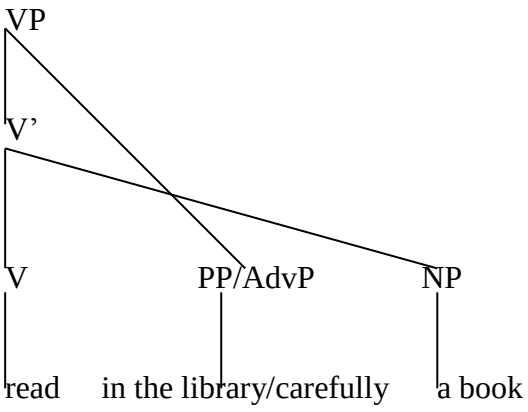
The maximal phrase is the VP, the minimal is the V (that is, the verb alone), in between comes a level we call V-bar level. This is shown below:

10.



Given this representation which collects together the V and the NP as a syntactic unit, it is easy to show why the alternate order is ill-formed.

11.

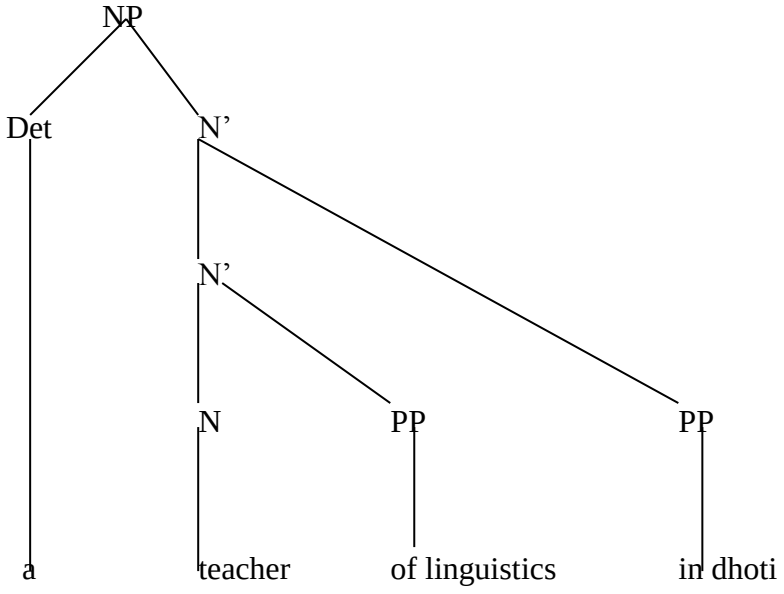


Notice that the association lines in the tree diagram (11) cross, giving rise to unacceptability. It is a fundamental tenet of the device of tree diagrams that in a well-constructed tree, the branches (i.e., the association lines) cannot cross. There is further syntactic confirmation available for the assumption that there indeed is an intermediary level of projection, a V-bar (indicated in the diagram by V') in this case. The same can be shown to be true of noun phrases: an N' that is between an N and a full-fledged NP. See the example below:

12. a) a teacher of Linguistics in a dhoti
    b) *a teacher in a dhoti of linguistics

The phrase in (12b) is unacceptable as it violates the principle regarding the relative order of complements and adjuncts within a phrase, as illustrated by (13):

13.



In (13), there are two N's, and the head noun and its complement (the PP *of linguistics*) is contained in the lower N'. The adjunct PP (*in dhoti*) is attached as

a sister to this lower N'. So the distinction in the syntactic status between the two PPs is in terms of what is its sister: the complement PP has N as its sister, the adjunct PP has an N'. There can be more than two N' levels, if necessary.

We will give more compelling evidence for this intermediate level within a phrase, in the next lesson where we will discuss the notion of constituency.

6. The English Auxiliary

We now turn to an area of English syntax that has proved to be a tough nut for traditional grammarians, namely the auxiliary system of English. As you may have realized from the lessons dealing with morphology, the way tense, aspect and mood are expressed in English is quite intricate. English is to a great extent an isolating language, in the sense that various grammatical elements do not appear as inflexions on the main verb stem, as is the case in agglutinating languages like Tamil, or synthetic languages like Latin, instead they often have word status.

6.1 An Algorithm for the English Verb Forms

An English verb usually appears in five different forms:

14.

VERB	*bare form*	*present sing III*	*past*	*-ing form*	*past participle*
WRITE	Write	writes	wrote	Writing	written
FLY	Fly	flies	flew	Flying	flown

These forms combine with features indicating tense, aspect and mood giving rise to various sequences.

15.

She writes a poem

She is writing a poem

She has written a poem
She has been writing a poem
She must have been writing a poem

She wrote a poem
She was writing a poem
She had written a poem
She had been writing a poem

What is the best way to analyse these various forms? Traditional grammar books resorted to a listing of them, under the three basic heads: present tense, past tense and future tense. Under each of these there is progressive and perfective aspects. Thus, a typical account of tense forms in English recognizes 12 forms (Notice that this does not include the passive forms). This is another example of confusing formal criteria with categories of meaning. (Recall the passing reference we made to the lack of a future tense in English, in Lesson 1.) English has only two distinct tense forms: past and present (or more accurately, non-past). English has more than one way of indicating future time. One way is to use the modal auxiliaries will and shall with the bare form of the verb. Another is to use 'going to' before the main verb. Below we illustrate these possibilities:

16. John will go abroad as soon as possible.
    I shall confirm my participation in two days.
    They are going to launch a new political party, by the end of this month.

Apart from these, very often, certain other verb forms also can indicate future time.

17. They would win the next election with a comfortable margin.

My cousin is leaving for the US, tomorrow.

In these examples, notice that the verb forms, *would* and *is*, indicate past tense and present tense respectively, yet, the sentence as a whole refers to a point of time in the future.

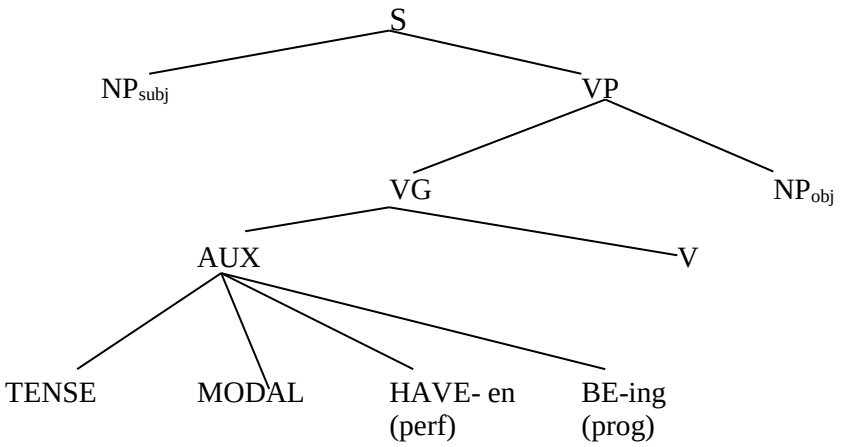
Therefore, future time is not the same as the future tense.

A second inadequacy with the traditional grammar accounts is that there is no algorithm that can generate all the forms. In the approach we are following in this course, it is possible to arrive at a schema for generating all the auxiliary verb sequences. The PS Rule (18) is capable of generating all the forms. What is more, it correctly rules out impossible sequences.

18. AUX ⟶ tense modal have-en be-ing

We can represent this as a tree diagram, as follows:

19.



We use VG as a node that contains the auxiliary elements and the main verb. Under the Aux node, there are four items, and they appear in the order given in (19). Under TENSE, we have *Past*/*Present*. Under MODAL, any of the modal auxiliaries can come: *will, shall, can, may, must, ought to, need* etc. However,

the past tense forms of these, i.e., *would*, *should*, *could*, and *might* are not generated under the node MODAL. The novelty of the schema in (19) is in the next two nodes: HAVE-en and BE-ing, which stand for the perfective and progressive aspects, respectively. Aspect is the technical term grammar uses for referring to the nature of the action indicated by the main verb. If the action is complete, at the point of speaking, then it has the Perfective aspect. If the action is incomplete at the point of speaking, it is Progressive (also known as the continuous aspect). These are the only two aspectual distinctions shown by English, though there are languages that make finer distinctions along the aspectual axis.

Now let us see how the schema in (19) can be used for generating all the permissible combinations, listed in (15). One thing to note about the elements in (19) is that only TENSE is obligatory in Aux, other things may be present or may not be present. Take for instance (20):

20. She **was writing** a letter.

We are concerned only about the bolded part in (20). This can be rewritten as (21), using (19):

21. Tense be-ing write

There is no Modal or Perf (*have-en*) in this. Now the Tense, *present* in this case, is to be realized on the element to its immediate right, namely *be*. Similarly, *-ing* is an affix and it cannot stand on its own. Therefore, it will have to move over to the main verb write, which comes to its immediate right. We need a formal mechanism to effect these two attachments. The grammar of English, therefore, must have a rule that takes an element which is affixal in nature, and attaches it to a free morpheme. Call this the **Rule of Affix Hop**, given in (22):

22. X Affix Stem Y → X Stem + Affix Y

6. 2 Affix Hop

This rule takes an affix (*tense*, *-en*, *-ing*) and attaches it to the right edge of the verbal element to its immediate right. The X and Y in (22) stand for whatever precedes and follows the Stem and Affix, respectively. This rule, applying on the string in (21) will change it to (23):

23. be + Tense write + ing = was writing

Notice that the rule in (22) applies at two points on the string in (21), attaching tense to *be* and attaching *–ing* to *write*. When we have longer strings with modal, perf and prog all instantiated, the Affix Hop rule will apply at more points in the string. A sample derivation is as follows:

24.	past	can	have-en	be-ing	write
Affix hop:	ø	can + past	have ø	be+en ø	write+ ing

'could have been writing'

The symbol ø shows the place from which the affix has been moved.

NOTE: English uses 'do' as a dummy modal. This can be seen in negation (e.g. *She does not smoke*) and in questions (e.g. *Does she smoke*?) when the corresponding affirmative sentence lacks an auxiliary element. The dummy 'do' functions as a site for realizing tense.

7. Summary

In this lesson we have provided a system of representing the structure of a sentence, using formal device called a tree diagram. The tree diagram encodes the relations of precedence and dominance among the words in the sentence. It also helps in disambiguating phrases and sentences that lend themselves to more than one reading.

We also gave a technical implementation of how to use a composite schema, known as a production algorithm, for analyzing the various permissible combinations of tense, aspect and mood in the auxiliary system of English. The

schema works in tandem with a rule of Affix Hop, which yields all the desired forms correctly.

8. Self Assessment Questions

1. *Say whether the following statements are True or False:*

a) A proper noun like *John* has only one word in it and is therefore not an NP.

b) In English tense is always attached as an affix to the main verb.

c) The Rule of Affix Hop can apply at more than one point in a string.

d) *Be* and *have* can appear either as an auxiliary verb or as the main verb.

2. *Draw simplified tree diagrams to disambiguate the following:*

a) ripe mangoes and oranges

b) They looked at the man with a telescope

3. *Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences.*

a) All the students in my class participated in the contest.

b) John's uncle sent him a present from England.

(Hint: take diagram (3) in the text as a model.)

9. Review Questions

1. What are the two relations represented by a tree diagram?

2. What is the motivation for setting up an intermediate level of projection within a noun phrase?

3. Define the terms 'mother node' and 'sister node' in tree. Illustrate with an example.

4. State and explain the Aux expansion rule in English.

5. Show how the rule of Affix Hop can derive the following sequences:

    a) She would have forgotten that.

    b) They may be waiting for your call.

10. Answer Key

1a. False, 1b. False, 1c. True, 1d. True

LESSON 3

Constituency and Thematic Roles

Contents

Objectives

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1. **Tests for Constituency**
2. **Structure of a Clause**
3. **The Lexicon**
4. **Predicates and their Arguments**
5. **Thematic Roles**
6. **Subject- a Non-argument**
7. **Summary**
8. **Self Assessment Questions**
9. **Review Questions**
10. **Answer Key**

Objectives

In this lesson, the over-all objective is to show that grammar is to be viewed as a formal deductive system, which functions as per a set of rules clearly laid down for a specific purpose. We demonstrate this by showing that a phrase is the fundamental unit that syntax recognizes. We also show that, for a proper realization of the meaning requirements in a sentence, there needs to be a separate component called syntax that is capable of addressing the semantic issues in syntactic terms. The notion of an argument being assigned a particular thematic role is a precise implementation of this idea.

Introduction

In this lesson we continue with the exposition of syntactic representations, discussed in the two previous lessons. First we provide arguments to establish the fact that it is only phrasal categories that take part in syntactic operations like movement, deletion, substitution and coordination. Then, in the following sections, we show how the different elements within a clause are grammatically organized. How the meaning of a predicate, to a large extent, determines the structure is dealt with, in terms of the the roles borne by the arguments. Finally we discuss the special status of the subject in certain English constructions.

1. Syntactic Constituents

One leading idea in our exposition so far has been that words combining to form phrases are at the heart of what we call syntax. All that happens in the syntactic domain can be made sense of in terms of the phrases that take part in the processes. With this aim, we now turn to an illustration of how only a phrase, and not a part of the phrase, can be involved in syntactic operations like movement, deletion, coordination and substitution.

2. Constituency Tests

2.1 Movement

It is a common strategy to front a constituent in order to give it some degree of prominence. This is exemplified in (1):

1. a. I read Steve Pinker's new book with relish.
   b. Steve Pinker's new book, I read with relish.

In the (b) sentence, the object NP has been 'topicalised', i.e., it is brought to the sentence-initial position. (We are assuming a position "Topic" which is a discourse related slot, situated to the right of the subject position.) What is interesting about this process is that the whole NP has to "move", not a part of it, as borne out by the unacceptability of the following:

2. a. *Steve Pinker's, I read new book with relish.
   b. * New book, I read Steve Pinker's with relish.
   c. * Book, I read Steve Pinker's new with relish.
   d. * Book with relish, I read Steve Pinker's new.

All are judged ill-formed (indicated by the asterisk), as they are in violation of the **principle of constituency**. In the d sentence, the PP *with relish* has moved along with *book* – but they do not form a constituent. This shows that movement in syntax (and English has that in abundance, as we shall see) observes constituency.

The same point can be illustrated with regard to interrogation in English. In English the standard procedure of forming Yes/No questions is by inverting the subject and the auxiliary.

3. a. John can sing.
   b. Can John sing?

Here also, it is possible to analyse this as moving the auxiliary across the subject NP. It is not just a flipping of the first two words in an assertive sentence that gives the question form.

4. a. Can John's sister sing?
   b. *John's can sister sing?

What this shows conclusively is that a string is analysed by syntax in terms of the constituents (i.e., phrases), not in terms of words.

Further confirmation of this is found in question word questions.

5. a. *Whose are you reading new book?
   b. Whose new book are you reading?

The object NP in the above is *whose new book*, therefore the fronting of the object, the characteristic of this type of interrogatives, needs to move the whole phrase, not just the part which is relevant from the point of view of meaning. Notice in this connection that the answer to the question refers only to *whose*; therefore (5a) ought to have been okay, but it is not.

2.2 Substitution

A second syntactic process that is sensitive to this principle is that of substitution. It is possible to substitute a VP by "so did" in certain constructions:

6. a. Mary bought a new sari and so did Joan.
   b.*Mary bought a new sari and so did Joan a new shirt.

The ungrammaticality of (6b) is due to the fact that " so did" substitutes only the verb *bought*, not the whole VP. It is worth emphasizing that there is no violation of any semantic (i.e., related to meaning) or pragmatic principle here.

It is a pure syntactic constraint that insists that substitution should observe constituency.

The substitution by "so did" is actually a special case of a more general principle that governs substitution. Pronouns are used for substituting for not nouns, but noun phrases. See (7):

7. John has bought a new car, I did not like *it*.

The pronoun it stands for *a new car*, not just *car*. Sometimes, it can substitute for a clause.

8. John has decided to contest the election. I think *it* is foolish.

It refers to 'decision to contest the election'. So we can say generally, substitution observes the principle of constituency.

2.3 Coordination

A third test we can use is that of coordination.

9. John bought a bottle of beer and a can of milk.

Here, *a bottle of beer* is a constituent, so is *a can of milk*. Therefore they can be coordinated. *A bottle of* is not a constituent, therefore it cannot be used in coordination, as shown by (9'):

9'. *John bought a bottle of and a can of milk.

Though coordination is a reliable test for establishing constituency, there are certain factors that complicate the outcome. Therefore, we will not go further into it.

2.4 Deletion

Often it is possible to delete a part of the sentence without any loss of meaning.

10. Mary may return from Chennai today, she may not.

In this sentence, what is deleted is 'return from Chennai today', which is a VP. Notice that it is not possible to delete a part of the VP, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (11- 13):

11. * Mary may return from Chennai today, she may not from Chennai today
12. * Mary may return from Chennai today, she may not Chennai today.
13. * Mary may return from Chennai today, she may not today.

In all these, part of the VP is retained in the second clause, which means only a part gets deleted. This part deletion is in violation of the principle of constituency, which is why the structures are deemed unacceptable.

In short, all syntactic processes do respect the principle of constituency. In other words, the building blocks of syntax are not words, but phrases.

3. Structure of a Clause

In the last two lessons, we examined the structure of phrases. In this lesson, we will look at the clause, which is the next higher unit.

A clause has two parts: the **subject** and the **predicate**. Consider a simple sentence with just one clause, as in (14):

14. Ravi opened the box

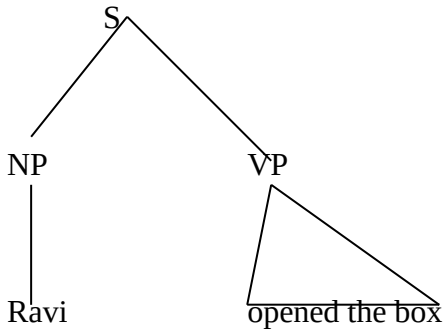
In (14), *Ravi* is the old (or given) information. Something is said about *Ravi*, which is the new information, namely *opened the box*. Therefore, as an initial step, we may characterize the subject as the given and the predicate as new information. Another way to look at this division is in terms of **Topic** (i.e., *Ravi*) and **Comment** (i.e., *opened the box*). A third approach treats the subject Ravi as the Theme and what is said about the subject as Rheme. What is common to all these approaches is that they all recognize a bipartite structure in a clause. In a formal theory of clause structure, like the one we are pursuing here, we can take

the primary division in a clause to be an NP followed by a VP. This is shown diagrammatically in (15).

15. S → NP VP

We use the symbol S for a clause. (15) says that a clause S is to be rewritten as consisting of a NP which is the subject and a VP which is the predicate. Of course, we are ignoring grammatical categories like Tense and Aspect when we opt for a simple Rewrite Rule like (15). Using the Rule in (15), we can represent the structure of (14) as in (16):

16.



We have already seen how to expand NP and VP, in the earlier lessons. Once we apply those PS rules we can arrive at a full-fledged tree structure for the sentence in (16). But before we go into the details of how the system puts together the structural analyses of sentences in terms of its constituent phrases, we need to address the question of where the material for these structures, namely the words themselves, come from. Obviously, the words are drawn from the lexicon.

3. The Lexicon

The syntactic component of grammar presupposes the existence of a lexicon. A lexicon is a list of words with all the idiosyncratic information associated with each item. A lexical entry will mention, among other things, the pronunciation of the word, its lexical meaning, and the category to which it belongs. The

lexicon may then be characterized as the place where all the arbitrary facts that pertain to a word (more correctly, a lexical item) are recorded. This mental lexicon is the essential input to the syntactic processes that string words together to form permissible sequences. It is the lexicon, working in tandem with the PS rules, that generate the underlying structure of a sentence.

A lexical entry, as we noted above, contains some specification as to the complement structure of the item. For instance, a transitive verb like *hit* has to be followed by an NP. The lexical entry of a verb specifies its **subcategorization** frame.

17. HIT = V [$_{NP}$]

(17) says that *hit* is a verb that is obligatorily followed by an NP. In lesson 1 we saw that there are different ways in which a VP can be rewritten; the particular expansion will depend on the choice of the verb. It is the subcategorization frame of the verb, given in the lexicon, that provides the information for rewriting the VP. Take a ditransitive verb, say *give*.

18. GIVE = V [$_{NP}$] [$_{NP}$]
V [$_{NP}$] [$_{PP}$]

(18) encodes the fact that the verb *give* has two alternate ways of selecting its complements, either an NP followed by another NP, or an NP followed by a PP – (19a-b) illustrate the two options, respectively.

19. a. give [$_{NP}$ Mary] [$_{NP}$ a book]
b. give [$_{NP}$ a book] [$_{PP}$ to Mary]

It is easier to see what the subcategorization frame of a verb is to be, but the principle is not necessarily restricted to verbs. Nouns and adjectives too have their subcategorization frames. A verbal noun, say destruction has the same frame as does its corresponding verb form destroy.

20. a. destroy the city
    b. destruction of the city

The only difference between (20a) and (20b) is that a dummy preposition *of* has to be inserted after the verbal noun, as '*destruction the city' will be unacceptable.

Thus, it is the lexicon which provides the primary information for constructing the tree diagram for a sentence. In a sense, all that we do when we rewrite a phrase in terms of its constituents is to project the lexical information about that item onto the syntactic plane. However, notice that the lexical entry of a word does not give any clues about the number of adjuncts within a phrase. The adjuncts are additional information, and therefore they cannot be determined once and for all by the predicate.

4. Predicates and their Arguments

So far our discussion has centred around the structural requirements of a phrase. It is time to introduce a deeper issue. Why is it that a certain verb demands a certain number of NPs and/or PPs to follow it? The answer is in the semantics of the verb. If we take a verb, say *put*, there has to be a person who puts, a thing that is put and a location in which the thing is *put*. Only when these three bits of information are provided the verb gets its semantics fulfilled. These are known as the **arguments** of the verb. Put is a verb that takes three arguments. Similarly, give takes three arguments: a giver, the thing given and the recipient. When any one of these three is left out, the semantics of the verb becomes incomplete. For any given verb, there is a unique argument structure that defines it.

We saw that the verb *give* admits two alternate subcategorization frames (see (19a-b)). Yet, it has only one argument structure: the recipient may be expressed

as an NP or as a PP, as shown in (18a-b). Another important point is that the subcategorization of a verb normally does not include the subject argument. That is, the giver is not part of the representation in (18). Why? The answer lies in the fact that the subject argument of a verb is not as closely tied to the verb as is the object argument. The subject is taken to be external to the VP. The verb and its complements is what the VP is constituted of. The subject is not a complement. Syntactically, a subject is on par with an adjunct, though it is hard to maintain this distinction when we look at the issue form the point of view of the semantics of the verb. Hence, it becomes necessary to bring in another term in order to deal with this tricky point, the notion of **selection**. A transitive verb like *hit* subcategorizes for an NP, the direct object argument, but it *selects* two arguments, the subject (the hitter) and the object (the hittee). While both the subject argument and the object argument are necessary for the saturation of the semantics of the verb, only the latter is deemed to be indispensable as far as the subcategorization frame of *hit* is concerned. However, all the arguments selected by the verb will be represented in the structure.

5. Thematic Roles

We now are ready to introduce another key factor into the discussion. When we say that a certain verb requires a specific number of arguments for its semantics to be complete, there arises the question: how do these arguments fulfil the semantics? To give a satisfactory answer to this, we need to probe further into what a verb (or more generally, a predicate) signifies. What is a verb's semantics, after all? A verb can be seen as denoting or describing an action, in the most common cases. If there is an action described, there are participants in that action. Take the example we discussed earlier, the verb give. There has to be a giver, a thing given and a recipient. These three entities involved in the action are the participants. In the model of syntax that we are following in this

unit, these participants are known as **thematic roles**. These are also called Theta Roles. Each of the arguments of a predicate takes on (or bears) a particular theta role, and it is this mapping between the arguments and theta roles that enable them to fulfil the semantics of the predicate.

Let us now review some of these thematic roles. Given below is a list of some common roles:

21.

- Agent
- Patient
- Theme
- Instrument
- Source
- Experiencer
- Goal
- Beneficiary
- Location

Though (21) is not an exhaustive list, it covers most of the familiar roles one comes across in sentences. **Agent** is usually the person who does/performs the action. And in most of the cases this role is assigned to the subject NP. **Patient** is the person or thing that suffers the result of the action. This role often gets assigned to the direct object NP. **Theme** is similar to the Patient in certain ways, in that Theme also is the sufferer of the result of the action, but the Theme usually undergoes a change of state as the result of the action. Below we give examples of theses three theta roles.

21. John admires Mary. John – Agent, Mary- Patient

22. John broke the mirror. John Agent, the mirror – Theme (The mirror suffers a change of state.)

It is not always the case that the subject gets the Agent role. Consider (23):

23. John broke his leg in the accident.

Though *John* is the subject in (23) *John* is not the Agent of the action, it is not willful action on the part of John that resulted in his leg being broken. *John* here is the Patient/Theme. Sometimes, the subject NP can be the **Experiencer**, as in (24):

24. John has a head-ache.

In (24), John is undergoing the experience. Therefore, which argument gets which theta role is dependent on the nature of the predicate. One important thing to bear in mind is that terms like subject, direct object, indirect object etc. are grammatical functions. There is no unique one-to-one correspondence between these grammatical functions and the theta roles. Each theta role is assigned to an argument in such a way that the meaning requirements of the predicate are satisfied.

A verb with three arguments like *give* will have three theta roles- Agent (the giver, usually the subject), Patient (the thing given, i.e., the direct object) and **Goal** or **Recipient** (the person who receives the thing, i.e., the indirect object).

25. John gave a book to Mary
    Agent Patient Recepient

Similarly, a verb like *take* will have, in addition to Agent and Patient, a **Source** (i.e where the thing is taken from).

26. Mary took the book from the shelf
    Agent Patient Source

Put is a verb whose theta roles include the specification of a **Location**.

27. Mary put the kettle on the stove
Agent Patient Location

Beneficiary is similar to Recipient, in verbs like *award* or *donate*.

28. Mary donated Rs 10,000 to the church.
The church here is the Beneficiary.

This list of theta roles is provisional. What is more important from the point of view of grammar is that thematic roles have to be assigned to and realized on arguments so that the meaning of the predicate (and therefore, ultimately of the sentence) gets properly represented.

6. Subject a Non-argument

So far we saw cases where the subject of a sentence is always assigned a theta role, either Agent or Experiencer or Theme. But there are exceptions to this. Consider (29):

29. It is difficult to learn syntax.

The subject in (29) is *it*. What theta role does it bear? None. We call the *it* in (29) an introductory *it*, or a pleonastic *it*. The *it* in (29) only fills the subject slot, it does not contribute to the meaning in any way. Therefore, it follows that there is no theta role assigned to it. In fact, the *it* in (29) is not even an argument. (Remember only arguments are assigned theta roles.) *It* in (29) is a non-argument. Another non-argument in English is the introductory *there*, exemplified in (30):

30. There is a lion in the cage.

Notice that the *there* in (30) is different from the adverb of place *there*, which is italicised in (31):

31. John is in Kolkata, he has been *there* for a week.

Similarly, the non-argument *it* is different from the pronoun *it*, see (32):

32. I bought a book yesterday, *it* is very interesting.

7. Summary

In this lesson, we examined the structure of a clause. The lexicon acts as the source of syntactic structures, in the sense that the words are drawn from the lexicon. It was shown that each predicate selects a specific number of arguments and that each argument is assigned a particular thematic role. The subject position in English can be filled by arguments with different theta roles, like Gent, Experiencer and Theme. It may also be filled by non-arguments: the pleonastic *it* and *there*.

8. Self Assessment Questions

1. *Say whether the following statements are True or False:*

a) Complements are obligatory, adjuncts are optional.

b) The subject NP always gets the Agent theta role.

c) Introductory *it* is a dummy subject, as it does not add to the meaning.

d) Subcategorization frame of a verb includes the subject argument.

2. *Mention the number of arguments that each of the following verbs selects.*

a) sleep, b) promise, c) tell, d) persuade, e) watch

(Hint: Put them in a sentence. Also note that there can be sentential arguments.)

9. Review Questions

1. What is the role of the lexicon in syntax?

2. What are the basic constituents of a clause? What functions do they fulfil?

3. Define the term ‘argument’.

4. What is meant by ‘subcategorization’? How is it distinguished from ‘selection’?

5. What is the principle of constituency? Give any two tests to determine that VP is a constituent in a clause.

10. Answer Key

1a True, 1b. False, 1c False, 1d. False

1, 3, 3, 3, 2.

Lesson 1

General Introduction and Word Meaning

CONTENTS

1.1 Introduction

The study of meaning is called semantics. Meaning can be analyzed at various levels. In this lesson we introduce you to the various levels at which meaning can be analyzed. We also introduce you to the various approaches to the study of meaning. In § 1.5 of this lesson, we look at various properties of meaning at word level. In § 1.6, we introduce you to the concept of breaking up of meaning of words into smaller units.

1.2 Objectives

After going through this unit, you should be able to

- say what the three levels at which meaning is structured are
- say what the three approaches to meaning are
- say what the different properties of meaning at word level are, and
- identify the components of meaning of certain words.

1.3 Three levels of meaning

In language, meaning is structured at three levels: word meaning, sentence meaning, and speaker meaning. In this section, I will briefly introduce you to how meaning is structured at these three levels.

1.3.1 Word meaning and sentence meaning

The notion of word meaning should be fairly obvious to you. All of us have had the experience of coming across words that we don't know the meanings of. And you know that there are dictionaries that give us the meaning of words. In modern semantics, there is a branch called "lexical semantics," which is the branch that deals with the meaning of words. Sentence meaning has become the focus study in modern day semantics, just as sentence structure has become the

focus of study in modern day syntax. In fact, the meaning of a sentence is closely connected to sentence structure. Take a look at the following examples:

Sarathy hates Roja.

Roja hates Sarathy.

In the above pair of sentences, even though we have the same set of words *Sarathy*, *hates*, and *Roja*, the meaning is different. And this difference, as you can see, is due to the fact that the words occupy different structural positions in the sentence. In the first sentence, *Sarathy* is in the subject position and *Roja* is in the object position, while in the second sentence *Roja* is in the subject position, and *Sarathy* in the object position.

Thus we see that the structure of the sentence plays an important role in determining the meaning of a sentence.

1.3.2 Speaker meaning

The importance of the meaning that the speaker intends to convey is best seen in the case of fixing the reference of certain expressions. Imagine a sentence like the following being spoken by your friend while looking at a painting:

The painter of this picture must be a genius.

Imagine further that you know that M F Hussein is the painter of the picture in question. So you might understand that your friend said that M F Hussein must be a genius. Now, it might turn out that your friend has no idea who M F Hussein is. So if you ask her whether by saying the above sentence she meant that M F Hussein must be a genius, you might get a big "No" as the answer. What this shows is that your friend did not "mean" M F Hussein when she said "The painter of this picture." The meaning she was trying to express can be better captured as something like "whoever painted this picture." Thus we see

that the meaning that the speaker intends to convey is very important when we try to understand the meaning of a sentence.

When we use language, we also try to convey much particularized kinds of meanings. If you say "It's quite warm" while you are in a room, it might be taken depending on the context as conveying the meaning that the fan has to be switched on or that the windows should be opened.

In modern linguistics, speaker meaning is often studied under the branch called pragmatics. We shall look at more of this in lesson 3.

Self Assessment Question – I

What are the three levels at which meaning is structured in language?

1.4 Different approaches to meaning

All the attempts to study meaning have to deal with the primary question, "What is meaning?" And, over the years, there have been many different perspectives on meaning. We can broadly classify all the approaches to meaning into three major types: denotational approach, mentalistic approach, and pragmatic approach. We shall briefly look at these three approaches in the following sub-sections.

1.4.1 Denotational approach

The basic idea in this approach is that expressions in language – namely words and sentences – denote certain things. At a very simplistic level, we can say that this approach assumes that a word like *lion* will denote the set of lions in the world and a phrase like *the lion* in the sentence *The lion is in the cage* will denote some particular lion that is being talked about.

The Denotational approach to meaning has quite a lot of followers among modern formal semanticists and philosophers. We cannot go into all the subtleties of this approach in a course like this.

1.4.2 Mentalistic approach

A very intuitive approach to adopt towards meaning is to think of it as something in the minds of the speakers of the language. So, instead of saying that the word *lion* refers to the set of lions in the world, the proponents of mentalistic approach will say that a person who learns the meaning of the word *lion* has the concept of "lioness" in her mind.

In spite of its appeal and wide following in cognitive sciences and artificial intelligence, this approach also has its problems and limitations. The main problem is that we have very little idea about what the mental representation of meaning is. Any attempt to understand more about that would take us away from our object of study, which is language. We would find ourselves getting into questions that are more relevant to a psychologist rather than a linguist. This may be the reason why the mentalist approach to meaning has not had many followers from among linguists.

1.4.3 Pragmatic approach

Unlike the Denotational and the Mentalistic approaches, the pragmatic approach takes the use of language into consideration. Pragmatic approaches have been very successful in the study of the meaning of linguistic chunks larger than a sentence.

Self Assessment Question II

What are the three different approaches to the study of meaning?

1.5 Properties of and relations in word meaning

We have already said that meaning in language is structured at the level of the word, sentence, and the speaker. In this section, we shall look at some of the properties of meaning at the level of word.

1.5.1 Denotation and Connotation

A word like *baby* has a primary literal or conceptual meaning in that it refers to a very young child. We call this the **denotative meaning** or the **denotation** of a word. Apart from their primary literal or conceptual meaning, words often have some feelings or emotions attached to them due to certain qualities associated with the things or concepts these words refer to. For instance, the word *baby* may evoke a feeling of innocence or inexperience in the minds of the hearers. The feeling or emotion associated to a word is its **connotation**. The connotation of a word can undergo change even without a change in its denotation. In societies where the position of women is improving drastically, the word *woman* will no longer have connotations of frailty or weakness. Now we shall look at some meanings relationships between words.

1.5.2 Synonymy

We say that an expression is synonymous with another expression when both of them have the same meaning. Sameness in meaning can be seen both at the word level and the sentence level. Although complete synonymy is hard to find at the word level, we can find many instances when the meanings of certain words overlap. For instance, a word like *large* can be seen to have the same meaning as a word like *huge* as in *a large mansion* and *a huge mansion*. But you

cannot use them interchangeably in expressions like *a large glass* and *a huge mountain*. Complete synonymy is thus hard to find in languages.

1.5.3 Polysemy

Polysemy is the property of a word having more than one meaning. A word like *article* is polysemous as it can either mean 'a thing' or 'a piece of writing about a particular subject.' Most words in English are polysemous as they have many meanings. Here are some other examples of polysemous words:

draw - 'to make a picture' as in *draw a picture* or
'to move in one direction' as in *draw the curtain*

soft - 'not hard' as in *a soft bed* or
'not loud' as in *soft music*

count - 'say numbers' as in *count up to ten* or
'be important' as in *everything counts during war*

Polysemy has to be distinguished from *homonymy*, in which case there are two words that are pronounced and written alike. *Homophony* is the case of two words being pronounced alike. The words *bear* and *bare* are homophonous. If two words are written alike they are said to be *homographs*. The words *minute* (adjective) 'extremely small' and *minute* (noun) 'a unit of time' are homographs. Thus, homonymy is obtained when we have both homophony and homography. The English word *bank* which means 'financial institution' is a homonym of the word *bank* which means 'the side of a lake or a river'.

How do we distinguish homonymy from polysemy? The distinction we make is that in the case of homonymy we consider the words to be different, while in the case of polysemy we treat it as a single word that has multiple meaning. Quite often, it is not easy to tell homonymy from polysemy. It is done by looking at

the etymology (origin) of the word and its history. But these are things only an expert on language has access to. The principle that we can adhere to is that in the case of polysemy, one can find some kind of link between the different meanings of the word, but in the case of homonymy, it is difficult to find such a link. Thus, one can find some link between the different senses of a word like *soft*, but not between the different meanings of *bank*. However, it should be noted that this is not a foolproof method. Take the case of a word like *pupil*. As you know, it has two meanings, namely 'a part of the eye' or 'a student.' Most speakers of English would not find any connection between the two meanings. But interestingly, an expert who knows the history of English language will say that *pupil* is a case of polysemy and not homonymy. This is because the two meanings of the word were connected at some point in the history of the language. For our purposes, it is enough to know that homonymy and polysemy are different phenomena.

1.5.4 Hyponymy

Can you say what kind of relationship exists between words like *flower* and *rose*? You might say, "A rose is a kind of flower." A way of capturing this idea is as follows: if we take the set of all the flowers in this world, we will have the set containing all the roses within it (along with, say, sets of other flowers like jasmine and dahlia). We say that *rose* is a hyponym of *flower*. Please note that it is the more specific term (or the smaller set) that is the hyponym. The larger term is the superordinate term. When we say that *rose* is a hyponym of *flower*, we mean that the meaning of *rose* is included in the meaning of the latter.

Self-Assessment Question III

Define denotation , connotation, synonymy, polysemy, and hyponymy

1.5.5 Antonymy

Just like sameness in meaning, speakers also have some understanding of opposition in meaning. We use the term *antonymy* to refer to opposition in meaning. However, we can find opposition in meaning in different dimensions. Consider the word *girl*. In one sense, it is in opposition with *boy*. In another sense, it is in opposition with *woman*. If we consider *boy* as the opposite of *girl*, we are thinking in terms of the opposition between 'male' and 'female.' If we think of *woman* as the opposition of *girl*, we are thinking of the opposition in terms of 'adult' versus 'non-adult.' In the following sections, we shall look at different types of oppositions in meaning that is obtained between words.

1.5.5.1 Binary opposition

A word that exhibits binary opposition divides the things it describes into two distinct realms and there is no overlap between the territories defined by two terms. Very good examples of binary opposition are pairs like *alive – dead*. The division into two distinct spheres is quite clear, as there is no middle ground between being alive and dead. So, we cannot say of somebody that she is neither alive nor dead (unless we mean it in a figurative sense). Similarly it can be shown that there is no overlap between *alive* and *dead*, because somebody who is alive is not dead and somebody who is dead is not alive. We cannot say of somebody that she is alive, but not dead, or that she is dead, but not alive.

1.5.5.2 Polar opposition

In the case of pairs expressing polar opposition we have a scale of which the two terms refer to the two extremes. Examples for polar opposition are pairs like: *hot – cold, big – small, rich – poor, young – old*, and so on. Unlike in the case of binary opposition, there is a middle ground covered by neither of the terms in the case of polar opposition. So we can say something like "the water is neither

hot nor cold; it is at the right temperature." Similarly pointing to two small boxes, we can say something like: "both are small, but one is bigger than the other."

1.5.5.3 Converse Relation

Converse relation is obtained between pairs expressing relationships like *parent – offspring, husband – wife, teacher – student* and so on. In the case of converse relation, if one of the terms denotes the relationship of A to B, then the other term necessarily denotes the relationship of B to A. Thus, if A is the parent of B, then B is the offspring of A.

Self-Assessment Question IV

Identify the meaning opposition in the following pairs of words: *awake – asleep*, *deep – shallow*, and *before - after*

1.6 Semantic field, Componential analysis, and Semantic primitives

Words that express related meanings fall into natural classes. Consider the following set of words: *mother*, *father*, *aunt*, *uncle*, *sister*, and *brother*. What is common between all these words is that they express some kind of kinship. So we can say that they belong to the semantic field of kinship terminology. Similarly, we can think of words expressing everyday activities as belonging to one semantic field.

Breaking up the meaning of words into smaller components of meaning has enabled us to understand the notion of semantic field better as it has been quite successful in capturing the similarities and differences in the meaning of words. Let us take the set of words: *girl*, *boy*, *woman*, and *man*. All of them belong to the semantic field of words that are used to talk about human race.

As we said in § 1.5.5 above, a word like *girl*, on the one hand, has an opposition with *boy*, but on the other, it opposes with *woman*. Breaking up the meaning of words like *boy* and *girl* enables us to see why this is happening. We can think of the meaning of *man* as comprising "primitive" meanings like HUMAN, MALE, and ADULT. This can be represented in terms of "features." That is to say, we can think of the information HUMAN, MALE, and ADULT as features. *Man* will oppose with *boy* in terms of the feature ADULT. This opposition can be captured in terms of "+" versus "-" opposition. So, *man* can be said to be + ADULT, while *boy* will be specified as - ADULT.

Man : + HUMAN, + MALE, + ADULT
Woman : + HUMAN, - MALE, + ADULT
Boy : + HUMAN, + MALE, - ADULT
Girl : + HUMAN, - MALE, - ADULT

The feature + HUMAN capture the fact that all of the four words belong to one semantic field. We have chosen to represent the other two features as MALE and ADULT. We could have as well chosen the opposite features FEMALE and YOUNG. In our system, femaleness is captured by the feature – MALE, and the quality of being young by the feature - ADULT. The opposition between the four words *girl*, *boy*, *woman*, and *man* can be brought out with the help of the following table:

	+ MALE	**- MALE**
+ ADULT	man	woman
- ADULT	boy	girl

This analysis of the meaning of words into smaller components is called **componential analysis**. Componential analysis had its heydays in the first half

of the twentieth century. However, it didn't meet with much success apart from the initial success it had with words like kinship terminology. Often the smaller components of meaning became too many and too complex to handle. Another problem was that quite often one found that it was difficult to capture the semantic complexity of a word with help of smaller components. Consider a word like *bird*. When we think of the meaning of this word, what might come to our mind might be a feathered creature capable of flying. But as you can readily see, if we were to characterize the meaning of *bird* in these terms, birds like penguins will be left out. In fact, it would be impossible to think of some set of features uniquely shared by all the birds. Yet another example is a word like *game*. You can imagine how difficult it would be to arrive at a set of features that would be able to characterize a game of chess and a game of football. In spite of all this, the notion that meaning of certain expressions can be broken into simpler and smaller units still survives in linguistics.

In contemporary linguistics, there is the idea that meaning can be quite often broken into smaller units that are primitives. The idea is that meaning of all the expressions in all the human languages can be broken into a finite set of primitive units that are cognitively simpler. Features like HUMAN, ADULT, and MALE are potential candidates to be semantic primitives. In the case of verbs, concepts like BECOME, DO, and CAUSE were thought to be primitives. The alternation between the intransitive and transitive uses of the verb *break* can be captured in terms of such primitives. For instance the intransitive verb *break* can be said to mean something like "BECOME broken," while the transitive verb can be said to mean something like "CAUSE to BECOME broken." Similarly if the meaning of *die* is "BECOME NOT alive," *kill* can be analysed as "CAUSE to BECOME NOT alive." After the initial euphoria, the attempt to break down meaning like this also has not met with much success. Much of

modern semantics concentrates on meaning of units larger than words – namely, sentences and discourse. In the next two lessons, we shall look at these aspects of meaning.

Self-Assessment Question VI

Explain briefly the concepts of semantic field, componential analysis, and semantic primitives.

1.7 Summary

In this unit, we looked at three levels at which meaning is structured in language: the word level, the sentence level, and the level of the speaker. We said that there are also three different ways to look at meaning: the denotational approach, the mentalistic approach, and the pragmatic approach. We looked at meaning relations between words like synonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, and antonymy. Synonymy is sameness in meaning, while polysemy is multiplicity in meaning. Hyponymy is a phenomenon where a wider term is considered to include the meaning of a more specific term. In the case of antonymy, we found that there are at least three different ways in which words enter into opposition of meaning: binary opposition, polar opposition, and converse relation. In the last section, we looked at some attempts to break up the meaning of words into smaller units.

1.8 Brief answers to Self Assessment Questions

Self Assessment Question – I

Word meaning, sentence meaning, and speaker meaning.

Self Assessment Question – II

Denotational approach, Mentalistic approach, and Pragmatic approach.

Self-Assessment Question III

Denotation: conceptual meaning

Connotation: emotion or feeling associated

Synonymy: sameness in meaning

Polysemy: multiplicity in meaning

Hyponymy: inclusion of meaning

Self-Assessment Question IV

awake – asleep: binary opposition

deep – shallow: polar opposition

before – after: converse relation

Self-Assessment Question V

Semantic field: Words belonging to a specific

Componential analysis: The attempt to break up the meaning of words into smaller units.

Semantic Primitive: Basic units of meaning that are universal out of which complex concepts are constructed.

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Lesson 2

Meaning at the Sentence Level

CONTENTS

2.1 Introduction

In the previous lesson, we introduced you to the concept of meaning and we also looked at some issues in the meaning of words. In this lesson we will look at the properties of meaning associated with the sentence. We shall also look at some meaning relationships between sentences.

2.2 Objectives

After studying this unit you should be able to

- say whether a sentence is meaningful, anomalous, redundant, contradictory, or ambiguous and
- identify the relationship between sentences in terms of entailment, Implicature, and presupposition.

2.3 Properties of meaning and relations in meaning

When we study meaning, an important aspect that we concentrate upon is the properties of meaning. We can say whether a sentence is meaningful, anomalous, redundant, contradictory, or ambiguous. Similarly, we can also talk about meaning relationships between sentences like contradiction, synonymy, presupposition, and entailment. In this section, we shall take a look at these.

2.3.1 Meaningfulness and Semantic Anomaly

Meaningfulness is quite easy to understand. Compare the following sentences:

Dutiful brave soldiers fought successfully.

Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

All of you will be able to say that while the first sentence is meaningful, the second one is hard to make sense of. Note that the second sentence has the same structure as that of the first one, and therefore is structurally well formed. In fact, the second sentence was coined by the famous linguist Noam Chomsky to illustrate that sentences can be structurally well formed, and yet meaningless. The oddity of the second sentence is due to the fact that it is semantically anomalous.

2.3.2 Redundancy

We have redundancy of meaning when the same meaning is expressed more than once. Take a look at the following sentence:

Rehman is an unmarried bachelor.

As you know, the word *bachelor* includes the meaning "unmarried." So the use of *unmarried* in the above sentence can be said to be redundant.

2.3.3 Contradiction

Contradiction in meaning occurs when the meanings are not compatible with each other.

#Rehman is a married bachelor.

(In this and the next units, the crosshatch "#" is placed before a sentence to indicate that it is semantically odd.)

As we said above, the word *bachelor* includes the meaning "unmarried," and hence it is incompatible with *married*.

2.3.4 Synonymy

At the sentence level, you can find that a sentence in active voice is quite often synonymous with its passive voice counterpart as shown by the following pair of sentences:

Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*.

Hamlet was written by Shakespeare.

However, you should remember that an active voice and a passive voice sentence have different functions to perform in discourse, and they cannot be always used interchangeably.

Self-Assessment Question I

Say what property of meaning (anomaly, redundancy, or contradiction) is exhibited by the following sentences:

1. The table was startled by the loud noise.
2. Poor little Serin is an orphan without any parents.
3. The tallest boy in our class is not taller than everyone else.

2.3.5 Ambiguity

A sentence is said to be ambiguous when it has more than one meaning. A sentence can be ambiguous due to the presence of a word.

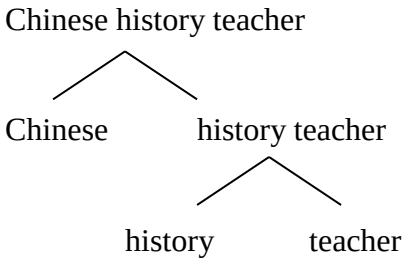
We saw him near the bank.

Here, the word *bank* can be interpreted in two different ways. Either you could be talking about a financial institution, or you could be talking about a shore of a river.

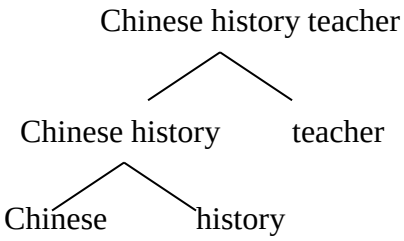
2.3.5.1 Structural ambiguity

If a sentence or a phrase can be given more than one structure, we call it structural ambiguity. Consider the phrase *Chinese history teacher*. It can either mean a teacher who teaches Chinese history, or a history teacher who is Chinese. This ambiguity is not the result of the multiplicity in the meaning of any particular word. The problem here is that the word *Chinese* can either be interpreted as modifying *history teacher* (in which case we get the reading that the teacher is Chinese), or as modifying just *history* (in which case we get the reading that the teacher teaches Chinese history). We can represent both the structures as shown below:

a. <u>The structure of *Chinese history teacher* (a history teacher who is Chinese)</u>



b. <u>The structure of *Chinese history teacher* (a teacher who teaches Chinese history)</u>



In (a), the word *Chinese* is attached to *history teacher*. So we say that it modifies *history teacher*, and we get the meaning 'a history teacher who is Chinese.' In (b), *Chinese* is attached to *history*. Here we get the meaning 'Chinese history.'

The same kind of structural ambiguity can be obtained at the sentence level. Consider a sentence like:

I will talk to the man near the counter.

One way to interpret the above sentence is as follows:

I will talk to the man who is near the counter.

Here, it is said that the man is near the counter. We don't know where the talking will actually take place. So we can continue the sentence as follows:

I will talk to the man who is near the counter if I meet at him at the railway station tomorrow.

In the other reading, the speaker is expressing her intention that the talking will take place near the counter. It is not said where the person is right now. So you can one can go on like this:

> I will talk to the man (when he is) near the counter. So I am waiting for him to reach the counter.

Yet another kind of ambiguity can be seen in a sentence like the following:

> I saw her painting.

Are you able to get both the meanings of the above sentence? In one sense, there is a painting by her, and the speaker is saying that he saw it. In the other sense, she was painting something, and the speaker says that he saw it. This is an ambiguity that arises from lexical as well as structural properties. At the lexical level, it is due to the fact that *her* can be understood in two ways: *her* is understood as a possessive pronoun in the first interpretation, while it is understood as the accusative form of the third person feminine pronoun *she* in the second sense. At the structural level, *her painting* is a noun phrase in the first sense, while in the second sense *her painting* is like a clause where *her* is understood as the subject of the verb *painting*.

Self-Assessment Question II

Explain the ambiguity in the following phrases/sentences by paraphrasing the different meanings:

1. Young men and women.
2. The principal asked the students to attend the classes in the evening.
3. Visiting relatives can be a nuisance.
4. I saw her duck.

2.3.5.2 Semantic Ambiguity

In this section, we look at a different type of ambiguity seen at the sentence level. Take a look at the following pair of sentences:

I didn't meet two professors.

Can you think of two ways to interpret the above sentence? You can use the above sentence to deny the fact that you met two professors. So you can continue to say something like "I could meet only one." In the other situation, there were many professors, out of which may have met some, but did not meet two. So, you are saying that there are two professors you did not meet. In other words, while the first sentence clearly says that the number of professors the speaker met is *not* two, the second sentence says that the number of professors the speaker did *not* meet is two. In the second scenario, the number of professors the speaker met could even be two if the total number of professors is four. That is, the speaker did not meet two, but also met two. The above interpretations can be paraphrased as follows:

It is not the case that I met two professors.

Two professors are such that I did not meet them.

Here, the first sentence has to be read as a denial of the fact that the speaker met two professors, while the second sentence asserts the fact there are two professors who the speaker did not meet. You may have noticed that we used a somewhat artificial variety of English to bring out these two meanings. Linguists use formal language to represent meanings like this. But in this course, we are not going to introduce you to such formal languages.

This kind of ambiguity arises because of the presence of words like *not* and the quantifying word *two*. In fact, quantifiers like *every*, *some*, and the article *a* are

notorious for giving rise to such ambiguities. Take a look at the following examples:

Every boy recited a poem.

Every tourist visited some monument.

Both the sentences are ambiguous. In the first sentence, it could be the case that either all the boys recited the same poem or each boy recited a different poem. The second sentence could either mean that there is some monument which was visited by all the tourists or that each tourist visited a different monument.

Self-Assessment Question III

Explain the ambiguity in the following sentences by paraphrasing the different meanings:

1. Kannan didn't return a book.
2. Everyone was angry with someone.
3. Sreevalli wants to marry a doctor.

2.3.6 Entailment and Implicature

A meaning relation that is studied in detail in current approach to meaning is the implication relationship between sentences. One kind of implication relationship between sentences is entailment. Let us see what entailment is.

When we say that a sentence A entails another sentence B, we mean that:

If we take A to be true in a particular situation and it necessarily follows that B is true in the same situation, then we say that A entails B.

Let us look at an example. Imagine a speaker saying the following sentence:

Sameera used to visit her uncle once a month.

Even if you didn't know anything about Sameera, you will come to the conclusion Sameera visited her uncle on many occasions. That is to say, you cannot say something like the following without people wondering about your sanity:

> #I believe that Sameera used to visit her uncle once a month, but I believe that Sameera only visited her uncle once.

So we can say that truth of the sentence *Sameera used to visit her uncle once a month* guarantees the truth of the sentence that Sameera visited her uncle at least more than a couple of times, that is to say, the relationship between the two sentences is that of entailment.

A foolproof way to determine whether there is entailment relationship is to try negating the sentence you are testing for entailment.

- If a sentence A entails a sentence B, then

  A but not B

  will give rise to a contradiction.

Let us try this out:

> Laila broke the teacup. (A)
>
> The teacup broke. (B)

If the first sentence is true, the second sentence has to be true. So, we can say that the first sentence entails the second one. We can confirm this by showing that "A but not B" gives rise to a contradiction.

> #Laila broke the teacup, but the teacup did not break.

You should also note that the entailment relationship holds only in one direction in the above case. The B sentence above doesn't entail the A sentence. That is to

say, if it is true that the teacup broke, it doesn't entail that Laila broke it; it could have been broken by someone else.

Sometimes you find that there is a different kind of implication relationship between two sentences. For instance, from the sentence *Sameera used to visit her uncle once a month* you might infer that she no longer visits her uncle once a month. But unlike the entailment relationship, here the truth of the inference is not warranted. The speaker who knows about the past habit of Sameera might have uttered this sentence without knowing whether she still is in the habit of visiting her uncle. So you can have a sentence like this:

Sameera used to visit her uncle once a month. I think she still does that.

The implication whose truth is not warranted is called **Implicature**. We shall take a look at Implicature in the next lesson. In this lesson, we shall look at another kind of meaning relationship, namely presupposition.

Self-Assessment Question IV

Say whether the (a) sentences in the following pairs entail the (b) sentences:

1. a. If it rains, the match will be postponed.
   b. It rained; so the match has been postponed.
2. a. All the countries do not have a coast.
   b. Some countries have no coast.
3. a. Kalyanraman bought a nice gift for his niece.
   b. Kalyanaraman gave a nice gift to his niece.

2.3.7 Presupposition

Presupposition is a meaning relationship between a sentence and the background information that is taken for granted when that sentence is uttered. For smooth

communication to take place, we expect that both the speaker and the hearer share the background information. Let us take a look at an example. Imagine that somebody utters the following sentence:

Arul didn't invite Ravi's uncle.

Whether you know Ravi or not, when you the above sentence, you will infer that Ravi has an uncle. Notice that the speaker by uttering the above sentence, the speaker hasn't explicitly stated that Ravi has an uncle. The fact that Ravi has an uncle is the presupposition of the above sentence.

You can however say that the speaker by uttering the above sentence has led the listeners to believe that Ravi has an uncle. One can show that the above sentence does not warrantee the truth of the fact that Ravi has an uncle, if we think of the sentence as being uttered in the following scenario. Imagine that Reshma is the speaker of the above sentence. Her friend Shamsu is making the claim that Arul invited Ravi's uncle to a party. Now Reshma can make the following claim:

I am sure that Arul didn't invite Ravi's uncle, because Ravi doesn't even have an uncle.

By saying that Ravi doesn't have an uncle, Reshma is refuting the background assumption that Ravi has an uncle.

The main difference between entailment and presupposition can be captured as follows:

- If a sentence A entails another sentence B, the truth of A ensures the truth of B. So you cannot refute the truth of B if you assert the truth of A.
- If a sentence A presupposes another sentence B, the truth of A doesn't ensure the truth of B, rather the truth of B is assumed or taken for granted. So it is possible to refute the truth of B while asserting

Presupposition is not just a relation between two sentences; it is a relationship between a family of sentences and a sentence. If A is the sentence that gives rise to a presupposition B, the family of sentences associated with A are the following: its negation, its interrogative counterpart, and the conditional. So the family of sentences associated with *Arul didn't invite Ravi's uncle* will be:

It is not the case that Arul didn't invite Ravi's uncle.

Is it the case that Arul didn't invite Ravi's uncle?

If Arul didn't invite Ravi's uncle . . .

The first sentence is the negation, the second one the question, and the third one the conditional. (Don't worry about the round about way of forming the negative and the interrogative. It just shows how negation and question formation are interpreted logically.) You can verify that all the three instances above presuppose that Ravi has an uncle. So, the best way to test whether there is presupposition or not is to see whether we obtain a presupposition relationship between a sentence A and B is to see whether the same relationship is obtained between the family of sentences (negation, question, and conditional) associated with A and with B.

I will wind up this section by showing that entailment and presupposition are totally independent of each other. That is to say, we can find either of these relationships independent of the other. For instance, in the example we just discussed, we found that there is presupposition but no entailment. Similarly we can obtain entailment without presupposition. Consider the following pair of sentences:

My sister arrived yesterday.

My sister arrived.

Here, the first sentence entails the second sentence. As, we can see that the following sentence is a contradiction:

My sister arrived yesterday, but my sister did not arrive.

Now, let us look at an instance where we obtain both entailment and presupposition between two sentences:

Sati knows that Sunder got married.

Sunder got married.

Let us now, whether there is entailment between the two sentences. As you might remember, the test is to try negating the sentence we are testing for entailment. If the result is a contradiction, then we can conclude that there is entailment.

#Sati knows that Sunder got married, but Sunder didn't get married.

As you can see, the resulting sentence is a contradiction. So we can conclude that there is entailment.

Now, let us see whether the first sentence presupposes the second one. As you might remember, the test for this is to see whether the implication is obtained from the family of sentences (negation, interrogative, and implication) associated with the first one.

Sati doesn't know that Sunder got married.

Does Sati know that Sunder got married?

If Sati knows that Sunder got married, then she would also get married.

It wouldn't be difficult for you to see that all the three sentences assume the truth of Sunder getting married. We see that there is the relationship of presupposition between the first and the second sentence in question.

Thus, the above pair of sentences provides us with an example where there is both entailment and presupposition.

Self-Assessment Question V

In each of the following pairs of sentences below, way whether the (a) sentence entails, presupposes, or both entails and presupposes the (b) sentence. Justify your answer.

1. a. Chennai is bigger than Madurai.
   b. Madurai is smaller than Chennai.
2. a. Sharath doesn't believe that Sharada talked to Gauri.
   b. Sharada talked to Gauri.
3. a. Ramu realized that he had lost all his money.
   b. Ramu lost all his money.
4. a. Some students did not pass.
   b. Not every student passed.

2.4 Summary

In this lesson, we looked at meaning in connection with the sentence. We saw that a sentence can be meaningful, anomalous, redundant, contradictory, or ambiguous in terms of meaning. We saw that ambiguity can be due to lexical reasons, structural reasons, or semantic reasons. We also looked at meaning relations between sentences. When the truth of a sentence ensures the truth of another sentence, we say that the former sentence entails the latter sentence. When implication is not based on truth, it is called Implicature. We also saw that the background information assumed to be true when a sentence is uttered is called its presupposition.

2.5 Brief answers to Self-Assessment Questions

Self-Assessment Question I

1. Anomaly – *startle* only animate things can be startled.
2. Redundancy – *orphan* already expresses the meaning 'without parents.'
3. Contradiction – the tallest boy has to be taller than everyone else.

Self-Assessment Question II

1. Either only men are young, or both men and women are young.
2. Either the asking took place in the evening, or the meeting was supposed to take place in the evening.
3. Either paying a visit to the relatives or relatives who visit.
4. Either she owns the duck, or she was ducking.

Self-Assessment Question III

1. Either he didn't return any book, or returned all books except one.
2. Either some particular person, different person for each one..
3. Either a particular doctor, or some doctor or other.

Self-Assessment Question IV

1. (a) entails (b).
2. (a) entails (b).
3. (a) doesn't entail (b).

Self-Assessment Question V

1. (a) entails (b).
2. (a) presupposes, but doesn't entail (b).
3. (a) presupposes and entails (b)
4. (a) entails (b).

2.6 Reference

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Lesson 3

Meaning in Context

CONTENTS

3.1 Introduction

In the last two lessons, we looked at meaning in relation to the word and the sentence. In this lesson, we will look at some of the issues related to meaning that arise when sentences are actually used in contexts. The moment we think of the meaning of sentences in context, we will see that factors other than our linguistic knowledge come into play. In fact, much of what is discussed in this lesson has evolved out of the work of those working on pragmatics. And it is for this reason that we have chosen to look at these aspects in a separate lesson.

3.2 Objectives

After you go through this unit, you should be familiar with the following concepts:

- Particularized and generalized conversational implicature
- Gricean maxims of conversation
- Conventional implicature
- Speech act

3.3 Particularized and Generalized Conversational Implicature

In the last lesson, we briefly talked about implicature and differentiated it from entailment. In the case of entailment, the truth of the entailed sentence is ensured by the truth of the entailing sentence. Implicature, we said, is an implication relation where the truth of the implicated sentence doesn't necessarily follow from the truth of the implicating sentence. The philosopher Paul Grice showed that these kinds of implication relations are largely due to certain principles that govern the conversational exchanges between people. A new term, namely, **implicature** was introduced by Grice to talk about this kind of implication relations. Since they follow conversational principles, the term **conversational implicature** is used to refer to these implicatures. If there is a relationship of implicature between sentence A and sentence B, we say that sentence A implicates sentence B.

Before we take a look at implicature, let us take a look at an example which shows the relationship of entailment.

Sameer opened the door.

The door opened.

Here, if it is true that Sameer opened the door, then it has to be true that the door opened (but not necessarily that the door is open as someone may have closed it again!). This is proven by the fact that affirmation of the former and negation of the latter leads to a contradiction:

#Sameer opened the door, but the door did not open.

So we can say that the sentence *Sameer opened the door* entails the sentence *the door opened*.

Now imagine a scenario in which you hear somebody uttering the following sentence:

Dominic has two children.

Based on the above sentence, you might immediately arrive at the following inference:

Dominic has only two children.

The question is whether the truth of the first sentence entails the truth of the second sentence in this case. Some of you might find this a strange question. If Dominic has more than two children, why will anyone say that he has two children? Before we answer this question, I would like you to think of the following scenario: Imagine that you want to enter a fancy restaurant where there is a cover charge of five hundred rupees per head. The gatekeeper tells you that you can go in if you have five hundred rupees with you. You check your wallet and find that you actually have around three times five hundred rupees. Would you consider yourself eligible to enter the place? Your thought process might go like this: “Five hundred rupees is the minimum amount of money one needs to have in order to be eligible to enter the restaurant. Having more money than the minimum amount needed will not make one ineligible. Therefore I am eligible to enter the restaurant.”

The logic seems to be quite simple. If you have fifteen hundred rupees, you also have five hundred rupees. If there is ten litres of water in a bucket, there is also two litres of water in that bucket. By the same logic, if you have more than two children, it is also true that you have two children. But why does one have no doubt about this argument when it comes to talking about money one has in his purse or the water in the bucket, but not when it comes to talking about the children one has. This is where we have to make a distinction between what we know due to our knowledge of the language, and what we know due to our knowledge of the ways in which people speak and act.

When the gatekeeper said "if you have five hundred rupees," we know from our knowledge of the facts governing entry rules to restaurants that he implies "if you have *at least* five hundred rupees." Similarly when someone says "I have two children," you take it that she implies "I have only two children," because there is usually no reason to mention just a part of the total number of children that one has.

Grice argued that there are two factors directly responsible in giving rise to such implications: (i) the literal meaning of what is said and (ii) the expectation that people have of one another. We can illustrate this with the help of the following example where we have an exchange between two people:

A: Can you lend me some money?

B: I haven't got my salary this month.

What do you think A will infer from the above exchange? Will she think that B will give her money or will she think that B is not in a position to give her money? I am sure you will all agree that the latter option seems to be more likely. Now, how did A (and you) arrive at such an inference? The argumentation goes as follows: "B said that she hasn't got her salary this month.

Since she wants me to know that she hasn't got salary, this piece of information may have some direct relevance to the question I asked. One possibility is that she herself is running short of money. If she doesn't have money, she is not in a position to give me money." Simple as it may seem, we are here witnessing a marvellous task that every normal human being can perform.

Let us take a look at what helped A arrive at the above conclusion. In the first place, the linguistic meaning of what B said is of utmost importance. This can be seen if we substitute B's response with something else as shown below:

A: Can you lend me some money?

B: It may rain tomorrow.

What will A (or you) be able to infer from B's exchange? One possibility is that you might immediately begin to have doubts about the soundness of B's mental abilities. (Or you might try to accommodate B's exchange by imagining that maybe B has a belief that she should not lend money on the day prior to a rainy day – a rather strange kind of practice indeed.) So, you see that the literal meaning of what is said is indeed important in arriving at the implicature of what is said.

Another factor that helped A in arriving at the conclusion is the belief that by making the above utterance, B had intended to communicate some relevant information. A was also assisted by his knowledge of the ways of the world that people who don't get salary are not likely to have enough money.

The above implication relationship actually holds only in the particular situation mentioned above. Said in a different context, the sentence *I didn't get my salary this month* will not implicate that the speaker of the sentence will not be able to lend money. Implicatures that are derivable only in particular situations are

called **particularized conversational implicature**. What linguists are more interested in is the **generalized conversational implicature**, which is not restricted to any particular context. I shall repeat the example we discussed in the last lesson:

Sameera used to visit her uncle every month.

Sameera no longer visits her uncle.

The implication relation between the first and the second sentence holds regardless of the particular situation in which the sentence is used, and hence it is an example of generalized conversational implicature. Another instance of generalized conversational implicature can be seen in the pair of sentences:

Vijaya gave away some her old books.

Vijaya did not give away all her old books.

Most of you would say that the first sentence implies the second one. This implication is only an implicature and not an entailment. (I will leave you to work it out. Clue: can you find at least one situation in which the first sentence is true, but the second one is not? Think of a situation where Vijaya gave away all her old books. Will the first sentence be true in such a situation? What about the second sentence?)

The implication between the first and the second sentence in the above pair is also generalized conversational implicature because it is not dependent on a particular situation.

Self-Assessment Question I

Explain the terms particularized conversational implicature, and generalized conversational implicature.

3.3.1 Tests for Implicature

If the implication relationship is that of implicature, we can reinforce it as shown below:

> Sameera used to visit her uncle every month, but she doesn't visit her uncle anymore.

If the relationship is that of entailment, such reinforcement would sound redundant as is evident from the following example:

> Ramesh is a bachelor.
>
> Ramesh is unmarried.
>
> #Ramesh is a bachelor and he is unmarried.

If someone is a bachelor, he has to be unmarried. So the first sentence entails the second sentence. However, the resultant sentence is odd when we try to reinforce the entailment as in the case of the third sentence.

Another property of implicature is that we can also deny the implicature. Take a look at the following pair of sentences:

> If you come early, you can meet the Minister.
>
> If you can't come early, you can't meet the Minister.

Here the first sentence implies the second sentence. Is it a relationship of entailment or implicature? As we said, if it is entailment the negation of the entailed sentence will result in a contradiction, if it is implicature, the implication can be denied without resulting in a contradiction. Now take a look at the following sentence:

> If you come early, you can meet the Minister and if you are lucky, you may be able to meet the Minister even if you come late.

Do you think the speaker of the above sentence is contradicting herself? I am sure you will not think so. Contradiction can be seen in something like the following:

> #If you come early, you can meet the Minister but if you come early, you can't meet the Minister.

Here contradiction arises because the speaker is negating the entailment

Self-Assessment Question II

Show that the relationship between the (a) and (b) sentences in the following pairs of sentences is that of implicature:

(1) a. Mr Vasan went to Singapore with a lady.
b. The lady who went with Mr Vasan to Singapore is not his wife.

(2) a. If Sachin Tendulkar hits a century, India will win the match.
b. If Sachin Tendulkar doesn't hit a century, India will not win the match.

(3) a. Some students knew the answer.
b. Not everyone knew the answer.

3.4 The cooperative principle and maxims of conversation

As we said in the last section, conversational implicatures are derived from principles or maxims of conversation. According to Grice, the most important maxim of conversation is the **cooperative principle**. The cooperative principle helps people to engage in conversations with each other, and to carry on the conversation. Conversation may break down if one violates the cooperative principle. The cooperative principle also helps us make adjustments in our beliefs and accommodate what people say.

The cooperative principle is only a descriptive in nature. It states that one's contribution to the conversation should fit with the requirement and the accepted purpose or the direction of the conversation one is engaged in. And it should also be appropriate to the stage at which it occurs.

Grice breaks down the cooperative principle into four maxims:

- Maxim of Quality
- Maxim of Quantity
- Maxim of Relation
- Maxim of Manner

Let us look at these maxims one by one.

3.4.1 Maxim of Quality:

The maximum of quality says that one should make one's contribution to a conversation "true." That is to say, we should avoid saying things that we believe to be false, or avoid saying things that we do not have enough evidence for. As you might have all experienced, communication breaks down if someone is wilfully saying falsehood.

3.4.2 Maxim of Quantity

Just like the quality of what you say, quantity is also of utmost importance. Your contribution to the conversation should be as informative as required for the purpose at hand. However, it should also not be more informative than is required. Take a look at the following two exchanges taking place on a train going to Delhi:

A: Where are you going?

B: I am going to a place.

C: I am going to Room No. 234 of Hotel Ashok at the Chanakyapuri in Delhi.

What do you think of the responses by B and C? B's response sounds too evasive because what she said is not at all informative. Everyone on a train is going to some place or other; by saying that she is going to a place she has not added any piece of information to the exchange. You might think C's response gives too much information than is called for. Somebody who wants to strike a conversation with you on the train will not be actually interested in knowing the minutest details of your destination. Here C has made her contribution more informative than needed. It should be borne in mind that the amount of information that is adequate depends on the context. For instance, the same piece of dialogue would be perfectly in order if said by a detective who is in search of a criminal who is hiding in the said room of the hotel.

3.4.3 Maxim of Relevance

What we say should be relevant to the conversation that is going on. We also try to make sense of what others say by considering what they say relevant to the conversation. Take a look at the following exchange:

A: Has the show started?

B: The lights are still on.

Although B has not given a direct answer to A's question, one would accept this as a meaningful exchange because B has said something relevant to the context. Since the lights are still on, there is reason to believe that the show has not started.

3.4.4 Maxim of Manner

Maxim of manner requires us to avoid obscurity and ambiguity. It stresses on the necessity of being brief and orderly in the presentation of our ideas. Consider the two sentences:

> Open the door.
>
> Walk up to the door, turn the doors handle clockwise as far as it will go, and then pull gently towards you.

Here both the sentences convey the same message. The first one is very brief while the second one is very elaborate. In our ordinary day to day situation, we would say that the second one would sound very odd, but if you are trying to prepare an algorithm to be followed by a robot, you may have to indicate all the steps in the above manner.

Over and above these Maxims, Grice said that people follow a Politeness Principle "Be Polite" when they talk to each other.

Grice says that the maxims of conversational behaviour are not like conventional rules that we learn. He suggests that something like the co-operative principle is necessary for any kind of co-operative exchange. Imagine two people trying to repair a car together. Do you think they can accomplish their task if they don't co-operate with each other? Similarly, human conversation is a co-operative endeavour, and it only holds to reason that there are a set of rules that govern such an activity.

People do flout the maxims of conversation to convey certain messages. For instance, when we use irony we deliberately flout the maxim of quality. Take a look at the following exchange:

A: Is Germany in Africa, teacher?

B: Yes, and India is in Australia.

Here B's answer flouts the maxim of quality as what she says is evidently false. But B flouts the maxim deliberately to show that what A said was not correct. Note that the communicative purpose of such strategies will be successful only if the listeners actually notice the flouting of the principles.

Self-Assessment Question III

Explain briefly the co-operative principle and maxims of conversation

3.5 Conventional implicature

We saw that the implication relationship obtained between sentences due to the principles of conversation is called conversational implicature. In this section, we look at an implication that comes about because of the "conventional meaning of the words used." Such an implicature is called **conventional implicature**.

Rajasekhar is a basketball player and he is very short.

Rajasekhar is a basketball player, but he is very short.

What do you think is the difference between the two sentences above? Both of them express two facts: (i) Rajasekhar is a basketball player and (ii) He is short. When we use, we are just connecting these two sentences without implying any kind of relationship between these two facts. But the use of *but* in the second example changes the scene completely. Here there is an implication that the occurrence of these two facts is rather surprising. It is the connective word *but* that expresses this meaning. We can say that this implication is due to the conventional meaning associated with *but*. Other words that give rise to implicatures by virtue of the meaning convention associated with them are words like *even*, *yet*, and *therefore*.

Self-Assessment Question IV

Explain conventional implicature

3.6 Speech Act

The philosophers Austin and Searle noted that when we talk, we not only say things, but we also *do* things. The most obvious instance of this is the use of verbs like *declare*, *promise*, *invite*, and *warn* to perform actions. For instance, a minister who inaugurates a bridge by saying "I declare this bridge open" is performing an act by saying the above sentence. Verbs that are used to perform such actions are called performative verbs.

Austin identifies at lease three kinds of acts that are simultaneously performed:

(i) the locutionary act

(ii) the illocutionary act

(iii) the perlocutionary act

The very act of uttering a sentence with an intended meaning and reference is the locutionary act. What is of importance to Austin is the illocutionary act, by which he means the act performed in saying something. That is to say, when we speak we perform actions like making a statement, offer, promise, or warning. In fact, Austin uses the term **speech act** to refer to the illocutionary act. By perlocutionary act, Austin refers to the act performed by bringing about an effect on the hearer by uttering the sentence (i.e. persuading, forcing, or frightening).

Self-Assessment Question V

Explain locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

3.7 Summary

In this lesson, we looked at certain concepts that help us understand the meaning of what people actually say. We saw that people actually imply various things when they speak. The term conversational implicature refers to the implications determined by principles of conversation. We saw that

We saw that the co-operative principle and the maxims of conversation are responsible for certain implication relations. We said that the implication arising from the conventional meaning of words is called conventional implicature. In the last section, we looked at the Speech Act theory.

3.8 Brief answers to Self-Assessment Questions

Self-Assessment Question I

Particularized conversational implicature: Dependent on particular situations.

Generalized conversational implicature. Not dependent on particular situations.

Self-Assessment Question II

In all the three cases, the (b) sentences can be both reinforced and negated. This shows that the (a) sentences implicate the (b) sentences. In (1), we can reinforcement is possible as we can continue the (a) sentence by saying something like this: “In fact, the lady was his wife.” Negation is possible by saying, “but the lady was not his wife.” The same tests can be used for (2) and (3).

Self-Assessment Question III

Co-operative principle: Your contribution should be as required at the particular stage of conversation, and it should suit the purpose and direction of the conversation.

Maxims of conversation: Your contribution should be true (Quality); be as informative as is required (but not more informative than is required); be relevant, and clear, devoid of ambiguity, brief, and orderly.

Self-Assessment Question IV

Conventional implicature: Implicature derived not from principles of conversation, but from the conventions of meaning associated with some expression.

Self-Assessment Question V

Locutionary act: The act of uttering a sentence meaningfully.

Illocutionary act: The act of performing an action by speaking – like the act of promising, warning, and so on.

Perlocutionary act: The act of getting the hearer to do something – like forcing, persuading, and so on.

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Lesson -I

Elements of Style

Contents

1.1Introduction to Stylistics

What is ‘stylistics’? This is a question that any reader is likely to ask. The word ‘stylistics’ for a layperson might bring to mind two other commonly found words, ‘stylish’ and ‘style’. But does Stylistics, an academic genre, have anything to do with these words? The answer is yes, it does. Stylistics does take into account both these words and is therefore not as removed from everyday life as it may appear to

be. Stylistics is an approach to the analysis of literary texts using linguistic descriptions. It is yet another evolution in literary criticism and can be traced back to the interface between new criticism in literature and structuralism in linguistics. From then on, stylistics has evolved greatly and today, has firmly cemented its privileged status in the area of literary criticism.

This course is a foundational one and is designed to introduce you to the field of stylistics. The objectives are to familiarize the learner with the principles of stylistics, the linguistic structures that are the focus of a stylistic analysis and also gain an understanding of linguistic phenomena such as dialect, deviance and so on. This book is not an exhaustive record of stylistics, but has been structured in such a way, as to acquaint you with the basics.

Self-Assessment Question One - What is stylistics?

1.2What is Style?

The style of a literary discourse is determined by the multiple possibilities for meaning that its linguistic features offer. The study of style is central to any stylistic analysis, as one discourse varies from other discourses in the same language because of its distinctive linguistic features. The unit of analysis for the stylistician is the text because the functional meaning potential of language is realized in units no smaller than texts. Of course, the study of texts is typically performed by examining elements of the lexis, grammar and phonology, but these smaller units must be viewed from the perspective of their contribution to the meanings expressed by the total text in context. "For a linguist, to describe language without accounting for text is sterile; to describe text without relating it to language is vacuous" (Halliday, 1985, p10).

So, is stylistics just another form of linguistics? True, as the definition of stylistics states, and from Halliday's remarks, it is clear that linguistics is the keystone of any stylistic analysis. But it is a genre that spans the borders of both linguistics and literature, areas that are not as diverse as they may appear to be.

This lesson will show you precisely how dependent these two subjects are on one another, when it comes to criticism. Style is

determined by meaning (semantics), sound, meter, rhythm, intonation, stress pattern, grammar, syntax and punctuation. Literature requires linguistics not only for descriptive ends, but also for interpretation and evaluation. The stylistic approach works on the basic assumption that there can be a universal skeletal framework for criticism that can be applied to all literary texts. But it is by and large based on a detailed study of the linguistic features of texts and their effects on readers.

- **The Antecedents**

Stylistics as we know it today is a relatively recent phenomenon. Tracing its origins back to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, modern stylistics as an academic discipline is commonly held to have begun in the year 1960 - as a result of the publication of the path breaking compilation *Style in Language*. The book was brought out by a diverse group as part of a collective effort to closely examine the range of cross disciplinary possibilities of fields such as linguistics and literature, at a time when the distinctions between different areas of study was beginning to be blurry. (More details about *Style in Language* are touched upon at a later point in this lesson.)

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw gradual, yet rapid developments in literary criticism. The structural linguistic concerns of pioneers like Edward Sapir (1884 - 1939) and Leonard Bloomfield (1887 - 1949) were being reflected in the literary

analysis of the French structuralists. Saussurean linguistics and Jakobsonian formalism were increasingly becoming reference points for evaluating the literary value of texts. New criticism as a systematized movement was born out of the growing need among critics at this point to regularize this teeming field of criticism. I. A. Richards undertook this task and published *Principles of literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929). This was the foundation for the school of New Criticism and subsequently led to the evolution of modern stylistics.

Zellig Harris's article on 'Discourse Analysis' (1952) proposed a comprehensive way of dealing with long utterances. Archibald. A. Hill, a structural linguist declared in the year 1958 that "all those relations among linguistic entities which are statable or may be statable in terms of wider spans than those which fall within the limits of the sentence constitute the style of a literary passage." Chomsky's breakthrough publications in 1957 (*Syntactic Structures*) and 1965 (*Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*) opened up new ways of reading literary texts by accounting for the deep/semantic structure of utterances.

In this period, when major advances were being made in the application of linguistics to literary analysis, a group of eminent critics, authors, linguists and psychologists came together and explored the multifarious potential and possibilities for cross

disciplinary activity. The results of this conference which were coordinated under the aegis of The Social Science Research Council of Indiana University were published as *Style in Language* in the year 1960. This is why the year is considered a landmark year in the field of stylistics, and the reason why *Style in Language* has since been regarded as the first and most useful frame of reference for all those who are interested in stylistics.

Modern stylistics therefore is not a freestanding, independent movement, but a progression from structuralism, New criticism and Formalism. Today it belongs not just to the interface between literature and linguistics, but spans a broad network of interlinking disciplines. Stylistics now, is, both textualist and contextualist, and takes into account Marxism, feminism, gender and new historicism. Richard Bradford concludes that these disciplines have enriched stylistics as "each draws its methodologies and expectations from intellectual fields beyond the traditional, enclosed realms of rhetoric and aesthetics" (Bradford, p.13)

Self Assessment Question: (2) - Trace the evolution of modern stylistics.

- **Linguistics and Literary criticism**

Early attempts at literary criticism through this kind of a linguistic approach met with a considerable amount of success and invited

criticism too. Purists of literature vehemently protested against this deconstruction of literary/poetic language. They have described that linguistics and literature are diverse areas and therefore ought to be treated in that way.

As we know, criticism by the 1950s had already moved from the biographical/ anthropocentric approach of critics like A.C. Bradley to a close text based reading by the new critics like Cleanth Brooks. With Bloomfield, Saussure, Jakobson and other linguists and structuralists, the focus of interpretation moved to the language of texts. Transformational Generative Grammar was the scaffold of this new shift in criticism.

Surface structure, socio cultural background and author's psyche were no longer the only tropes of literary analysis. Rather, emphasis was laid on the deep structure, that is, the layers of meaning that great texts conceal artfully. If Noam Chomsky propounded the principle of Universal Grammar as something that was common to all languages, stylisticians sought to formulate more or less universal structures which could reflect all the innate capabilities of writers.

The vital importance of linguistics to literary criticism was reiterated by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in *Theory of Literature* (1949). The book asserted that literature was, but a linguistic art and language, its raw material at every level (be it, prose, poetry or

drama). It included a chapter entitled ‘Style and Stylistics’ wherein it says that ‘a thorough grounding in general linguistics’ is an essential pre requisite for stylistics. Zellig Harris goes to the extent of defining stylistics as “an uncompromisingly scientific study of language” in a text. Though it was *Style in Language* that propelled linguistics into the realm of literary criticism, Harold Whitehall in the year 1951 said – “as no science can go beyond mathematics, no criticism can go beyond its linguistics”. Stylistics does not look at language in mathematical or scientific terms alone, but looks at describing literary language in a more two-way, inclusive manner.

As Halliday says, if linguistics is the description of language in terms of “the close relation between innate properties of the mind and features of linguistic structure, then stylistics is the examination of the relation between the organ of the human aesthetic and the features of the literary structure of language.”

Initially stylistic analysis was limited to poetry alone, but in later years it was used across all genres. In *Linguistic Criticism* (1996) Roger Fowler says that stylistics is useful in referring to a plethora of literary texts.

- **Why Stylistic Analysis?**

At this point, one might ask how conceivable it is to determine the style of say, William Faulkner and Jane Austen by using a set universal structure. Both writers are separated by a century and are as different as chalk from cheese. So is it impossible to study them using a given set of parameters? Stylistics makes this feasible.

Stylistic analysis looks at how different writers through their use of language, grammar, meter, register, distribution of sentence length and other literary devices gives rise to a shared meaning. Determining the style of literary texts, allows for a generalized conceptual understanding of specific authorial styles as well. For instance, many of you may have come across these descriptions in any anthology of criticism that you might have picked up. - the 'rhetoric' style of Alfred Lord Tennyson, the 'pathos' of Charles Lamb, the 'sardonic' style of George Bernard Shaw and the 'grandiose' style of John Milton, are a few good examples.

1.6 How is Stylistics different from Practical Criticism?

Stylistics claims its distinctiveness from other kinds of criticisms, in the singular, unidirectional way it goes about with its study of a text. This is why some people tend to see it as an extension of practical criticism. If at this point, you find yourself nodding in agreement,

then you can give yourself a tiny pat on the back, because at a basic level, there is a definite overlap between stylistic analysis and practical criticism. Both use textual evidence to support their claims and substantiate their analysis. But the rigor and attention to detail that stylisticians pay to language, is seldom done by other critics. The first difference therefore is in terms of the degree of intensity of the analysis. Stylisticians make a detailed, systematic and exhaustive analysis of the text, to the extent of stating facts that may seem obvious and come down to a very basic level of explanation – what might prompt other literary critics to say "Elementary, my dear Watson."

It is possible to discern three differences between stylistics and practical criticism.

1) When other critics cite evidence from the text to quantify their analysis, they quote selectively in a way that is tailored to suit their requirements alone. Stylistics is not selective or deliberate. As mentioned before, it looks at language as the raw material that is then molded in specific ways in literature. So in this approach, stylisticians are distinctive in the way they avoid being selective and instead choose to be as detailed, meticulous and systematic as possible.

2) Stylistic analysis does not privilege one interpretation over the other. Stylisticians do not preoccupy themselves with deciding on the validity of one interpretation and the insipidness of another. What they do is relate good, impartial criticism with linguistic description when it comes to either supporting a particular viewpoint of a literary text or arguing against it. At no point do stylistic critics claim to know the right meaning. They rely on linguistic features like sound structure and parallelism to make sense of the plot, the style of the author and the comparative standing of the text with other texts.

3) While practical critics are interested in new (to be read conversely as multiple) interpretations of old texts, stylistic critics are as interested in established texts as they are in newer interpretations. This is because they are primarily interested in discovering not just what a text means, but also how it comes to mean that in the first place. To do so, stylistics begins by looking at established meanings of a text. It also looks at the range of agreement between readers, despite the subjective readings and the disagreements. This agreement is made possible by language. Not only is the structure of, say, a language like English, common to all, but the procedures of inference are common too. Procedures of inference are nothing but the linguistic stylistic features that draw the attention of the

stylistic critic. The point that you will have to understand is this – while other kinds of criticism involve a considerable amount of subjectivity, stylistics is a more scientific study of the rules and procedures that make us arrive at particular meanings (or interpretations) of the text.

- **Stylistics in our Everyday World**

Linguistic knowledge is essential to determine how language is being used or manipulated by different writers. It takes a basic grounding in linguistics to understand and appreciate stylistics. So is stylistics then an exclusive, elite field of study that is useful for the study of literary texts alone? While it is true that stylistics is an approach to literary criticism and is largely employed for evaluating the merit of literary texts, it is also possible to do a stylistic analysis of something as basic as a road sign.

The following is an example of stylistic analysis of a road sign which reads 'NO LEFT TURN'.

- The statement is in imperative mode.
- It is a command/order.
- The statement does not follow the typical syntax, that is, S+V+O. In fact, there is no Subject or Verb here.
- The statement is without punctuation.

- Capitals may be unacceptable in sentences throughout as a general rule. But in this sentence, they play up the importance of the sign itself.
- Vocabulary is concise and there is succinct compression of information to enable rapid comprehension.

Stylistic analysis therefore can be employed to both literary and non literary texts. Its primary interest is in the language of the text, and how the selection of certain linguistic elements, literary devices and styles can affect the understanding, assimilation and interpretation by readers.

1.8 Stylistics from Different Perspectives

Some literary critics have looked at stylistics as too analytical, unfeeling and prosaic and questioned the relevance of linguistics to literary criticism. Stylisticians have defended their stance over the years by asserting objectivity and precision of stylistics over the subjectivity and imprecision of literary studies. In literary criticism, any interpretation whether feminist or Marxist, is somewhat arbitrary.

Stylisticians seek to do away with such arbitrariness and establish an inventory of fixed significances and points of reference instead. One of the criticisms that stylistics has invited in recent times is in

response to a statement by Martin Joos who says – "Text signals its own structure" ('Linguistic Prospects in the United States'). It is alleged that stylisticians look at the text alone as provider of meaning and in the process, ignore the possibilities for multiple meanings that arise when text and reader interact.

Critics have said that for stylisticians literature is data which is then broken down and affixed with interpretations and labels that are unchanging and arbitrary. Unchanging, because they are taken from linguistic rules and seen outside of their context and arbitrary, because they are fixed and not seen within the different contexts that they belong to – like socio cultural, political, historical and so on.

Stanley. E. Fish described this procedure which has been critiqued for its scientific, almost clinical precision in his essay 'What is Stylistics?' For stylisticians, meaning is something that the text offers to the reader by way of certain conscious and deliberate choices and deviations that the writer makes with the language. So meaning, while it can be found plentifully from reader response and sales figures in the market, can also be found independent of all of these. Fish, being more sympathetic towards a reader-centric approach criticizes this tendency of stylistics to focus on text as source of meaning. He feels that the drawback of such a text-centric approach can reduce the reader among other factors, to "either

selecting items from its storehouse of significances or to recognizing the items that have been selected" (Fish, p. 67).

In short, the reader becomes a passive observer who receives a meaning that is ready to be found or uncovered as the case may be. Fish suggests that stylistics can overcome this predicament by shifting the focus of attention from the words on the page and other obvious, visible linguistic regularities or irregularities to the constantly shifting "temporal context of the mind and its experiences."

Critics accept that stylistics is crucial but have insisted that a more open methodology be devised. As Roger Fowler says, the choice cannot be between mere description or, description based on pre-formulated patterns alone. Fish again offers a third path, one that has moved away from stratification and formulaic procedures to include the reader. He suggests "…a third way, one which neither begs the question of meaning nor pre-decides it arbitrarily; but takes as its point of departure, the interpretative activity (experience) by virtue of which meanings occur" (Fish, p.73).

The criticism leveled against stylistics is similar to the response that author-centric criticism, structuralism and formalism invited in the 1960s, with the work of Roland Barthes. Barthes went so far as to

proclaim the ‘death of the author’. Fish’s criticism is not of such a severe degree as Barthes’ was then, but that is not our concern now. It is important for those who are doing this course to have a fair idea of where stylistics stands today in relation to other kinds of literary criticism and we hope you are more enlightened now in that regard.

Self Assessment Question Three - Examine the criticisms about stylistics

1.9 Brief Answers to Self Assessment Questions

1 Stylistics is an approach to the analysis of literary texts using linguistic descriptions.

2 Stylistics as we know it today is a relatively recent phenomenon. Tracing its origins back to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, modern stylistics as an academic discipline is commonly held to have begun in the year 1960. Modern stylistics therefore is not a freestanding, independent movement, but a progression from structuralism, New criticism and Formalism.

3 Some literary critics have looked at stylistics as too analytical, unfeeling and prosaic. It is alleged that stylisticians look at the text alone as provider of meaning and in the process, ignore the possibilities for multiple meanings that arise when text and reader

interact. Also, the tendency of stylistics to focus on text as source of meaning.

Lesson II

Style and Literary Meaning

Contents

2.1 Introduction

With the advent of modernism in the early part of the twentieth century and post modernism in the latter half of the same century, literary meaning is among other things, no longer either single or stable. Texts are no longer considered the property of their creators and seen as carrying an arrived meaning. Texts belong to the here and now and are constantly subject to interpretation and reinterpretation. Their meaning arises from their interaction with reader and they are therefore open to multiple readings and inferences. In such a scenario, where any meaning can be the right meaning and to use a colloquialism, "anything goes," stylistics provides a stable, conceptual framework for determining the meaning of a literary text through its style.

At a time when different readers have their own understanding of the text owing to the individual reader's background knowledge, presuppositions and so on, standardizing meaning is no longer possible. None of you, I am sure will be willing to concede that your understanding of a text is not as nuanced or probable as the next person's. Keeping this in mind one wonders then, how it occurs sometimes, that most of us have a consensus over our understanding of some literary text. This is despite the fact that we may be individually different in terms of background and ideology. In this

lesson, we will see how writers manage to achieve this puzzling effect.

2.2 How is Style related to Literary Meaning?

Stylistics examines the way the linguistic styles can communicate to the reader and provide a direction for our understanding and analysis when we read. True, the reader enriches the text when she interacts with it, but on the other hand, stylisticians show how the text also plays a vital part in prompting and guiding our responses. By closely studying the style of language, stylistics is interested in how writers artfully manipulate language and what effects these deviations and stylistic devices have on the readers. In doing so, stylistics, does not take away from the pleasure of reading or in anyway hamper the scope for inferring multiple meanings. Our interest here is to see how style can change, and influence literary meaning.

How do stylisticians arrive at a framework for analysis? How is literary meaning arrived at? Before we tackle these questions, let us see what we understand as criticism. Criticism is taken to be a detailed study of the content, context, background, poet/ author and style (in terms of language and imagery and so on) of the text. We then add our personal subjective response to the meaning of the text and evaluate the value of the text in comparison with other texts. From this we can discern a pattern in the procedure for literary criticism. There is description, interpretation and finally, evaluation.

To make this clear, let us look at a popular Indian poem by Sarojini Naidu and the manner in which it has been critiqued by C.D.Narasimhaiah, following the above pattern. Before you read the criticism, put down in your notebook, what you think of the poem. How do you interpret it? What does it mean to you? If you had to analyse it, how would you go about it?

Indian Weavers

Weavers, weaving at break of day,
Why do you weave a garment so gay?
Blue as the wing of halcyon wild
We weave the robes of a new-born child.
Weavers, weaving at fall of night,
Why do you weave a garment so bright?
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green
We weave the marriage veils of a queen.
Weavers, weaving solemn and still
What do you weave in the moonlight chill?
White as a feather and white as a cloud
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

Taking from the school of New Criticism, Narasimhaiah skips the description and focuses extensively on the interpretation and evaluation. He connects the weavers with The Three Sisters of Greek

mythology and is convinced that Sarojini Naidu had the Hindu trinity in mind when she wrote this poem. He credits the masterful way in which Naidu alludes to the Trinity to her intimate knowledge of religion and tradition and her economy of language and brilliance of style. He is certain that the weavers are allegories for Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and that the sonnet is broken up into three segments of four lines each, for every deity. Brahma, the creator is associated with morning / day break and new life. So line 4 of the poem "We weave the robes of a new-born child" is an explicit reference to Brahma.

Narasimhaiah continues in this manner and feels that the poem ranks among the best of Naidu's work as it is unmarred by "her characteristic vices of rhetoric, sentimentality, and vague longings, and the poetic diction which usually mar her verse". He also bases his evaluation on the poet's "…admirable poise, economy, and ear and eye for striking rhythm, image and symbol".

Now all of you I am sure certainly may not have arrived at this interpretation of the poem or this evaluation of the poet's style. Each of you who read this may by all means have radically different interpretations. This is what happens when criticism is entirely individualistic and subjective.

Now a stylistic critic will also follow the pattern that is enumerated for you above but she is more concerned with relating linguistic description to interpretation (meaning) than with predicting the authorial intention. So they perform an explicit grammatical analysis of every line of the poem to arrive at what it means. Normally, we do not break down lines in such a tedious fashion, but intuitively analyze the over all linguistic structure in order to understand the interplay between words in the text. So our understanding of the linguistic form and meaning of a text is implicit. Stylisticians make explicit, what is otherwise seen as "understood." One merit of this approach is, when in a class, we are unable to decide on the meaning of a text, we can revert to stylistic analysis. This is not to say that stylistics can provide a "right meaning." On the other hand, it tells us which of our interpretations are more likely.

2.3 Effect of Linguistic Choice (Style) on Meaning

If you look at the third lesson on principles of stylistic analysis, you will realize that linguistic deviations or choices are the factors that determine the way we read a poem and interpret it. When authors/poets deviate, they do it purposefully, either within the system of rules that language allows or completely outside of known language systems. These are new to the reader and therefore meaning may not be clear unless a new framework is also produced for understanding this. When the writer stays within conventional

deviations like metaphor for instance, it does not mean that she is resorting to foregrounding alone. As is mentioned to you in the lesson on foregrounding, what is fore grounded is not necessarily the highlight or main focus of the poem/text. So meaning should not be decided based on what is fore grounded alone. While such a linguistic choice has its psychological effects on the reader, it ought not to close the mind of the reader to the other subtleties in the text.

In a stylistic analysis, the critic looks at the text closely to compare what is on the page to what might well have been on the page instead. You could either pick up various versions of the same poem, like 'Leda and the Swan' where Yeats has written three versions of the first stanza; or look at two different drafts of a poem by the same poet – as in, Wilfred Owen's *Anthem for Dead Youth*, which was later published as '*Anthem for Doomed Youth'* with a few changes; or look at the deliberate choice of words or register in one poem with an authorial intention to create a particular effect in mind. A detailed analysis of W.B.Yeats' '*Leda and the Swan'* can be found in Greenfield (1967) and an analysis of Wilfred Owen's poems can be found in Short (1996). Look at this example. The third choice is fulfilled here. These are lines from Sylvia Plath's poem 'Daddy'.

Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute

Brute heart of a brute like you.
You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of the foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.

The poem is entitled ‘Daddy’ and throughout the poem, Plath repeats the child-like cry of ‘daddy’ several times. Though a woman in her early thirties when she wrote this poem, she manages to conjure the mental image of a child in the mind of the reader. The agony, anger and longing that are expressed seem so very child-like and innocent. She achieves all of this with the use of just one word constantly- ‘daddy’, the refrain that evokes pathos, very effectively. For a stylistician, this choice of ‘daddy’ over ‘father’ is significant. ‘Father’ simply would not have evoked this child-image, and this kind of pathos. Here the poet persona appears to be a child-woman at most, but had it been ‘father’ it would appear to be an older woman

who is far more mature, not to forget, bitter (as opposed to ‘agony’ which we attribute to the persona here).

Such an analysis tells us that linguistic choices are not for mere adornment or embellishment alone, but have the intention to create a psychological effect on the reader about the text and author. We will not go into a psycho-analytic study now. That is not in the interest of the stylistic critic. By comparing what is on the page with what might have been, stylistic analysis helps us to precisely identify the meanings and psychological effects we can intuitively agree upon, which otherwise would be difficult to state explicitly.

Self Assessment Question: (1) How does style affect meaning? Substantiate your answer with an example of your own.

2.4 Relationship between Style and Semantics

Stylistics research has by preference worked with texts. Most major investigations of style have used fictional texts as material; only a few studies have used words and phrases as a point of departure. The relationship between the parts that make up a text (the words) and the text as a whole is extraordinarily complex. The question of how words inform and influence each other in texts has often been left unresolved and unexplained; the importance of context is invoked without making the important distinction between the meaning and

the function of a word - a prerequisite for determining which variables have an influence on the whole. Do words have a lexical, inherent, stylistic value? Researchers have taken diametrically opposed views on the question of whether words have a semantic and stylistic value of their own or if they obtain their meaning and value from and through their context.

It is possible to establish a set of general rules for assessing meaning potential, and one of the decisive variables for this is the stylistic value of a word. A word with strong connotative associations in the stylistic dimension should influence context rather than be influenced by it. Stylistics and semantics are therefore closely interwoven. Every major problem of semantics has stylistic implications, and the two subjects are inextricably intertwined just as linguistics and stylistics are related to each other. The example from Sylvia Plath's 'Daddy' is apt to understand the point here.

Self Assessment Question: (2) How is stylistics related to both linguistics and semantics?

2.5 Style Variation and Meaning

Sometimes, poets/writers deliberately switch from one kind of language use to another. You may argue that this is just another kind of foregrounding and that argument is true to a point. But it is

important for you to understand that foregrounding only amounts to the highlighting of small portions (words, phrases, images or sentences) of a text. A long stretch of the text cannot be foregrounded. That is not foregrounding, but style variation. Style variation can be of four kinds in terms of:

1 Medium
2 Tenor
3 Dialect
4 Register

Without being consciously aware of it, most native speakers of English and also those well acquainted with English literature originating from different parts of the once-colonized nations, can perceive language varieties associated with dialect (regional, class, community), medium (written versus spoken language), register (legal, medical, scientific) and tenor (formal, informal, slang). In this section, you will have an overview of all these variations. It is by no means a comprehensive account of style variation. You are advised to refer to Leech (1969) and Crystal and Davy (1969) for discussions on style variations in poetry and introductions to style variations in English, respectively.

2.5.1 Variation in terms of Medium

Literature is etymologically written language, but poets/writers can dramatize their writing by borrowing characteristics which are generally associated with speech. Spoken language is generally unrehearsed, produced fast and without much thought or refinement. So it can be full of performance errors, gap fillers, pauses, repetitions, grammatically incomplete utterances/phrases and false starts. Writing is a far more leisurely activity and writers have enough time to revise, correct, embellish and add to what they are writing. So such performance errors are ruled out. Of course, when they are deliberately induced, then we have what is called **medium** variation.

Feature stories in magazines and editorials in newspapers are usually written in a very conversational tone. Moving to literary genres, such a shift in medium is possible in novels also. In '*Bridget Jones Diary'* Helen Fielding writes in first person. The novel is from Bridget's point of view, but there is also a third person omniscient narrative. So there is a constant shift between spoken and written medium. For instance when Bridget is expressing her dismay at the profession of television anchor that she is trapped in, she expresses herself like this –

"I don't know anything about television, but, sod it, I'm stuck in a dead end here."

In this example, you will note that Fielding does not summarize Bridget's feelings in third person, impersonal narrative. Instead she switches to first person, conversational style, to increase the sense of immediacy and humor. Switching to conversational style, allows for the use of slang, everyday and informal language and the idea or feeling is conveyed far more effectively to the reader. Such writing might appear to be far more informal and closer to speech than say the writing of Jane Austen or Thomas Hardy.

2.5.2 Variation in terms of Tenor

Another stylistic variation that can affect meaning and the discourse is, the tenor in which the text is written. The word **tenor** is used to define the formality of a text or an utterance. Leech, Deuchar and Hoogengrad (1982) define tenor as related to "the relationship between a speaker and hearer…often characterized by greater or lesser formality". So tenor refers to the way we switch from say, formal speech with a senior professor, to informal speech with our friends, depending on, the people and the situation. In literary texts, the notion of tenor can be extended to apply to the relationship between the writer and reader too. In Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, the author addresses his readers very formally and respectfully at the beginning of each part of the novel. In the beginning of book three, Tom Jones, he says-

"The reader will be pleased to remember that at the beginning of the second book of this history we gave him a hint of our intention to pass over several large periods of time…in doing so we do not only consult our own dignity and ease, but the good and advantage of the reader…."

Here we see Fielding addressing his readers in a very formal, third person way. In Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, we see a very informal mode of address to the reader.

"Try to foresee now everything that might make you interrupt your reading. Cigarettes within reach, if you smoke, and the ashtray. Anything else?...All right, you know best."

2.5.3 Dialectal Variation

Depending on which part of the country one comes from, the dialect changes. This is one of most well known kind of language variations and has been the point of interest and even amusement in many texts and notably in cinema. Owing to colonialism and the spread of the English language, today we have innumerable varieties and dialects of English. Some dialects have gone on to become kinds of the English language. Today both American as well as British English is largely acceptable. We also have Scottish English, Carribean English

and Australian English, not to mention the distinctive African American English and hydra-like Indian Englishes.

Dialect can indicate not just where a person comes from, but also the social class and community that he or she belongs to. People often make unconscious judgments and “place” a person by just looking or listening to their dialect. Both the words and pronunciation of many individuals reflect that person’s social position. Within the United Kingdom, Britons intuitively know that there is a dialectal difference between northern and southern varieties of British English.

It is agreed that in England, the "phonetic factors assume a predominating role which they do not generally have in North America" (Wells 1982). The dialects prevalent in England are ‘Geordie’, ‘Cockney’, ‘Jock’ and ‘Scouse’ (Trudgill 1999). The four dominant kinds of English in Britain, as per dialectal variation are: Queen’s English, Cockney, Estuary English and Received Pronunciation. In a detailed study of dialectal variation in Britain, Wells comes to the conclusion that while the “working class” display a good deal of regionalism and dialectal variety in their speech and writing, the “upper class” (bureaucrats, aristocracy) exhibit more or less, no regional variation. Linguistically, a more concentrated dialectal variation indicates a maximal degree of difference from R.P (Received Pronunciation).

While there is no R.P in India as such, strong regional dialects are often a cause for humor in films and books alike. They are especially pronounced in movies to stress on the community, class and region that the character/s comes from. In 'Bend It Like Beckham', there is a lot of dialectal difference between the English spoken by the protagonist's mother (a first generation immigrant) and the protagonist Jess herself (second generation immigrant). The former carries a strong regional dialect, while the latter is completely acclimatized and comfortable with British English. A very interesting literary text where there is polyphony of accents and dialects is V.S. Naipaul's *The Suffrage of Elvira*. The novel is set in the West Indies and the characters are immigrants from various countries. The confluence of religions, communities and dialects is a laugh riot and at the same time full of bleakness and pathos.

The most well-known example of dialectal variation is Audrey Hepburn's *My Fair Lady* (1964) which was based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. The play and movie showed how dialectal variations can affect one's social standing. The politics of such effects are not our concern here. An excellent example of an Indian poem which is written with dialectal variations that will be familiar to us is Nissim Ezekiel's Goodbye Party for Ms Pushpa T.S.' Look at the poem carefully and note how it is different from other English poems that you may have read in school.

‘Goodbye Party for Ms. Pushpa T.S.’

Friends,
Our dear sister
Is departing for foreign
In two three days,
And,
We are meeting today
To wish her bon voyage.
You are all knowing, friends ,
What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa
I don’t mean only external sweetness
But internal sweetness.
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
Even for no reason
But simply because she is feeling.
Miss Pushpa is coming
From a very high family.
Her father was renowned advocate
In Bulsar or Surat,
I am not remembering now which place.
Coming back to Miss Pushpa
She is most popular lady
With men also and ladies also.
Whenever I asked her to do anything,

She was saying, “Just now only
I will do it.” That is showing
Good spirit. I am always
Appreciating the good spirit.
Pushpa Miss is never saying no
Whatever I or anybody is asking.
She is always saying yes,
And today she is going
To improve her prospects
And we are wishing her bon voyage.
Now I ask other speakers to speak
And afterwards Miss Pushpa
Will do the summing up.

What dialect is the text in? How is it different from other poems like Sarojini Naidu’s ‘The Weavers’ and Sylvia Plath’s ‘Daddy’? It is in English, but what kind of English?

2.5.4 Variation in terms of Register

This is again related to tenor, but the difference is, register is far more technical. A register is an occupational variety or style of language. A register is used in a domain. Some of the vocabulary and syntax of a register may be described as **jargon**, which is the specialist terminology of a register and its users. Register is one of the many language variations that stylistic analysts can identify and

classify. Registers are usually characterized solely by vocabulary differences; either by the use of particular words, or by the use of words in a particular sense.

Registers are simply a rather special case of a particular kind of language being produced by the social situation.

While a dialect is based on a geographical area, a register is based on a job or an activity. A group of people have a common interest or employment and use specialist language to describe their activity. Common choices of vocabulary and common expressions consolidate common understanding and reinforce the group. Kinds of registers include medical, legal and so on. When a doctor switches from his medical register with a colleague to common vocabulary he is switching codes or registers.

Self Assessment Question: (3) What are the different kinds of stylistic variations?

2.6 Authorial Style and Text Style

The word ‘style’ brings to mind, authorial style – readers and aficionados of generic fiction (like crime, sci fi, horror and so on) are likely to recognize the writing of their favorite author. This ability to perceive a distinctive authorial style / flavor enables people to write satires, puns, parodies and pastiches. Virginia Woolf, for instance, is in the habit of juxtaposing internal and external reality as she

seamlessly moves from past to present and back again. Michael Cunningham captures this mellifluous tide-like movement in his novel *The Hours*. This book mimics Woolf's style and is a postmodern, pastiche-like take on Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Cunningham recreates Woolf, the author and character, by ingeniously transposing the story of Woolf the author herself alongside a neo feminist reader of *Mrs. Dalloway* and a new age Mrs. Dalloway.

Authorial style according to Goethe "is a faithful copy of his [the author's] mind … and if you could write a grand style, you ought to have a grand character." Buffon, the French writer/critic, declares that "Style is a man's own; it is a part of his nature." So this notion of style as an indication of an author's merit is yet another meaning that can be inferred from the word "style." Text style does not have anything to do with authorial worldview, but with the linguistic choices which are made. These choices are inextricably linked with meaning and the effect it produces on the reader. In order to infer meaning from text style of a literary excerpt, the linguistic features you must identify are:-

1 Foregrounding
2 Figures of speech
3 Syntax
4 Parallelism

5 Deviance

6 Lexis / vocabulary

7 Imagery

Figures of speech include metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration and hyperbole to name a few. Imagery refers to the visual effects that are evoked in a literary text. Imagery can be visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile. The other features are described in detail in the following lesson.

2.7 Brief Answers to Self Assessment Questions

1) Linguistic deviations or choices are the factors that determine the way we read a poem and interpret it. When authors/poets deviate, they do it purposefully, either within the system of rules that language allows or completely outside of known language systems through stylistic variations. So readers interpret the meaning according to the psychological effect, the stylistic variation has made on them.

2) It is possible to establish a set of general rules for assessing meaning potential, and one of the decisive variables for this is the stylistic value of a word. A word with strong connotative associations in the stylistic dimension should influence context

rather than be influenced by it. Stylistics and semantics are therefore closely interwoven.

3) Dialect, medium, tenor and register.

Lesson III

Principles of Stylistic Analysis

Contents

3.1 Introduction

In this lesson, you will be introduced to the important principles of stylistic analysis. Concepts are explained with examples. You will learn how stylistic analysis works, what makes it distinctive from other kinds of critical approaches and also gain an insight into the tools that are used for any stylistic analysis. Under the first section, three key principles are elaborated upon. A stylistician would base her analysis of a literary text using these principles as her criteria for interpretation, understanding and evaluation. At the outset, you are informed that this is by no means an exhaustive description and study of the subject at hand. You are advised to refer to the books mentioned in the '**References**' section for more detailed information on all the topics that will be covered in this lesson.

3.2 Basic concepts in Stylistic Analysis

The foremost principles in stylistic analysis are **Linguistic Deviation**, **Foregrounding** and **Parallelism.** In this lesson we will examine each of these in detail.

3.2.1 Linguistic deviation

The origins of deviation or defamiliarization may be found in the Romantic period, especially in Coleridge's (1817/1983) proposal that the purpose of literature is to overcome the automatic nature of normal, everyday perception. One aim of the poetry that he and Wordsworth wrote, he said, was

"to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand". (Vol. II, p. 7)

"Deviation" as the word suggests, is a move away from the norm. In literature, a deviation may be of several kinds. Writers could experiment with several genres, codes, registers and so on. What is of interest to stylistics, are the deviations in terms of the linguistic choices that an author consciously makes in a text, with an intention to affect the reader and elicit a certain response from him/her. So when does a writer decide to make a deviation or to quote from Robert Frost, tread "the road not taken"? Is a linguistic deviation a mere fancy that is of no more than just ornamental value? These are

pertinent questions that you must bear in mind before you read ahead.

When a writer wishes to fully engage the readers, establish his distinctiveness and evolve an authorial style that can be then identified as synonymous with him, he uses language in a way, which the reader wouldn't have encountered before. By doing so, the writer tries to create a strong impression on the reader's mind and may be even elicit a predetermined response. In voluminous texts, it is a challenge for the author to sustain the reader's interest and attention throughout. If the entire literary text is set in the conventional, everyday language, it can become boring for the readers. In fact, the reader might ask, "How is this literary if it sounds like you and me speaking?" or what is it that makes this literature? Isn't this similar to the register of report writing and journalism? So the writer throws a surprise to the readers by deviating from the conventional literary norms.

This phenomenon of using creative language by deviating from the conventional norms is known as "Linguistic deviation." The writer can even resort to this when he wants to draw his readers' attention to some interesting aspect of his writing or to embellish his narrative (by way of metaphors and metonymy) or simply bring it alive in the minds of his readers. Linguistic deviation can be of various types of

which inversion, lexical deviation, and phonological deviation are some. These deviations were originally widely seen only in poetry. From modernism onwards, paradoxically, deviations have become the norm and are found in all the literary genres.

3.2.1.1 Discourse Deviation

In a discourse, a number of sentences are related to form a higher unit of linguistic organization. There is a general assumption that discourse, especially written discourse, must begin at the beginning. And by beginning we are not referring to the beginning of a person's life, say from birth onwards, but to the beginning of a sentence. In James Joyce's novel *Finnegan's Wake*, he deviates from this rule by beginning and ending his novel in mid sentence. Such a deviation may seem pointless, but those of you who have read the novel will know that his deviation has a deeper significance. Joyce deliberately does so to blur the distinction between life and death, beginnings and ends.

Another kind of discourse deviation is when the poet addresses an inanimate object, animal or someone who is dead. Why is this a deviation? Because in general we understand that a discourse is a conversation between two 'people' or just 'people'. In 'Ode On A Grecian Urn', John Keats addresses an urn, an inanimate object.

3.2.1.2 Semantic Deviation

"O! Happy dagger!" – Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (Act V, Scene iii, Line 169)

For a stylistician, what is of interest in this sentence is the unusual semantic deviation. Note the placement of the adjective 'happy' in this sentence. It curiously precedes 'dagger'. 'Happy', in general takes on an animate complement. However in this sentence, it takes on an inanimate object like a dagger. A stylistic analysis of this deviation can be shown under the following headings.

Normal Paradigm	**Abnormal Paradigm**
Happy man	*happy* dagger
Happy family	
Happy dog	
Rajesh is a happy man	
Prince is a happy dog	
I have a happy dagger??	

So 'happy dagger' is an abnormal paradigm and makes sense only in a particular context and not otherwise. Juliet says 'Oh happy dagger' in a definitive context. Romeo has just died, (having consumed poison) interpreting Juliet's deathly countenance as real. Awake after a potion-induced sleep, Juliet finds Romeo dead and wishes to end her life too. She takes hold of Romeo's dagger and calls it happy for

being given a chance to fulfill its promise and purpose (that is, to kill). Now for someone who reads this phrase in isolation, it is nothing but a semantic incongruity. It cannot mean anything. This shows that there is more to literary meaning than a mere linguistic analysis of the text. To arrive at an appropriate interpretation, we need linguistic as well as contextual knowledge.

Poetry in particular uses much deviation and may be used as a key to our understanding of poems. Semantic deviations are also seen in puns, metaphors, metonymy and the metaphysical conceit. In 'A Valediction: Forbidden Mourning', John Donne compares separated lovers to a compass, a comparison that is incongruous at the literal level.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and harkens after it,"

Donne wrote this famous conceit comparing two departed lovers to a compass. By compass, he means a drawing compass- one that makes geometric circles, not the kind of compass that points to the magnetic poles. Through the strange, but fitting comparison, he tries to capture the idea that as one lover, or compass leg, moves further away, the one remaining stationary will "lean and hearken" after it.

3.2.1.3 Lexical Deviation

When a poet or author coins a new word altogether, they provide us with the best example for understanding lexical deviation. Spenser and Gerald Manley Hopkins are famed for their lexical innovation. In more recent times, J.K. Rowling, Helen Fielding and J.R.R. Tolkien have been attracting attention for their innovative words and phrases. Fielding refers to single, unmarried individuals as ‘singletons’; Tolkien invented a new creature, the ‘hobbit’; and Rowling cleverly puns on known English words to create metaphorically-loaded spaces. Knock-Turn Alley is a pun on ‘nocturnally’ and serves to convey the impression of the place she is referring to. We know that it is an unsavory, dangerous place by attributing impressions from the word ‘nocturnal’ to the new word. Such lexical deviation is instinctively understood, but lately, fans and reviewers have begun to provide glossaries to catalogue these deviations for the ‘uninitiated’.

3.2.1.4 Grammatical Deviation

Grammatical deviations occur at the level of the grammatical structure of the sentence. In poetry, they are now acceptable and are seen as part of poetic diction. From shifting word order to playing with subject-verb agreement and placing the adjective after the noun it qualifies, grammatical deviations are the most common form of stylistic variation. Let us look at two stanzas from Roger Mc Gough's 'Come Close and Sleep Now' to understand this.

Come close and sleep now
For in the morning
When a policeman
Disguised as the sun
Creeps into the room
And your mother
Disguised as birds
Calls from the trees
You will put on a dress of guilt
And shoes with broken high ideals
And refusing coffee
Run all the way
Home.

Line 7 contains two coordinated main clauses 'Come close' and 'Sleep now', but the second of these main clauses then extends to the end of the poem, with a series of subordinate clauses, some of which, in turn, have more subordinate clauses embedded in them. The conjunction 'for' in line 8 is the beginning of an adverbial clause which gets picked up in line 15 ('for in the morning . . . you will put on a dress of guilt and shoes with broken high ideals'). This adverbial clause has another adverbial clause coordinated with it: 'and . . . run all the way home'. This last clause has another adverbial clause ('refusing coffee') embedded inside it, and the clause beginning 'for in the morning' in line 8 has two coordinated adverbial clauses embedded inside it ('when a policeman disguised as the sun creeps into the room and your mother disguised as birds calls from the trees').

The incidence of so many embedded subordinate clauses is grammatically impossible. But poetic license allows a poet to get away with such a deviation from the norm. Why is the poem so fragmented, why are the lines so brief and why does one line run into another and another without any pause or punctuation? These grammatical deviations are to convey the effect of speech-the effect of a righteous, protective and admonishing conscience (as perceived by a restless mind) on a child.

3.2.1.5 Morphological Deviation

The morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of meaning. One way of producing a morphological variation is by adding an ending or suffix to a word, it would not normally be added to. Another kind of deviation is when the poet plays with word boundaries. In Hopkins' 'Windhover', he splits the word 'kingdom' and thereby makes us think of both morphemes individually. A third kind of morphological deviation is when there is no gap between different morphemes. In 'she being Brand', cummings, plays with very suggestive imagery. He compares driving a car with making love and he likens the urgency of the moment of culmination to the sudden braking of a car with a rapid, breathless sequence of morphemes – 'bothatonce' – thereby coupling the symbolism, imagery, speed and parallel plots in a most effective manner.

3.2.1.6 Graphological Deviation

If you refer back to the same poem cited above, you will note that the poem does not have line-initial capitals or punctuation. This is typical of McGough's poetry generally, and indeed of many 20th century poets and is a perfect example for variation at that level. Graphological variations include capitalization or non-capitalization (as in e e cummings' poems), italicization and unusual spellings.

Self Assessment Question: (1) - What are the different kinds of linguistic deviations? Explain with your own examples.

3.2.2 Foregrounding

While deviation is a linguistic phenomenon, it also has an effect on the psyche of the reader. This psychological effect of deviation is what is termed as foregrounding. This is one of the most important analytical tools used in any stylistic analysis.

The notion of foregrounding comes originally from the visual arts and refers to those elements of a work of art that stand out in some way. According to Russian formalists, the purpose of art and literature is to defamiliarize the familiar. The intention is to make the work of art or literature stand out from the norm and when it does, it becomes foregrounded. Foregrounding in linguistics was first postulated by Mukarovsky. The term was then adopted by a number of Prague scholars studying literary texts in the early twentieth century and was introduced to academics in the West later through translations. Foregrounding theory was seen as a means of explaining the difference between poetic and everyday language, and despite criticism of this from scholars such as Stanley Fish, it has become widely accepted as one of the foundational theories of stylistics.

The term foregrounding originally comes from painting. Art critics use the word to distinguish and describe background and foreground

of a painting. So if we keep the idea of a painting in our mind, then we can understand that what is foregrounded is generally that which is more prominent. Because of the way we perceive, we assume that what is foregrounded is the subject matter or focus of the poem. Let's say, we come across a painting of a marriage procession in front of a temple. What would you entitle the painting? Think about it. Most of you, I'm sure will think of something like 'The Marriage Party', 'The Wedding' and so on, ignoring the temple that is in the background. This is because, psychologically we think that what is in the forefront, is the more important of the two.

Now if we applied the same analogy to literature, an analysis would be deemed incomplete if it did not take into account all the aspects of the text. Foregrounding occurs in literature when the poet/writer deviates from expected linguistic norms. For example in 'Ode On a Grecian Urn', Keats refers to the boughs depicted on the urn as "Happy, happy boughs". As seen with the example from *Romeo and Juliet*, this is also a grammatical deviation. 'Boughs' and 'Happy' are incongruous together, yet they serve to foreground what Keats is talking about, that is, the urn. But this kind of foregrounding effect might lead the reader to mistakenly conclude that the poem is about an urn. Such a conclusion would mean that one is missing the deep structure of the poem completely.

Given the structure of foregrounding in literary texts, Miall says that, as reading continues, the affective meanings associated with foregrounding provide the basis for interpretive integration. For example, what we associate with individual authorial intent for foregrounding enables us to interpret other works by the same author and arrive at an integrated understanding of his predominant themes and preoccupations. Perhaps, somewhat as in mood-congruent remembering, readers will begin to relate passages that offer similar affective meanings. Experienced readers will also begin to anticipate the recurrence and development of certain affective meanings, perhaps only as imprecise intuitions at first, but increasingly explicitly as these recurrences accumulate (for an elaborate account of the same, refer to Miall, 1989)

First, it seems clear that most readers, though aware that they are reading a literary text, attempt to understand the text using prototypic concepts: this enables the text to be located within some existing domain of the readers' understanding. A bottom-up process of word and sentence interpretation takes place, with several prototypic propositions, being activated. At the same time, however, responses to foregrounded sections challenge the adequacy of reader’s immediate, prototypic understandings. The feelings engaged in response to foregrounding guide alternative interpretations: these feelings offer an avenue to a rich set of alternative meanings that may be more persuasive than the prototypic propositional structure.

Even if not immediately persuasive, readers may gradually begin to relate passages that offer a similar feeling, perhaps as a result of the recurring patterns of foregrounding that are found throughout the text (termed *parallelism* by Jakobson). Thus, the reader begins to anticipate the likely meaning of the text.

Foregrounding often seems to occur in a highly clustered form: a given passage will contain features at all three levels (phonemic, grammatical, and semantic). Thus, a reader who is relatively insensitive to phonemic foregrounding, for instance, will still respond to features at the other levels. It is also probable that across longer sequences of a literary text, readers respond cumulatively to features that they would not be able to recognize and isolate singly. As Coleridge notes (1817/1983) the effects on the reader "are too slight indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct consciousness, yet become considerable in their aggregate influence" (Vol. II, p. 66).

Self Assessment Question: (2) - What is foregrounding?

3.2.3 Parallelism

It refers to the parallel use of words or phrases that are similar in sound. The sound-parallel can be alliterative (similar in sound) or by length and rhythmic stress. Parallelism has the ability to not just foreground certain parts of the text it also compels the reader to look

for contrastive semantic links between those parallel parts. This could lead to searching for connotations that the words might have and trying to fit them into the framework available. Simple repetition of words, phrases or clauses is also parallelism, but of a limited kind, because the scope for the reader's participation are that much lesser. Parallelisms are used for opposites, paradoxes and comparisons. In John Donne's 'The Indifferent' we see parallelism used with the intention to show a reconciliation of opposites at every level.

I can love both fair and brown;
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays;
Her whom loves loneness best, and her who masks and plays;
Her whom the country form'd, and whom the town;
Her who believes, and her who tries;
Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,
And her who is dry cork, and never cries.
I can love her, and her, and you, and you;

Self Assessment Question Three - What is Parallelism?

3.3 Summary

Functional linguistics tells us that language is a systematic resource for expressing meaning in a context. From what you have read in this

unit, you would have realized that particular aspects of a given context (such as the topics discussed, the language users and the medium of communication) define the meanings likely to be expressed and the language likely to be used to express those meanings. Since language is viewed as semiotic potential by stylistics, then the description of language is automatically a description of choice. Stylistic critics perform their analyses by looking at the choices writers can make in a given setting to realize a particular linguistic product and effect. The available choices depend on aspects of the context in which the language is being used (that is, register, tenor and medium). These choices are then charted on different levels, or strata, of language.

The three basic strata, you will know by now, are: the semantic, lexico-grammatical, and phonological. In non literary texts, where linguistic rules are adhered to, readers use prototypic concepts to arrive at the meaning. But in a literary context, when their referents are rendered unfamiliar by various stylistic devices, the reader is compelled to reinterpret such referents in non-prototypic ways, or even to relocate them in a new perspective that must be created during reading. Stylistic analysis can capture these variations and the plausible interpretations that may be made from these variations by the reader. Stylistics is therefore an important approach to literary criticism and analysis.

3.4 Brief Answers to Self Assessment Questions

1) Linguistic deviations are of six kinds – discourse, semantic, lexical, grammatical, morphological and graphological.

2) This psychological effect of deviation is what is termed as foregrounding. This is one of the most important analytical tools used in any stylistic analysis.

3) It refers to the parallel use of words or phrases that are similar in sound.

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