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**SREENARAYANAGURU
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SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

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Access and Quality define Equity.

English Language and Linguistics

Course Code: SGB24EG305MC

Semester- V

**For Undergraduate Programme
English Language and Literature (Honours)
Major Discipline Specific Elective Courses
Self Learning Material
(with Model Question Paper Sets)**



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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala



English Language and Linguistics

Course Code: SGB24EG305MC

Semester- V

Major Discipline Core Courses

BA English Language and Literature (Honours)

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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Four Year UG Programme in English Language and Literature offered by Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Established in September 2020, our university aims to provide high-quality higher education through open and distance learning. Our guiding principle, 'access and quality define equity', shapes our approach to education. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards in our academic offerings.

Our university proudly bears the name of Sreenarayanaguru, a prominent Renaissance thinker of modern India. His philosophy of social reform and educational empowerment serves as a constant reminder of our dedication to excellence in all our academic pursuits.

The Four Year UG Programme in English Language and Literature covers all relevant areas aligned with English language and literary studies. We have incorporated the latest trends in English studies to ensure a comprehensive and up-to-date curriculum. Moreover, the programme encompasses flexible options for learners to choose from a range of Ability Enhancement Courses, Multi-disciplinary Courses, Value Added Courses, and Skill Enhancement Courses, complemented by discipline-oriented Advanced and Additional Advanced Courses.

Our teaching methodology combines three key elements: Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling, and Virtual modes. This blended approach aims to provide a rich and engaging learning experience, overcoming the limitations often associated with distance education. We are confident that this programme will enhance your understanding of English language and literature, preparing you for various career paths and further academic pursuits.

Our learner support services are always available to address any concerns you may have during your time with us. We encourage you to reach out with any questions or feedback regarding the programme.

We wish you success in your academic journey with Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Best regards,



Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-08-2026

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BLOCK - 01

Introduction to Language and Linguistics

Unit
1

Language Diversity

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to :

- ▶ analyse major theories concerning the origin of human language and assess their explanatory limitations
- ▶ differentiate human language from animal communication by applying the defining design features of language
- ▶ interpret representative definitions of language and identify their structural, social and communicative emphases
- ▶ compare speech and writing as complementary modes of language, using appropriate examples from everyday communication

Prerequisite

Imagine a morning without language. You cannot call someone by name, describe yesterday's experience, ask for tomorrow's schedule, record an idea, or warn another person about a danger that is not immediately visible. Bees can indicate the location of food, birds can signal alarm, and animals can display fear or aggression; yet human beings can narrate the past, invent fictional worlds, discuss abstract justice, and preserve knowledge for generations. This extraordinary capacity raises several questions: Where might language have come from? Why is human communication more flexible than animal signalling? Why can the same object be called by entirely different words in different languages? How did speech, which disappears as soon as it is uttered, come to coexist with writing, which can travel across time and space? This unit begins with familiar communicative experiences and gradually introduces theories of language origin, the special properties of human language, and the relationship between speech and writing. No technical background is required; an attentive interest in how people and other living beings communicate is sufficient preparation.

Keywords

Theories about the origin of human language, Human and Animal Communication, Speech and writing

Discussion

1.1.1 Theories on the Origin of Language

Do you remember exactly when you first articulated the distinct word ‘Mom’ in childhood? I am sure you don’t, none of us do. So is the case with the origin of language. A large number of theories have been formulated on the matter. Most of the debates about the origin of language were without empirical proof and in 1866, the Linguistic Society of Paris banned any further theorisations about the subject.

You might have heard a biblical story regarding the evolution of human language. God gave Adam the ability to speak. For a long time there was only one language that Adam was endowed with. Afterwards, the mighty men planned to build a tower tall enough to reach heaven. The angry gods decided to destroy their plan. What He did was to give each of them different tongues or languages. Then they became unable to communicate and the construction of the tower came to an abrupt end. But it gave way to multiple languages in the world. This fictitious story doesn’t have a scientific base. It is related to the divine origin of language. Then how does science elaborate the evolution of human language?

No one knows for sure when language evolved, but fossil and genetic data suggest that humanity can probably trace its ancestry back to populations of anatomically modern Homo sapiens, that is people like us. Evidence suggests that language could probably be 200,000 years old. By 40,000 years ago in

Europe, Homo sapiens had art and other cultural artefacts.

Now a question crops up. Did language have a single origin? This sounds like a question in biological evolution, where we consider evolution as an upward movement from unicellular to multi-cellular organisms. In the case of language, the idea of common origin is more difficult to admit. This is because features such as vocabulary and grammar change too fast to be able to link all of the world’s languages to a common original mother tongue. However, there are many things common to all human languages. All combine sounds or ‘phones’ to make words, many of those sounds are common across languages, different languages seem to structure the world semantically (meaning-wise) in similar ways, all human languages recognize the past, present and future and all human languages structure words into sentences. All humans are also capable of learning and speaking each other’s languages. This proves that anatomically, neurologically and physiologically there are commonalities among human languages.

Darwin has found parallels between the formation of different languages and evolution of distinct species, bringing forth the idea that language evolution is like biological evolution. He has seen the survival and preservation of certain preferred words in the struggle for existence within language as natural selection. Darwin is right. Linguists now know that languages evolve from their earlier ancestral languages just like biological forms evolve from earlier forms.



Now, let us briefly consider some of the theories about the origin of language.

Divine Source Theory

Most of the religions proclaim that God has created the 'word' and conferred man the divine ability for language and speech. Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) believe that God created Adam and the archangel taught him the names of things. In Hindu tradition, language is the gift from Sarasvati. These are purely conventional beliefs.

The Bow-Wow Theory

This theory explains that language originated as a result of the basic human instinct to imitate natural sounds which early men and women heard around them. Children think of a dog as 'Bow-Wow', a nightingale as 'Cuckoo' and a cat as 'Meow', a crow as 'Crow', a duck as 'Quack', etc. imitating each creature's cry. Every language has only a few words of this kind which are called onomatopoeic words. The Bow-Wow theory can explain the origin of a certain number of words but not of whole languages. It also fails to explain the arbitrariness of the language.

The Pooh-Pooh Theory

It holds that language evolves from the natural and involuntary exclamations or interjections of hunger, pain, pleasure, surprise, contempt, etc. Its name comes from the expression "Pooh-Pooh", a usual exclamation of contempt. Thus, emotional interjections like "ah!", "ha!", "Wow", etc. ultimately developed into language. Charles Darwin was an ardent proponent of this theory.

The Ding-Dong Theory

It was Max Muller, the German philologist's contribution to the study of the origin of language. Language is developed from the sense

of rhythm inherent in humans and the rhythmic nature of the universe. It is a musical relationship between sound and meaning. There is a rhythm when the stream flows and the trees sway in the wind. Man's mind received this natural rhythm and it found expression in vocal sounds or ding-dongs. But how far it can be justified is problematic.

The Yo-He-Ho Theory

When people engage in heavy muscular and physical labour like cutting a tree or lifting a rock, they would utter some 'Yo-He-Ho' noises to ease themselves the burden of labour. The theory proposes that language originated from the rhythmic grunts, groans, chants, etc. which resulted from the earliest people's togetherness to accomplish a formidable task. It is also known as 'work song' theory. Noir, a 19th century scholar, was the first to suggest such a theory.

The Musical Theory

It is also referred to as 'Sing-Song' or 'La-La' theory. Otto Jespersen, the Swiss linguist and propounder of this theory, claims that language evolved in the form of songs which were reactions to the emotions of love, joy, courtship, etc.

The Gesture Theory

Wilhelm Wundt and Sir Richard Paget have another view regarding the origin of language. It holds that language is derived from the gestures used for day-to-day communication. When a man makes gestures, his tongue, lips and jaws move accordingly. This gradually developed into spoken language. Communication with a deaf person will make it clearer. When he beckons us by the hand to come, there is a corresponding movement of vocal organs. When one speaks "I" or "Me", the lips are drawn towards him pointing to him-

self. On the contrary, when he utters “You” or “Thou”, the lips are open and the tongue is projected as if towards the person addressed.

The above theories may justify the origin of a small part of language which may be true to some extent. However, none of these theories explains how language evolved the way we use it today. They also do not answer whether there was a common language at the outset nor whether it developed at different places at various ages. Linguists like Noam Chomsky reconsidered the question of language origin later. They probed the features of the brain and vocal tract in early humans. The research is still ongoing.

1.1.2 What is Language?

What makes human language unique? It is a difficult task to define such a general and vague term. Scholars studying language have tried their best across ages and produced varied definitions. Let us look at some globally accepted definitions to have a comprehensive view of what language is and which are the elements that constitute language.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines that, Language is a ‘system of sounds, words, patterns,, etc. used by humans to communicate thoughts and feelings’.

Here, language is understood as a system for humans to communicate with one another. That system is constituted of sounds like /f/, /b/, /l/, etc. in English which form into meaningful units like words. These words and sounds have a pattern of grammar that organizes and controls them. However, the problem is that human communication is restricted only to thoughts and feelings in the definition. It can actually convey more than thoughts and feelings. The definition also implies that communication is a conscious process. Use of language is not conscious all the time. In certain

situations, we respond without thinking. The question ‘how the use of language is peculiar to humans?’ remains unanswered in this definition.

Edward Sapir, the American linguist, propounds that ‘language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols’.

As we have mentioned, it is doubtful whether language is purely human. Language is a general or holistic term, including animal or bird language, sign language, body language, etc. ‘Language is a non – instinctive method of communication’ is also doubtful. Here ‘non-instinctive’ means the way or method of communication where there are no stimuli to prod us to speak or talk. The native speakers are able to use language instinctively without thinking much about it. Ideas, emotions and desires are only a few of the things communicated by human beings. Thus, there are some tricky loopholes in this definition.

For Noam Chomsky, the father of modern linguistics, language is ‘a set of (finite or infinite) sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements’.

Chomsky’s definition focuses more on the structure of language. It informs that a language is a set or group of sentences. The number of sentences is determined according to the language. A language like English can produce an endless number of sentences. Finite means limited in number and infinite means limitless. But, any sentence in any language is constructed by a limited number of elements. For example, in the English language you can produce myriads of sentences, but its basic elements like speech sounds or phonemes are limited in number. The definition becomes silent about the communicative



function of language. He studied what the constitutive elements of language are. His attempt was to find out the principles common to all languages which enable humans to talk freely and creatively. Chomsky's definition is a widely accepted one and his findings initiated a new direction in the field of linguistics.

Each of the definitions above deals with only some of the essential features of language and thus it is not a comprehensive definition. This only proves to show that an overarching definition is not possible at all. We can still deduce some intrinsic elements of human language:

- a. It is a means of conveying thoughts, emotions, feelings,, etc. to fellow human beings.
- b. It is systematic and dynamic.
- c. Language is a social and cultural phenomenon.
- d. Language is conventional and its structures are inherent in humans.

1.1.2.1 Human Language v/s Animal Communication

Animal communication is nothing like human communication. Animals have a wide variety of systems of communication. Some species communicate using scents; others use visual displays, such as baring their teeth, puffing up their fur, or flapping their wings; and still others use vocal sounds as alarm call in the presence of enemies. Male songbirds, such as canaries and finches, sing songs to attract mates and to protect territory, and chimpanzees use a combination of facial expressions, sounds, and actions, such as slapping the ground, to convey aggression.

"If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it," said the 20th-century philosopher Wittgenstein. The animal world is unintelligible to humans. Animals communicate

through body language and instinctive calls. Humans also make instinctive calls- distress screams, laughter, crying,, etc. However, humans are different in that they have a brain template for acquiring language. Complex language helps us to tell stories. An animal would through body language or cries express "danger! Snake!" in the present tense, but humans are able to talk about the past and say, "Yesterday I saw a snake there".

Despite their wide abilities to communicate, efforts to teach animals to use language have not been successful. In sum, although many animals communicate, none of them has a true language.

With some exceptions, the information that can be communicated in nonhuman species is limited primarily to displays of liking or disliking, and related to basic motivations of aggression and mating. Humans also use this more primitive type of communication, in the form of nonverbal behaviours such as eye contact, touch, hand signs, and interpersonal distances, to communicate their like or dislike for others, but they (unlike animals) also supplant this more primitive communication with language. Although other animal brains share similarities with ours, only the human brain is complex enough to create language. What is perhaps most remarkable is that although language never appears in nonhumans, language is universal in humans. All humans, unless they have a profound brain abnormality or are completely isolated from other humans, learn language.

Most of you might have seen honey bee hives. Honey bees live as a colony. Their style of communication is interesting. Honey bees communicate by means of dance and smell (odour cues). Scout honey bees are some special female worker bees among them. They are entrusted with two important tasks. One

is to seek fresh floral sources. Other female worker bees then go to collect honey and the hive is thus able to survive. The other task is to find out new places for the colony to build a hive.

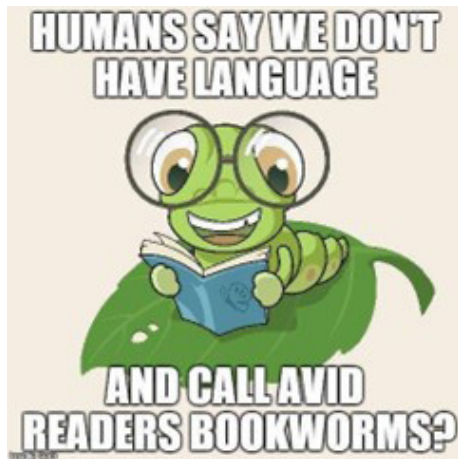


Fig 1.1.1

When the scout bees return to the hive after sourcing new flowers, they have to convey this information to the other bees. They do this by ‘dancing’ in a particular manner, which is a very interesting way of communication. Offering some nectar to the surrounding worker bees, the scout bees attract them and start dancing. The intensity and liveliness of the dance vary according to the quality, quantity and distance to the food sources. It would be either a round shaped or a waggle dance. The remaining nectar with the scout bees is again given to the worker bees. Then, the attracted bees fly out searching for the nectar. The smell or fragrance from the scout bee’s body and the nectar helps them to find out the source. Therefore odour cues are also a vital part of their communication. In waggle dance, the direction and distance are indicated by tail-wagging. The bee has great visual memory. They can remember the colours of flowers from which they sourced nectar but their waggle dance communicative method allows them to locate the source of nectar spatially only and cannot communicate colour information.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12Q8FfyLLso>

Watch the waggle dance language in the link above.

Animal communication is limited to a small set of needs like food, presence of danger, aggression, etc. However, it is known that animals know many more concepts but have no means of saying it. This information is useful to understand human language evolution. The fact that animals have concepts but have no means to express all helps us bridge the discontinuities in the story of evolution of language.

Now, think about another species, the ants. They also live as a colony. Ants work exactly like a human colonizer community. Ants communicate by means of touch and pheromones. Pheromones are a kind of chemical substance secreted by the body of an animal being. Each ant has a pair of antennae with strong sensory abilities. It smells the oozed-out pheromones of other ants and touches their antennae for communication purposes. When ants march in a trail like soldiers, they are guided by these pheromones. When an ant detects food scraps like bread crumbs or sugar, it runs back to the colony, sprinkling tiny drops of pheromones, to inform others who will follow the drops and collect the food. Each of the animal species has its own unique communication systems.

A number of species of parrots can mimic human sounds. Some apes have been taught to make sign language gestures with their hands. Dolphins have a little more advanced way of communication. Still animal communication is mostly limited to repetitive acts for a specific purpose. There is no creativity in language use.





Fig 1.1.2

Now, think about how we, humans, communicate. How does it differ from animal communication? Using a limited number of speech sounds we are able to produce endless meaningful utterances. Genetically humans are trained to do so. Our brain, mouth and tongue are equipped for such communication from birth itself. That is why human language is unique and different from that of animals. Other living beings cannot revise or add something to their communication system. It is fixed forever.

Do you ever think of dogs/elephants/any other non-human beings telling their history or legends to their children? Animals or birds writing their own books? Non-human creatures wouldn't be able to do these social and cultural activities the way humans do. Non-human communication systems are different from human language basically due to the fact that the human brain is distinct from those of animals. Human brain has an inborn capacity for a higher mode of thinking and learning language creativity. Though other creatures communicate with their fellow beings using vocal noises, their social organization is mainly instinctive and genetically transmitted. On the other hand, human language has evolved to achieve a different social organization which is chiefly acquired and transmitted by their cultural heritage.

Then in what respects does human language differ from animal communication?

Look at the following features of human language:

a. Duality of structure or double articulation

Every human language has a set of basic speech sounds or phonemes which are themselves meaningless. English has forty-four phonemes (for example /h/, /t/, /p/, /b/, /ae/, /i/, /k/, /a/, etc.). These basic speech sounds combine to form words/sentences which are meaningful for e.g. /haet/ hat, /kaet/ cat, etc. Though the basic speech sounds are small and limited in number, words or sentences formed by them in different combinations can be numerous and we cannot set a limit to them.

Thus, human language works at two levels or structures of articulation: there is a primary layer of individual speech sounds which combine together to form a secondary layer of bigger units like words or sentences. This peculiar organisation of human language into these two levels is called duality of structure or double articulation. Here a small number of meaningless units are combined to produce a large number of meaningful units. Duality is the facilitating element to the existence of spoken languages.

On the other hand, the communication system of non-human creatures is on the basis of 'one sound, one meaning'. The cries of animals or the chirping of birds and the buzzing of bees serve only a limited number of purposes like anger, approaching danger, mating instinct and so on. They cannot articulate more than what these sounds mean. Their language cannot be broken down into smaller units like phonemes, morphemes, words or sentences. But human language can be broken down into those units because of its duality.

Andre Martinet, the French linguist, was the first to point out the importance of duality during the 1950s. Charles Hockett, the American linguist, coined the term 'duality' in 1960

b. Creativity or recursiveness

How many sentences or words can a human speaker produce? There is no limit to it. Using a few speech sounds and basic rules of construction, humans can produce and understand an infinite number of utterances they have never made before. Thus, there is endless scope for creativity in human language. This property of language is called creativity or recursiveness.

Communication systems of non-humans have only a fixed number of speech sounds which mostly articulate what they mean. Researches on animal and bird languages show that they cannot articulate anything new. So, creativity is one of the elements that distinguishes human communication from animal communication.

c. Arbitrariness

A dog by any other name is still a dog...

There is no inherent or logical relationship between the vocal sounds and the object or the idea it stands for in human language. The relationship is purely conventional. The sounds that go into the making of the word 'dog' do not resemble the animal 'dog' in any way. They are just a combination of speech sounds. The concept that 'dog' refers to an animal with four legs and which barks is a convention that we have been educated into. The fact that the word 'dog' in English has different words in different languages as shown in the picture above also proves that the relationship between the word and the object is one conventionally imposed by a particular language. In the same way the word 'tree' has three phonemes /t/, /r/, /i:/ which do not in any way resemble the tree we find in nature. However, convention helps us to understand the word as the object we see in reality. This feature of language is known as arbitrariness. Onomatopoeic words are exceptions. Such words imitate the sounds of what they represent. For

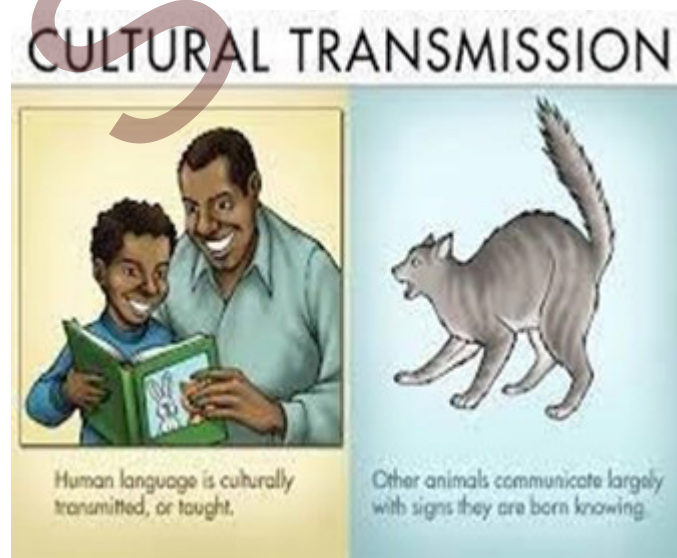


Fig 1.1.3 Cultural Transmission

e.g., the word 'hiss' means a sound made by a snake, but it originates from the sound of hissing act by the snakes. The buzz sound made by bees is an example where the sound itself

takes us into its meaning. Animals communicate more through onomatopoeic words than human beings.

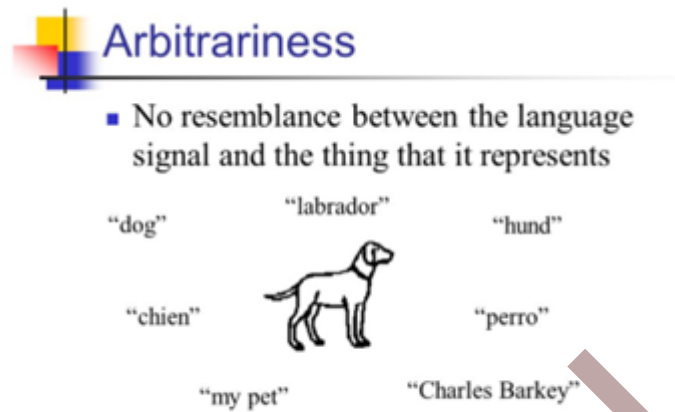


Fig 1.1.4 Arbitrariness

d. Displacement



Fig 1.1.5 Displacement

A bird or an animal can produce the cry of danger only when the danger is present both in time and place. For example, think about the hen in your home making violent noises and running throughout the courtyard when it smells danger from a mongoose or a snake. They cannot communicate the danger which

is not present both in time and place because their communication is context-bound and also controlled by a stimulus. Unlike animals and birds, human beings can talk and communicate about anything which is distanced far in time and place. We can talk of earthquakes even when there is no earthquake. This property of language is called displacement. Animals can respond only to a stimulus like mating instinct, within an immediate environment.

e. Transferability

Human language is manifested either in spoken or in written form (speech and writing). What is spoken could be written down and the written material could be spoken or read aloud. This linguistic feature is referred to as transferability. An animal like an elephant cannot write down what it has uttered or vice versa.

f. The need for learning

Just imagine a child who is brought up in isolation without any contact with society. Will he be able to learn language?

Fig1.1: Mowgli in the film adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*. He was brought up by a family of wolves in the forest and, though a human, has the language of animals.

Even though we are born with a brain which has an inherent capacity to learn language, that in itself, will not enable it to learn. Regular contact with society and the environment is a must.



Fig 1.1.6 A scene from the *Jungle Book*

Therefore, for a human, language is to be learned. This makes human language different from animal communication. On the other hand, the need for learning in non-human communication is very low. Their language is more or less genetically inbuilt. Even if an animal is brought up in isolation, without any contact with its community, it would be able to make the same sounds in times of danger, hunger, joy, etc.

All these are peculiar features that distinguish natural human language from non-human communication.

1.1.3 Speech and Writing

Which came first, speech or writing? Even though the question seems familiar like a 'chicken or egg' puzzle, there is an exact answer to it. Speech is the beginner. But both are equally important. These are two modes of communication and two basic manifestations of language.

Think of a child's acquisition of language. She learns her mother tongue first and later on she learns to write what she speaks. Thus, speech is primary and writing is secondary. Traditional grammarians founded their rules based on the established works of famous writers. Hence, they considered written language superior to spoken language.

If we analyse the history of any linguistic community, speech comes before writing. In the case of a child's learning of language, it is true too. In all world languages, spoken form has developed before the written form. There are some languages without written form like Mandarin and Cantonese. They have only the spoken form. There is no language in the world which has only a written form without having a spoken form. Therefore, modern linguists, contrary to traditional grammarians, never considered writing as superior or speech as inferior. Both are important in the evolution of human language.

When we speak, we change our tone; vary our pitch, as also stress. This is difficult to represent in written language without the use of Supra-segmental signs (these are symbols which illustrate tone, pitch and stress). In the spoken language, we use facial expressions, gestures, body language and other paralinguistic features to convey additional meaning. That is mostly not possible in written language. Speech is immediate, that is, when a word or sentence is uttered, it is only momentary and thus transitory. Written form of language is

capable of preserving valuable ideas, thoughts and knowledge across time. Development of the writing medium and the printing system led to the advancement in knowledge, and understanding the ways of life and thoughts of our ancestors. Thus, the invention of writing was a milestone in the evolution of language.

During speech, we make use of vocal organs to articulate definite sounds. These sounds are arranged into a word that stands as a symbol

of the referred object. Both the words and the arrangement of sounds vary across time and place because of many reasons. That is why language is highly dynamic both in spoken and written forms.

To sum up, human language (both spoken and written) paved the way for all other technologies of the modern world. Therefore, it has to be studied systematically and scientifically.

Table 1.1.1 Difference between speech and writing

Speech	Writing
Speech is primary	Writing is secondary
It is immediate and transitory	It is mediate and not transient
It cannot preserve ideas and knowledge	It enables man to preserve ideas and knowledge
It can convey additional meaning using paralinguistic features like facial expression, gestures, pitch, intonation, etc.	It cannot convey additional meaning directly except by using Supra-segmental signs

Recap

- ▶ Language is a uniquely productive human communication system.
- ▶ The exact origin of language cannot be established with certainty.
- ▶ The Divine Source theory attributes language to supernatural creation.
- ▶ The Bow-Wow theory links language to imitation of natural sounds.
- ▶ The Pooh-Pooh theory connects language with instinctive emotional cries.
- ▶ The Ding-Dong theory proposes a natural harmony between sound and meaning.
- ▶ The Yo-He-Ho theory relates language to rhythmic sounds of collective labour.
- ▶ The Musical theory associates early language with song and emotion.
- ▶ The Gesture theory considers bodily gesture a precursor to speech.

- ▶ No single origin theory adequately explains modern human language.
- ▶ Language is systematic, conventional, social and dynamic.
- ▶ Sapir emphasises voluntarily produced symbols in human communication.
- ▶ Chomsky highlights the generation of sentences from finite elements.
- ▶ Human language combines a limited sound inventory into unlimited expressions.
- ▶ Duality organises language at meaningless and meaningful levels.
- ▶ Creativity enables speakers to produce novel utterances.
- ▶ Arbitrariness means that word forms have no necessary link with meanings.
- ▶ Displacement permits communication beyond the immediate time and place.
- ▶ Cultural transmission requires language exposure within a community.
- ▶ Speech is historically and developmentally prior to writing.
- ▶ Speech uses pitch, stress, gesture and facial expression directly.
- ▶ Writing preserves language and knowledge across time and distance.
- ▶ Speech is typically immediate and transient.
- ▶ Writing is relatively permanent and visually organised.

Objective Questions

1. Which theory explains language as imitation of natural sounds?
2. Which property permits endless new utterances?
3. Which property permits reference to absent events?
4. What term describes the conventional word-meaning relationship?
5. Which mode of language is historically primary?
6. Who defined language as voluntarily produced symbols?
7. Who emphasised finite elements generating sentences?
8. What is the two-level organisation of language called?
9. Which theory links language with collective labour?
10. What preserves verbal knowledge across generations?



Answers

1. Bow-Wow
2. Creativity
3. Displacement
4. Arbitrariness
5. Speech
6. Sapir
7. Chomsky
8. Duality
9. Yo-He-Ho
10. Writing

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain why theories of language origin are treated as speculative rather than conclusive.
2. Distinguish duality, creativity and displacement with one original example for each.
3. How does arbitrariness account for different words for the same object
4. Compare the communicative range of a honeybee dance with that of human language.
5. Examine the strengths and limitations of any two definitions of language discussed in the unit.
6. Why is cultural exposure essential even when humans possess an innate capacity for language?
7. Prepare a concise comparison of speech and writing under four relevant criteria.

Assignments

1. Create an illustrated concept map comparing at least five theories of language origin and add a critical note on the limitation of each.
2. Observe one animal or bird communication system and prepare a 600-word analysis comparing it with human language using design features.

3. Collect five multilingual names for three common objects and explain how the data demonstrate arbitrariness.
4. Record a short conversation, transcribe it, and analyse what meaning is conveyed through tone, pause, stress and gesture but is reduced in writing.
5. Design a classroom activity that enables learners to discover duality, creativity and displacement through examples.
6. Write a reflective essay on how writing transformed the preservation and transmission of knowledge.
7. Prepare a position paper evaluating the claim: “Animal communication is meaningful, but it is not language in the human sense.”

Suggested Reading

1. Trask, R. L. *The Origin of Language: Tracing the Evolution of the Human Mind*. Routledge, 1999.
2. Calvin, William H. *How the Brain Evolved Language*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.
3. Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. John Murray, 1871.
4. Fitch, W. Tecumseh. *The Evolution of Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2010





Branches of Linguistics

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ classify central and interdisciplinary branches of linguistics according to their objects and methods of study
- ▶ explain how psycholinguistics investigates language acquisition, production and comprehension
- ▶ analyse the reciprocal relationships among language, culture and society through ethnolinguistic and sociolinguistic examples
- ▶ differentiate psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic explanations of language behaviour and language disorders

Prerequisite

Consider four ordinary situations. A child says “I goed” instead of “I went”; a community creates a new word for an unfamiliar object; a speaker changes vocabulary and tone during a job interview; and a person with brain injury suddenly struggles to name familiar things. All four situations concern language, but they cannot be explained by grammar alone. The first directs us to the mind, the second to culture, the third to society, and the fourth to the brain. Linguistics therefore expands beyond sounds, words and sentences and collaborates with psychology, anthropology, sociology, neuroscience and other disciplines. Before entering the unit, recall that scientific study depends on observable evidence, systematic analysis and freedom from personal prejudice. The unit uses familiar cases - children’s speech, culturally shaped vocabulary, socially variable pronunciation and language impairment - to show why branches of linguistics are needed and how their questions sometimes overlap.

Keywords

Psycholinguistics, Ethno-logistics, Sociolinguistics, Neurolinguistics

Discussion

1.2.1 Introduction to Linguistics

‘Linguistics’ is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of studies related to language. There are a number of full-fledged and emerging sub-disciplines or branches in linguistics. It is a dynamic discipline which undergoes constant changes.

For the convenience of classification, we can broadly divide all branches into two:

1. The Central Branches of Linguistics

Central branches in linguistics are those sub-disciplines that study inherent features and structures of language. They focus on speech sounds, pronunciation, meaning, grammatical structures, syntax, etc. Linguistics has three central branches. Look at the diagram below:

- ▶ Branches of Linguistics based on sound:
 - a. Phonetics is the study of speech sounds and their articulation.
 - b. Phonology studies how speech sounds are selected, organised and arranged in a language.
- ▶ Branches of Linguistics based on structure:
 - a. Morphology deals with words and their formations.
 - b. Syntax is the study of rules that govern the structure of sentences. It looks into the formation of meaningful sentences.

▶ Branches of Linguistics based on Meaning:

- a. Semantics is the study of meaning in language.
- b. Pragmatics studies how linguistic utterances convey meaning in actual situations. It is related to the practical aspects of human language.

The coming blocks will elaborate on these branches.

2. Interdisciplinary Branches of Linguistics

Language is relevant for every aspect of our lives. Hence linguistics is very diverse. There is no one way to approach language. A linguist studies different spheres of human experience in relation to language. Here, linguistics cannot stand on its own in the study of language. It has to depend on other disciplines of knowledge. Therefore, linguistics employs an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach.

Hence, in addition to the central branches, linguistics has many hybrid or interdisciplinary branches. These combine their central research questions with those in linguistics. Psycholinguistics, Neurolinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Ethnolinguistics, Anthropological linguistics, Computational linguistics and Stylistics are a few.

In this unit, we are going to discuss some important interdisciplinary branches of linguistics.



While going into the branches of linguistics, you have to remember that they may overlap each other. We will not be able to avoid overlaps completely. For example, if we study language in relation to the mind, we cannot ignore studying society because language is a social phenomenon.

1.2.1.1 Psycholinguistics

Just observe the tiny-tots in our homes. They would call all men “Papa” or all vehicles as “cars”. They even sometimes say “I loves Mama” or “puppy no drink”. They make many such mistakes during their learning of language. Gradually they will improve and learn the language perfectly.

A child would say “I thinked” instead of “I thought”. Here the child has the idea of grammar well in place. She knows that she is talking about something that is in the past. She used the past tense form of ‘think’, only it is not the right form. However, the idea of tense is known to her. So how does a child learn language? Does her mind have an innate capacity to learn language? Psycholinguistics is the sub-discipline of linguistics which studies these issues.

Psycholinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and the mind. It mainly deals with four areas of study: language acquisition, production, comprehension and second language acquisition. It explores the psychological processes involved in using language and what is the mind’s involvement in it.

A lion’s share of psycholinguistics is about the child’s acquisition of language. Earlier, there was a heated debate about whether language acquisition is an innate capacity or it is an acquired behaviour. Currently, the former view is stronger. Noam Chomsky also proposes the same view. One of the crucial findings of

Chomsky was the concept of Universal Grammar, that there is a common basic structure for every language and humans are born with the knowledge of this structure. Chomsky is a key figure in psycholinguistics with influential contributions.

Psycholinguists further explore how words and structures are stored within the mind and how the memory part of the mind works.

It would be difficult to deal with psycholinguistics without mastering the discipline of psychology. The American psychologist Jacob Robert Kantor introduced the term ‘Psycholinguistics’ in 1936 in his book *An Objective Psychology of Grammar*. It started to emerge as a distinct discipline in the 1950s. Steve Pinker, Jean Aitchison and Noam Chomsky are the key figures in psycholinguistics.

1.2.1.2 Ethnolinguistics

Now let’s go through an amusing story that happened in the recent past. Decades ago, when electricity connections were given across Kerala state, the project was not properly implemented in some tribal colonies of Wayanad. They came forward, began indefinite strikes and shouted slogans. One slogan was “We also want ‘VadiVilakku’”. There was no Malayalam word as ‘VadiVilakku’. It was their own coinage for ‘tube light’. Since there was no word for tube light in Malayalam and in their dialect, they took words that equal tube light in idea and form to convey their thought. The shape of the tube light resembles a common stick they use for daily needs. And in the idea, it is a lamp or lantern that gives light in the darkness. Therefore ‘VadiVilakku’ is a lamp in the form of a stick.

What happens here? Since there was no word for a tube light, they invented one with what language resources they had. They didn’t even consider whether the idea of electricity comes

in the word or not. Here the language of a person or community influences his/her culture and views about reality. This is a famous theory in linguistics. It is called the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. It says that language determines or influences how we see and perceive the world around us. When we think about this hypothesis, it would not be correct all the time. We have abundant examples of how culture influences language. In the Arctic region, which is characterised by the extreme cold and constant downfall of snow, lives the Inuit community. They have around fifty words for snow. It suggests the importance of snow in their culture which in turn influences their language and vocabulary. All these issues come under the purview of Ethnolinguistics.

It is the study of the relationship between language and culture. Ethno in the word means 'ethnic', which suggests a group of people with common racial, national, religious or cultural origin. Being a member of an ethnic group, his culture would definitely influence his use of language and vice versa.

The discipline was established with the findings of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. The Whorfian hypothesis, that language determines thought, culture and reality was then the prevalent argument. But later, it became outdated and the scholars held the view that language only influences them. Now practitioners in the field consider that the relationship between language and culture is reciprocal.

Ethnolinguistics is different from sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics analyses changes in the language of an individual, a society and different contexts, including the elements of culture. Ethnolinguistics focuses only on the relationship between culture and language. Therefore, sociolinguistics is more a general field and ethnolinguistics is particular.

There are some other branches of linguistics which are not mentioned here: Historical Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Computational Linguistics and Comparative Linguistics.

1.2.1.3 Sociolinguistics

Kiran, a programme manager of Ravens Solutions makes a call to BS International for some special business matters.

Attending the call, the customer service associate greets: "Good morning, BS International, how may I help you".

Kiran: "Hello, could you put me through to Mrs. Krishna in accounts, please?"

CSA: "Could I ask you who's calling, please?"

Kiran: "It's Kiran, programme manager from Raven Solutions".

CSA: "Could I ask the purpose of the call, please?"

Kiran: "Yes, of course, I am calling to discuss an invoice".

CSA: "Sorry, he is on vacation (American English) at the moment".

Kiran: "When would be a convenient time for me to call back?"

CSA: "He'll be back tomorrow morning"

Kiran: "Could I leave a message please?"
"Please, tell Mrs. Krishna that Mr. Kiran from Ravens Solutions called regarding the invoice. Please, ask him to call me back as soon as possible on *****101".



CSA: "I'll get him to call you as soon as he gets back".

Kiran: "Thank you very much for the help. Goodbye".

CSA: "Goodbye Mr. Kiran. Thank you for calling".

The above mentioned telephone conversation is a highly formal talk in a business situation. Would you call and chat with your buddy in the same manner? No, it would be casual and informal. The following is such a conversation.

Arun: "Hey George!"

George: "Hey, how's it going?"

Arun: "Great. I was just calling to see if you wanted to meet up this weekend?"

George: "Yeah, I'd love to. Where were you thinking?"

Arun: "I thought we could go to Rahmath restaurant at Calicut".

George: "OK, I'll meet you there at 8:00 pm on Friday. Did you need anything else while I've got you on the line?"

Arun: "No, nothing else, I'll see you on Friday".

George: "Catch you later, good to talk to you".

Arun: "Bye".

In these various situations, the way language is used is different. In the above two examples, the tone and style of the language employed

are entirely different. The first one is highly formal because it is a business situation. The second one is wholly informal because it is a casual talk between two friends. In various social situations, we use language differently. There may be variations in vocabulary, pronunciation, style, gestures, etc. All these are studied in sociolinguistics.

Language is a social phenomenon. Studying language involves studying society. Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society.

During the 1960s, William Labov, an American linguist, conducted a study on how different classes of people pronounce /r/ sound in the speech. He undertook experiments among different social classes in New York. Based on his life experiences, he believed that people of higher social classes pronounced the /r/ sound clearly in speaking. Three departmental stores were the site of his experiments: Saks Fifth Ave (elite class), Macy's (middle class), and S. Klein (lower class). He collected data by asking participants to read word lists or passages containing the /r/ sound and by interviewing them informally. He looked for the pronunciation of /r/ in the middle and at the end of words. By analysing the data, he concluded that there is a strong tendency among higher-class people to pronounce /r/ sound distinctively. Therefore, the pronunciation of the /r/ sound is a marker of social class. The higher the social class, the clearer would be the pronunciation of the /r/ sound.

Here, Labov has undertaken a scientific and systematic study of elements in the language or the speech of people residing in New York. The scientific study of language starts with an original doubt or question. 'How do different classes of people in New York differ in pronouncing /r/ sound?' is such a question. Later, based on his prior knowledge and experiences,

he formed a hypothesis or an argument. Here, his argument was that members of higher social classes distinctively pronounce /r/ sound in speaking. Thereafter, one who undertakes the experiment collects data, analyses them, and finally checks the result. Based on the result, he verifies and reaches a conclusion. In the above example, Labov concludes that moving up the social ladder, the pronunciation of the /r/ sound is clearer and therefore, the pronunciation of the /r/ sound is a marker of social class. Such a conclusion might be against or in favour of the previously formed argument. Here, the conclusion supports his general observation in the beginning.

It is a classic example of sociolinguistics.

Unlike traditional grammarians, sociolinguists go out into a speech community. They will look into language variations in a speech community. Then, they formulate theories on how and why language changes. In a speech community, there are variations: a plumber does not speak like a teacher. Men do not speak like women. Older people do not speak like children. You do not use language the same way when you answer during a job interview, chatting with friends in a café, writing an article, and speaking with the chief minister.

The sociolinguists try to find out the factors that would influence an ordinary speaker's language use in a speech community. This discipline studies how there are different language varieties based on social variables.

Look at the following excerpt from the famous play *Pygmalion* by Bernard Shaw. It is from the opening act where Freddy is desperate to find a cab for his family and is chastised by his mother and sister. He again goes searching for the cab:

FREDDY: Oh, very well: I'll go, I'll go.

THE FLOWER GIRL: Nah then, Freddy: look wh' y' gowin, deah.

FREDDY: Sorry [he rushes off]

THE FLOWER GIRL: [picking up her scattered flowers and replacing them in the basket] There's manners f' yer! Te-oobanches o voylets trod into the mad.

THE MOTHER: How do you know that my son's name is Freddy, pray?

THE FLOWER GIRL: Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewddan y' de-ootybawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awyatbahtpyin. Will ye-oopy me f' them?

THE DAUGHTER: Do nothing of the sort, mother. The idea!

This conversation continues. Here is the link for the full text: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3825/3825-h/3825-h.htm>

We cannot understand what the flower girl is saying. It is Cockney English. Cockney is a working-class dialect of English in England. It is considered a crude and lower variant of English. What his mother, sister and Freddy himself speak is a sort of polished variety of English. Here it is evident that one's social class is a determining factor in the use of language. The Labov experiment testifies it further.

In the conversations above, we have different situations and thus different ways of using language. In the first one, it is a business situation and thus a highly formal language is used. However, the second interaction is a casual talk between two friends and thus is an informal mode of communication delivered



over the phone. Therefore, social contexts are also decisive in the use of language. Speaking at a playground is different from speaking at a meeting. The way you speak at an interview would be different from the way you speak within a circle of friends.

Another vital thing to note from the above example of *Pygmalion* is that Cockney is spoken only by working-class people around London. Thus, it is specific to the identity of the working class and also peculiarly spoken in and around the geographical region of London. Therefore, ethnic identity and geographical region also are reflected in one's use of language.

In the same way, one's age, gender, and nationality also influence language. A male does not speak the way a female does. Linguists have explored the way women choose vocabulary differently or use certain vowels more than others. A middle-aged person and a teenager talk differently. A foreign speaker would speak differently from a native speaker. In recent times many varieties of English (Indian English, Scottish English, to name a couple of them) have been studied by linguists.

As evident from the above-cited discussion, the following are the most important factors that affect one's use of language:

1. Social class
2. Social context
3. Ethnic identity
4. Geographical location
5. Age
6. Gender
7. Nationality, etc.

These are only a few of the factors that affect one's language use. Regarding accent, vocabulary, pronunciation, and manner of expression there would be differences in each. Taking all these into consideration, a sociolinguist

would try to find out what are the reasons for linguistic change. Sociolinguistics emphasises the variability, multiplicity and the dynamic aspect of language.

In sociolinguistics, both sociology and linguistics come together. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of sociological concepts is necessary. The roots of sociolinguistics can be traced back to the early 20th century in the theorizations of Ferdinand De Saussure. However, original investigations began only in the 1950s. The American linguist William Labov was the key figure who revolutionized sociolinguistics.

1.2.1.4 Neurolinguistics

Did you watch the movie 'Taare Zameen Par'? The story revolves around an eight-year-old child 'Ishaan'. Though he excels in art and extra-curricular activities, he fails in some language skills, especially in writing. Ram, Ishaan's art teacher, goes to the latter's house after recognizing the child's problems. Showing his notebooks, Ram explains to them:

Ram: "Ishaan is confused with similar-looking letters. In writing 'bad' he substitutes 'b' with 'd' and writes 'dab'. Several letters are inverted, for example when he writes 'sir', 's' and 'r' are both reversed. He mixes up similarly spelt words like 't-o-p' which becomes 'p-o-t' and 's-o-l-i-d' which becomes 's-o-i-l-e-d'. He uses different spellings for the same word in different places".

In the same movie, there is another scene where Ishaan is looking outside and his teacher is engaged in teaching students to mark adjectives.

Teacher: "Can I have your attention Ishaan?" "Ishaan! I said page 38, chapter 4, paragraph 3, read the first sentence and point out the adjectives?" "Just read the sentence Ishaan".

Ishaan: “The letters are dancing, teacher”.

Teacher: “They are dancing, are they? Then read the dancing letters. Are you trying to be funny?”

Ishaan: “wu—au---d—a---v”

Teacher: “I said loud and proper, Ishaan”
Ishaan continues to grapple with the letters. The teacher keeps insisting that he read loud and proper.

Then he makes a babbling sound and the teacher asks him to get out of the class.

You might have seen people who struggle when they communicate with others; people who stutter. They can’t articulate exactly what they are thinking. Some others would listen carefully, but understand little. Some have great difficulty in reading newspapers or any other written materials. They try to pick one or two words and combine them, but are unable to read in full. Some others would attempt to write words and sentences, but make grave mistakes. These defects, when they go beyond normal cases, are diseases. Such cases are called aphasia. People of any age can be affected by it and not just children. Why does it happen? When some particular areas of the brain are damaged, certain language abilities are probably impaired. When the language disability is particular to writing, it is called Dyslexia. The character Ishaan seriously suffers from dyslexia.

The branch of linguistics that studies these aspects is called Neurolinguistics. It is the study of the relationship between language and the brain. It studies which physical areas in the brain enable a person to peculiar language abilities like reading, writing, speaking, comprehending, etc.

Paul Broca, a French surgeon and Carl Wernicke, a German physician proved that language can be studied through examining physical characteristics of the brain. It was the American neurologist Norman Geschwind who found out that the brain consists of different parts representing various language skills and these parts are interrelated.

In this modern era, there are even advanced brain scanners or brain imaging technologies which could examine the activities in the brain of a person who performs specific linguistic tasks like reading, writing, and listening.

As an interdisciplinary field, neurolinguistics employs methods and theories from many disciplines, especially neuroscience and linguistics.

Neurolinguistics is closely related to the field of psycholinguistics. There are overlaps and collaborations between these sub-disciplines. How can you distinguish between both? Both focus on acquisition, production or expression (speaking or writing) and comprehension (listening) of language. Psycholinguistics looks into the psychological processes during these activities or what happens in mind when these happen. But neurolinguistics tries to find out in which physical areas of the brain these language activities occur, how and what happens in the brain physically during the processes. Therefore, neurolinguistics is a practical explanation of psycholinguistic theories. Psycholinguistics is abstract and theoretical. Neurolinguistics is concrete and practical. Like sociolinguists, neurologists undertake field experiments.



Recap

- ▶ Linguistics is the scientific and systematic study of language.
- ▶ Objectivity requires freedom from personal bias.
- ▶ Empiricism bases explanations on observable language evidence.
- ▶ Systematic enquiry follows organised procedures of data collection and analysis.
- ▶ Phonetics studies the production and properties of speech sounds.
- ▶ Phonology studies the organisation of sounds within languages.
- ▶ Morphology studies the internal structure and formation of words.
- ▶ Syntax studies rules governing sentence structure.
- ▶ Semantics studies linguistic meaning.
- ▶ Pragmatics studies meaning in context.
- ▶ Psycholinguistics examines language and the mind.
- ▶ Language acquisition is a major area of psycholinguistics.
- ▶ Production concerns the mental processes involved in expressing language.
- ▶ Comprehension concerns the processing and interpretation of language.
- ▶ Universal Grammar proposes shared innate principles of human language.
- ▶ Ethnolinguistics studies language in relation to culture.
- ▶ The Sapir-Whorf tradition explores links among language, thought and reality.
- ▶ Current approaches often treat language and culture as reciprocally influential.
- ▶ Sociolinguistics studies language in relation to society.
- ▶ Register and style vary according to social context.
- ▶ Social class, region, age, gender and identity may influence language use.
- ▶ Labov demonstrated systematic links between pronunciation and social class.
- ▶ Neurolinguistics studies language and the physical brain.
- ▶ Aphasia is an acquired impairment of language ability.
- ▶ Dyslexia primarily affects reading and written-language processing.
- ▶ Broca and Wernicke linked language functions to particular brain regions.
- ▶ Psycholinguistics is primarily cognitive; neurolinguistics is primarily neurological.
- ▶ Interdisciplinary branches may overlap because language is simultaneously mental, social and biological.

Objective Questions

1. Which branch studies language and mind?
2. Which branch studies language and culture?
3. Which branch studies language and society?
4. Which branch studies language and brain?
5. Who proposed Universal Grammar?
6. Who pioneered variationist sociolinguistics?
7. What is an acquired language impairment called?
8. Which principle requires evidence from observation?
9. Which branch studies contextual meaning?
10. Which disorder mainly affects reading?

Answers

1. Psycholinguistics
2. Ethnolinguistics
3. Sociolinguistics
4. Neurolinguistics
5. Chomsky
6. Labov
7. Aphasia
8. Empiricism
9. Pragmatics
10. Dyslexia

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Differentiate the central and interdisciplinary branches of linguistics with examples.
2. Explain the four major areas of psycholinguistic enquiry.
3. Assess the claim that language influences culture and culture influences language.



4. How does social context shape register, vocabulary and pronunciation?
5. Reconstruct the logic of Labov's department-store study as a scientific investigation.
6. Differentiate aphasia and dyslexia without treating them as identical conditions.
7. Compare psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics in terms of questions, evidence and methods.

Assignments

1. Observe the speech of a young child and prepare an ethical, anonymised analysis of two developmental language patterns.
2. Compile ten culture-specific words from a language known to you and explain what cultural practices or values they encode.
3. Conduct a small sociolinguistic survey of one pronunciation or lexical variable across age groups and present the findings in a table.
4. Create a case-based chart linking everyday language problems to the most relevant branch of linguistics.
5. Prepare a multimedia presentation explaining Broca's area, Wernicke's area and the relevance of brain-imaging methods.
6. Analyse one public speech and one friendly conversation to show how social setting affects language choice.
7. Design an interdisciplinary research proposal on a language issue, stating the question, data, method and branches involved.

Suggested Reading

1. Clark, Eve V. *First Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
2. Chomsky, Noam. *Syntactic Structures*. Mouton, 1957.
3. Sapir, Edward. *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1921.
4. Labov, William. *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972.
5. Price, Cathy J. *Neuroimaging of Language*. Oxford University Press, 2012.



Language Varieties

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ distinguish idiolect, dialect, isogloss and register by analysing authentic examples of language variation
- ▶ explain the formation and development of pidgins and creoles in multilingual contact situations
- ▶ compare bilingualism and diglossia in terms of individual competence, social function and domain of use
- ▶ interpret language variation as a systematic resource connected with identity, geography, context and power

Prerequisite

A learner may speak Malayalam at home, use English in a university assignment, mix languages while chatting with friends, and adopt a highly formal style when addressing an official. Another speaker from a neighbouring district may pronounce the same word differently, while members of a profession may use vocabulary unfamiliar to outsiders. These are not random errors; they are patterned forms of variation. Sometimes variation belongs to an individual, sometimes to a region or social group, and sometimes to a particular situation. When groups without a shared language meet for trade or labour, a restricted contact code may emerge and, under certain conditions, develop into a full community language. In other settings two languages or two varieties coexist but serve unequal or specialised functions. This unit invites you to treat diversity not as linguistic deficiency but as evidence that language adapts to speakers, communities, purposes and histories. Familiarity with everyday multilingual life is the most useful starting point.



Keywords

Language change, Dialect, Idiolect, Isogloss, Register, Pidgin, Creole, Bilingualism, Diglossia

Discussion

1.3.1 Language Varieties

Language variation or language varieties are differences in the way a language is used, especially in a speech community. Language varieties are abundant. Most prominent among them are dialect, idiolect, register, pidgin, creole and diglossia.

Variations in language happen because of the dynamics of social life. Language change refers to changes in languages across time. As we have discussed, language is a social and cultural phenomenon. It is a highly dynamic realm. Living languages are always changing. New inventions and discoveries are on their way at each moment. Our social life demands new words and pronunciations that enrich a language. These words and pronunciations, in their turn, require expansion in grammatical forms and structures. In the same way, some words and concepts lose relevance and they are no longer used. This works just like the Darwinian theory of natural selection and adaptation.

The following are the two lines that begin the 13th-century *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of modern English poetry:

“Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,”

You can't comprehend these lines without modern English paraphrase. Chaucer's use of English is obsolete now.

You can see that no language is pure on its own. Any language has an abundance of foreign words. Words like coffee, boomerang, tobacco, chocolate and pizza are not English at all. Still, they are part of English vocabulary through the practice called language borrowing. Speakers of a language take words from their neighbouring language. We call these borrowed words loan words. Dravidian languages have largely borrowed from Sanskrit. 'Akrama', 'Ahankara', 'Agni' and 'Angam' are Sanskrit words in Tamil and Malayalam. Not just words, but many other features like structure and phonology are interchanged and borrowed from language to language. This borrowing is a part of language contact. When a language changes because of the influence of another language, it is language contact. Even though there are abundant theories on the origins of Malayalam, scholars unanimously hold that it has been heavily influenced by Sanskrit and also by Tamil.

When languages come in contact with each other, there may have been prestige issues. During the 11th century, Normans invaded Briton. English was the language of the colonised and French was the Norman language. Thus, French was more prestigious than English. 'Andwlita' was the word for face in old English and since the word seemed inferior to the English people they replaced it with the French word 'face'.

Do you know a country called Papua New Guinea? It is a part of the continent of Australia. In 1998, an earthquake badly affected some of its parts. It destroyed and eradicated people speaking Arup, Malol, Sissano and Warapu languages. Those languages became extinct with the earthquake. Sometimes, languages may be destroyed by an invasion, a disease or a natural disaster as we have mentioned or by a genocide. If a language disappears or is completely wiped out from the earth, it is called Death of a Language or Linguicide. Sometimes, it happens slowly and sometimes at a fast pace. Some scholars consider English as a 'killer language' because it was responsible for the extinction of many indigenous languages and cultures via colonialism even though it acts as the world's connecting language.

Thus far, we have come across concepts and terms like language contact, language borrowing and death of a language. All these are studied as a part of the concept 'language change' and language change is the main reason behind language variation. What we have discussed in this section testify that language is a highly dynamic domain. It is subject to endless change.

Earlier, traditional linguists considered language varieties as some tiresome details to be swept under the carpet and ignored. But in the 1960s linguists like William Labov made 'variation' the basis of their research and established the discipline of Sociolinguistics. Then on, variations have become an important aspect of language study.

The following are the major categories of language that we are going to deal with: idiolect, dialect, isogloss, register, pidgin, creole, bilingualism and diglossia

1.3.1.1 Dialect

Tapioca is a favourite food of Keralites. The Malayali from the Travancore region call it 'maracheeni'. Those from Thrissur, Ernakulam and Idukki districts (midland Kerala) call it 'kappa'. People from the Malabar region identify it as 'poola' or 'kolikkizhangu'. A single food item is named differently in a single-language speaking society! 'Maracheeni', 'poola', 'kappa' and 'kolikkizhangu' are Malayalam words for tapioca. They are synonyms for 'tapioca' and they are different versions of it in the same Malayalam language. We call these different versions of Malayalam as dialects. There are differences in features of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation also from dialect to dialect of the same language.

The above is an example of differences in vocabulary among dialects. 'Kai' is the word for hand in Malayalam. People from the Malappuram region pronounce it as 'kajj'. They replace /ya/ or /yi/ sound with /j/. In the Kozhikodan dialect, it is pronounced as 'kayyu'. A special stress is given at the end. So, the pronunciation of a single speech sound would vary in different dialects of a language. Consider the sentence "you don't be making sense!". We feel it to be unfamiliar and ungrammatical. We are used to the grammar of the Standard English dialect (we will discuss 'standard language' in this section). But it is grammatical in the Inner-City English dialect of Washington DC. Therefore, there would be grammatical variations in different dialects of the same language.

The categorisation of languages and dialects is based on socio-political criteria. Hence linguists define a dialect as closely related varieties of a language. They are subtypes of the same language.



How do you distinguish a dialect from a language? Mutual intelligibility is a test to understand a dialect. If dialects of a language are mutually intelligible to their speakers, and hence if two speakers understand each other, they are using dialects of the same language. If not they are using different languages. However, mutual intelligibility among dialect speakers is not always absolute. There are various degrees of it. Dialects of areas geographically and culturally closer will be mutually more intelligible. The boundary dividing a language from its dialect is not really clear. Hindi and Urdu are different languages but a Hindi speaker is able to understand Urdu. This is because they share many linguistic features, even though they are categorised as different languages and not as dialects. On the other hand, Mandarin and Cantonese are regarded as dialects of Chinese but the speakers of one cannot understand the other.

The word ‘dialect’ comes from the Greek ‘*di-alektos*’ which means ‘discourse or language’. The study of dialects is called dialectology. A dialect is a regional or social variety of a language. The form of language spoken over a geographical area is called regional dialect (regional variety) and the one that is spoken in a community is social dialect or sociolect.

Mostly both social and regional aspects combine to form a dialect. Every one of us interacts in one dialect or another. It is not possible to speak a language without using a dialect. Therefore, a language itself is a collection of different dialects. However, there is a standard version that is used for official purposes and recording. It is used in dictionaries, educational systems and media. We call it standard language. The dialects of a language are often considered as not quite respectable. The standard variety is looked upon as ‘correct’. We give it a status of prestige. It is usually the

dialect of the politically and socio-economically powerful community that thus acquires prestige and becomes a status symbol so that speakers of other dialects try to imitate it.

There can also be a dominant dialect which influences this standard language. Mostly it will not be a pure dialect. Many factors contribute to the standard language. Valluvanadan Brahmin and Nair dialect is a dominant one in the standard language of Malayalam. Kottayam Christian dialect also influences it because Christian missionaries were the first to establish printing presses in Kerala and the missions were centred in Kottayam. Working class English dialects in England and the ghetto English (African-American, Hispano, etc.) language varieties in the United States are other examples. Received Pronunciation (RP) is the standard language of English often regarded as prestigious. For a better understanding of dialect, we will discuss an example from literature.

Have you read *Pygmalion*, a play by George Bernard Shaw or watched *My Fair Lady*, its film adaptation? The plot revolves around the character Eliza Doolittle, a lower-class young flower girl who speaks Cockney (a version of English spoken by the working class in London, especially in the East End region). Professor Higgins (an expert in phonetics) attempts to transform her into an upper-class lady speaking standard elite English. The Professor wins in his effort. The class register attached to certain dialects results in them being looked down upon. There is another episode in the beginning where Higgins identifies the region to which each person in his audience belonged by the way they spoke. His expertise in phonetics helped him locate the region by the dialect of English they spoke. The English in London is different from Scottish (Scotland), Welsh (Wales), RP (Received Pronun-

ciation), and Scouse (Liverpool) varieties of English but RP or Queen's English is the standard version.

1.3.1.2 Isogloss

Look at the two maps given below. One is a political map which we all know. The other is a map showing variations in use and distribution of sounds in the Russian language of a particular area.

It is a map of the United Kingdom. It shows the political boundaries and regions in the UK. Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland constitute the political boundary of the UK. The map also illustrates the major towns and places in the UK. Now look at the following map.

It is not a complete map of the Russian federation. It is only a part of Russia. At the same time, it does not intend to illustrate its political or geographical regions. The map clearly shows changes or variations in the features of the Russian language over a certain geographical area of the country. A two-line border marks the geographical area which was considered to be the 'old' Russia before various invasions. Therefore, Russian people consider the varieties of language which originated from this region as original and pure Russian language.

There are three main dialects from this region: Northern, Southern and Central. Green, pink and yellowish green colours indicate them respectively. These are called 'histori-



Fig 1.3.1 Political map of the United Kingdom

cal' dialects. They are classified according to the variations in the pronunciation of vowel sounds. In the northern dialect there are mostly no vowel variations, but the southern one has numerous variations. Actually, the central

dialect is a combination of both northern and southern variations. These variations may be phonological or grammatical or regarding vocabulary.



Fig 1.3.2 Map showing variations in use of Language

Certain lines (in red/maroon/orange/yellow/gold, etc.) are used to mark such variations. These lines are called 'Isoglosses'. Here, in the map, only phonological variations are indicated. The red dotted line that surrounds a small region in the northern part and along the central region marks the variation in the pronunciation of vowels in some syllables. All other lines illustrate certain types of variations in the pronunciation of vowel sounds.

The word 'Isogloss' comes from the Greek 'Iso' (equal or similar) and 'glos' (tongue). Since changes or variations in the features of a language constitute a distinct dialect, different isoglosses together combine to form a dialect region. Then it is called the dialect boundary. The following is a dialect map illustrating dialect boundaries.



Fig 1.3.3 Map showing different Dialects

Here is a map of the England region of the United Kingdom. Different dialects are marked with hypothetical borders. Those borders are dialect boundaries.

With the emergence of sociolinguistics and dialectology, regional variations in language became the focus of linguistic scholars. Subsequently, dialect atlases containing dialect maps were published in great numbers. A dialect map shows variations in the features of a language. The lines that indicate the variations are called Isoglosses. When a number of isoglosses combine to mark a distinct dialect, it is called a dialect boundary. A dialect boundary shows the geographical boundary of a particular dialect.

1.3.1.3 Idiolect

You might have listened to speeches delivered by Barack Obama or Donald Trump, the previous US presidents. In spite of some similarities, they differ in many respects. Trump uses intensifiers like ‘extremely’ and ‘really’. Repetition is another characteristic of his speech like ‘very very’, ‘many many’, etc. He articulates in simple phrases and sentences with a heavy accent. Obama’s speech is somewhat different. He employs a continuous flow of words along with intermittent heavy pauses. The message of his speech is crystal clear. These along with many other differences make their speeches distinct from each other.

We are able to recognize different individuals by their distinct speech and language patterns. It is easy for us to identify Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and Dr. Shashi Tharoor from their style of speech and use of language. APJ is from Tamilnadu and his English accent is heavily influenced by Tamil language. Some words like ‘better’ or ‘greater’ are often repeated during his talks and speeches. He uses simple vocabulary. Tharoor’s hallmark is the use of

difficult vocabulary both in speech and writing.

A person’s language is one of the most fundamental features of his self-identity. Each of us has our own peculiarities in using language. Such individual peculiarities in language use is called idiolect. An idiolect is the intrinsic and distinct properties of an individual speaker in his use of language. It is the unique way an individual uses language. Therefore, no two individuals (whether they share a common language or not) speak the same way. Each has his own features of language peculiar to himself. Each one’s choice of words, style of expression, pause in between the words, sentence construction, stress pattern, pronunciation and use of grammar is different.

The term ‘idiolect’ might seem strange to you. It originates from the Greek roots: ‘idio’ means ‘personal, private, own’ and ‘lect’ refers to a Greek word ‘lego’ meaning ‘I speak’. In English ‘lect’ is a variety of languages.

This idiolect is not an inborn characteristic as you might think. There are several factors contributing to it at different stages of an individual’s life. His geographical region, whom he is addressing, his dialect, sociolect, parents, teachers, friends, education, job, the books he reads, the songs he listened to, etc. would surely influence him and his idiolect. Therefore, it is a dynamic, evolving and ever-changing aspect of an individual.

1.3.1.4 Register

“The respondent repudiates all the averments in the above petition except those that are admitted hereunder”

“The petitioner has no prima facie case in the above matter”.

Do these sentences make complete sense to you? Surely not, if you are not a lawyer!

The first sentence in plain English means:

“The defendant denies all allegations in the above complaint except those admitted here”.

The second sentence means:

“At first glance there is no justification for the case put forward by the person who complained”.

Look at another example.

A tailor instructs his subordinate on the work that he is supposed to do: “Make a small hem on the edge of the garment, turn it on to the right side, and then take it down. Arrange the lace in position over this hem, with the straight edge of the lace to the hem, of the edge. Pin and tuck. Sew the lace to the garment with tiny satin stitches worked close together as according”. The words used are peculiar to tailoring.

Apart from regional and social variations, there are variations depending on the kind of subject matter dealt with, occupations or disciplines engaged in, fields of activity and so on. Such varieties with features determined by the context or the field of discourse are referred to as registers. The same lawyer will not speak that polished and standard court language when he interacts with a doctor after getting injured or with an engineer for the purpose of constructing his house or with a religious priest in a temple. The same tailor won't use such vocabulary when he goes shopping or when he is at home. In each of these situations, there would be variations and changes in one's use of language. A person usually talks according to what the context demands from him. Register is the way a speaker uses language differently in various contexts or situations.

Grammar, vocabulary, tone of voice, body language and all other features of language may vary from register to register. The body

language a fisherman employs in the market starkly differs from that of a lawyer in the court. A newspaper boy's tone of voice is different from a teacher who teaches the students in the class. Style is also a part of the register. In various situations, we use different styles. In a religious gathering, we would be reverential and serious in our interactions. In seminars or academic discussions, we are more analytical and observational. In a restaurant or friendly circle, we may be more casual. In a formal setting (meeting, etc.) you may offer coffee to a guest “may I offer you some coffee?” or “would you care for some coffee?” But in an informal situation (restaurant, etc.) you ask your guest or friend “want some coffee?” or simply “coffee?” While “child” or “father” are the words in a formal situation, “kid” or “dad” would be preferred in informal conversations. All these are diverse styles.

While discussing registers we cannot avoid the term jargon. It is an important part of the register. Jargon is a special language used in a professional or occupational group. It is the special vocabulary to meet particular needs of the profession. Lawyers have their own vocabulary and usage of language as we have mentioned above. They use legal jargon. Only a doctor can understand what other doctors say regarding a serious disease. Thus, health professionals use medical jargon. The following are some of them:

1.3.1.5 Medical Jargon

Blood swab - a blood sample taken with a cotton-tipped stick.

Granuloma - a tumour.

bilateral probital hematoma- black eye

Journalists have their own words and codes which others can't comprehend. Some of them are mentioned below:



Journalistic Jargon

Clean Copy - it is the final copy of a newspaper ready for publication. It needs no more editing and thus would have no errors.

Fillers – these are negligible news items used only for filling the remaining gaps.

Lead – it is the main paragraph in a news story.

Computer/Internet Jargon

FAQ – Frequently asked questions

It was the linguist TBW Reid who used the term ‘register’ for the first time. M.A.K Halliday made relevant contributions in developing the concept of register during the 1960s and 1970s.

Another important thing to remember is that dialects and idiolects are variations or varieties in language according to ‘users’. But, registers are varieties of a language according to its specific ‘use’.

1.3.1.6 Pidgin

"Saposyukaikaipiantipinat, baiyukamap strong olsem phantom". It is a casual extract from ‘TokPisin’ language that is spoken over Papua New Guinea. Though it is not English, there is a close resemblance to English. It has an English script. ‘Strong’ and ‘phantom’ are exact English words. By a close reading, we understand that ‘yu’ is ‘you’ and ‘pinat’ is ‘peanut’. The quotation means “if you eat plenty of peanuts, you will come up strong like the phantom”. ‘TokPisin’ is a combination of many languages. English, Portuguese, German and a number of native languages contribute to it but the contribution of English is bigger.

Imagine how such a hybrid language could have been born! During colonial rule in Aus-

tralia, the colonizers established a number of sugar plantations. Labourers were brought into the plantations from different and scattered Pacific islands (like Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Solomon Islands) nearby. They spoke different native tongues. Communication with their superiors and among themselves became extremely difficult.

What happens when such situations do arise? Sometimes, the language of one group will be learned and grasped by others. Then, it would be used as ‘Lingua Franca’ (link language). But mostly, it is not the case. Words from the languages of the concerned people will be combined together for communication. Such a crude language is called Pidgin. It is not a real or complete language. Since pidgin is intended for a limited purpose, its structure would be very simple. There will not be an elaborate grammar of its own. There are no native speakers of pidgin. It is usually learned as a second language by all the speakers. The process of formation of a pidgin is called ‘Pidginisation’. Here, in the above sugar plantations, the labourers devised their own communication system borrowing vocabulary and components from many native and European languages. It was modelled on English. Therefore, ‘TokPisin’ is an English-based pidgin.

Colonisation, trade and slave trade were the major reasons behind the formation of pidgins. Until the abolition of slavery, slaves from Africa and other continents were taken to plantations across the world for the purpose of cheap labour. These slaves were put up with others who spoke other languages in order to prevent them from planning an escape together. These people, speaking different languages, formed a language of their own to communicate. West African Pidgin English and Hawaii Pidgin are instances. Usually, the pidgins die out when the purpose behind them

is accomplished. Eventually, they drop out of use. The disappearance of a pidgin may happen even after it remained in use for generations. Many pidgins like Butler English and Hawaii Pidgin are about to disappear from the face of the earth.

We can discuss another instance from the Indian context. “One master call for come India ... eh England. I say not coming. That master very liking me. I not come. That is like for India - that hot and cold. That England for very cold”. Here, a butler servant tells his friend what he replied to the British colonial superior who had invited him to England. We cannot grasp it fully. Though the words and script are English, it is spoken in the style and structure of an Indian language. During British rule in India, the head servants (butlers) in the colonial households struggled to communicate with their masters. Learning English vocabulary and usage, the butlers adapted English to their own use in style and structure. It was prevalent in Madras presidency. This language is now known as ‘Butler English’ which was a pidgin.

Invaders from Britain, Spain, Italy, France and Portugal colonised countries like India, China and Africa. The natives adapted the colonizers’ languages into their own use and the result was pidgins. Butler English, Chinese Pidgin English, Nigerian Pidgin, Japanese Bamboo Pidgin are some of the English based pidgins that originated due to colonisation.

It is generally assumed that the word ‘pidgin’ comes from the Chinese pronunciation of the English word ‘business’.

In any Pidgin, the features like vocabulary and structure of one language would be dominant. That dominant language is a superstrate language. Other languages with minor contributions are known as substrate languages. English is the superstrate language in ‘TokPisin’

and Butler English pidgins. Other languages in both of them are substrates. Malayalam is the superstrate in ‘Arabi-Malayalam’ pidgin. It originated as a result of trade relations between Arabs and Malayalees. People from Kerala do not know Arabic and Arabians have no knowledge of Malayalam language. Then, both languages combined to form ‘Arabi-Malayalam’. Gradually, Tamil, Persian, Sanskrit and many other languages contributed to it. Later it was extensively used to teach religious education among Muslims in Kerala.

1.3.1.7 Creole

A pidgin will not be the native language of a community. It is only used as a second language. It is employed as a means of communication among persons or communities speaking different languages. But, sometimes, a pidgin is acquired and learned as a mother tongue by children (second generation) of the pidgin using community. Then it is called Creole. A Creole is a native language. There would be enhancement in vocabulary. Grammar and structure of the language would achieve greater expansion. Gradually, the pidgin would become a creole or it would attain the status of a complete language. The transition from a pidgin to creole is called creolization.

In the case of ‘TokPisin’, it didn’t vanish like Butler English. Having no language in common, the children of plantation labourers chose that as their mother tongue. In the hands of later generations, ‘TokPisin’ evolved and developed. They appropriated English as its script. According to needs, vocabulary (from many languages) was enriched and grammatical structures matured. Books and literature were abundantly written. Currently, it is the official language of Papua New Guinea. Therefore, ‘TokPisin’ is now established as an important creole.



The story of ‘Arabi-Malayalam’ is no different. After the early use for trade (then it was a pidgin), it became a tool for teaching Muslim children religious knowledge. Using Arabic script, it writes Malayalam. Vocabulary and grammar are mostly borrowed from Malayalam. But, as we have discussed, many languages contributed to it. There is extensive Mappila literature written in it. Unlike ‘TokPisin’, this creole is now on the verge of extinction.

English and Malayalam have supplied most of the vocabulary to the creoles of ‘TokPisin’ and ‘Arabi-Malayalam’ respectively. The language which provides Creole a major share of its vocabulary is known as lexifier language. Today, there are a number of creoles in the world. Look at another example:

“*Uh gwine gone deytomorrh*” is a sample from Gullah creole. It means “I will go there tomorrow”. Vocabulary and script resemble English language. Therefore, it is an English-based creole where American English is the lexifier language. Today it is spoken by descendants of Africans who live by the coast of South Carolina, USA. Enslaved Africans were brought into North America for plantation and household works during the 18th and 19th centuries. Since they had different tongues, a pidgin was developed for communication. Later generations made it their mother tongue.

1.3.1.8 Bilingualism

‘A.B.C.D’ is a 2013 Malayalam movie that tells the story of two US born spoiled young men: Johns and Korah. Their father sends both of them strategically to Kerala for graduation and to learn life’s lessons from villages where he had been brought up. Throughout the movie, both Johns and Korah shift between the languages of English and Malayalam. They skilfully use both languages according to the demands of a situation. Johns and Kora are

US citizens speaking American English. But, since their parents are from Kerala, they are also well-versed in Malayalam. We can call them bilinguals. Bilingualism is the ability to speak or deal in two languages. If a person has that ability, he is bilingual. If a speech community has the tendency to use two languages routinely, it is also bilingual. Canadian society is bilingual. They use both English and French languages for interaction and as official languages.

How do people become bilingual? Sometimes, children acquire two languages simultaneously in childhood as they grow up. For example, children of immigrants in the USA become bilingual in that way. They speak their mother tongue at home or in other local friendly circles. But they speak only English at school and in other official situations. Sometimes, children learn a native language in childhood and acquire a second language when he is compelled to. A UK native speaking only English would be compelled to learn German when he goes there for a job or higher education.

Bilingualism is a common phenomenon in today’s world scenario. Around 70 per cent of the world’s population are supposed to be bilingual. David Crystal, a British linguist, points out that two-thirds of the world’s children grow up in a bilingual environment. His research shows that there are around 570 million people who speak English and around 235 million are bilingual speaking both English and some other language.

Of the entire population in India, very few are monolingual or speak only one language. People from northern parts would speak both their mother tongue and Hindi or Hindi and English. People from southern states would speak both their native language and English or the mother tongue and the language of the neighbouring state. A middle-class Tamil soft-

ware engineer living in Chennai may be used to speaking English in his office and Tamil in his family and friends circles. Usually, Indian people are multilingual. Multilingualism is the ability to speak or deal in more than two languages.

1.3.1.9 Diglossia

In Athens, the newspaper 'Akropolis' published a new translation of the gospel of St. Matthew (the first book of the New Testament). It was translated into a modern spoken variety of Greek. It was considered by common men and elites alike as an inferior form of Greek language. Such a translation enraged the public and fierce riots took place along the streets of Athens in 1901. Many of them could not understand ancient Greek or its simplified version 'katharevousa'. Bible and other religious manuscripts were written in those varieties. Only government officials and priests know them. But they also speak a low variety of Greek whenever it is needed, as in family situations.

Here, a single speech community uses two varieties of language at the same time. We can discuss another example: Christian Arabs in Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq, speak a 'Christian Arabic' dialect when they talk among themselves. But, they speak 'Muslim Arabic', a standard and general Baghdad dialect, when they deal in public. There are different versions of Arabic in various Arab countries like Moroccan, Omani, Najdi, Yemeni, Libyan, Algerian, etc. Though people use them in everyday speech, classical Arabic is adopted for official, religious and literary purposes.

This is the peculiar phenomenon of diglossia. Diglossia is a situation where two distinct varieties of a language are used within the

same speech community. It was first identified by Charles Ferguson, an American linguist during the 1960s. The word 'diglossia' originated from the Greek 'diglossos' meaning 'speaking two languages' and the French 'diglossie'.

During medieval times, in Europe, Latin was the language for official purposes. Latin was adopted in churches, courts, scriptures and literary writings. At the same time, a number of local vernaculars constituted the everyday speech of the people. Usually, Jewish people stick to Standard English when they interact in public. But, among themselves and in religious contexts, they would try a type of English mixed with words and phrases from Yiddish and Hebrew languages.

The above cited examples clearly show that there is a clear difference between the two language varieties in diglossic situations. One is the High (H) variety enjoying great prestige. The other is Low (L) variety with less or no prestige. Ancient Greek, Classical Arabic, Latin and Yiddish/Hebrew English are High varieties and all others are Low varieties. In any diglossic situation, L would be the native language of most people and H is mostly acquired by formal education. L is commonly used in ordinary speech contexts and for popular entertainment. Generally, L doesn't have a written form. Literature, school teaching, university lectures, religious practices, formal radio and television broadcasts and so on are rendered usually in H.

In the case of Kerala, people living near Karnataka – Kerala border in Kasargod and Wayanad districts, speak a Kannada mixed form of Malayalam. But, for official purposes they only use standard Malayalam.



Table 1.3.1 Different language varieties, their definitions and examples

Language Varieties	Definition	Examples
Idiolect	It is the intrinsic and distinct properties of an individual speaker in his use of language.	Barack Obama and Donald Trump have their own distinctiveness in speech and interactions.
Dialect	Dialects are closely related varieties of a language. It can be a regional or social variety of a language.	The English in London is different from Scottish (Scotland), Welsh (Wales), RP (Received Pronunciation), and Scouse (Liverpool) varieties of English. But RP is the standard version. All these are different dialects in British English.
Isoglosses	They are particular lines that are used to mark variations in a language over a geographical area.	If /s/ sound is silent or not pronounced among a community living in a geographical region, an isogloss or a line would mark that area.
Register	Register is the way a speaker uses language differently in various contexts. When people speaking different languages come together, words from different languages	Journalistic or Legal or Medical jargons.
Pidgin	combine to form a communication system. That crude form of language is called pidgin.	Butler English, TokPisin, Arabi-Malayalam, etc.
Creole	A pidgin becomes creole when it is acquired and learned as mother tongue by the children of a pidgin using community.	Gulla, TokPisin, Arabi-Malayalam Creoles. Butler English died out as a pidgin.

Bilingualism	Bilingualism is the ability to speak or deal in two languages.	Canadian society uses both English and French languages.
Diglossia	Diglossia is a situation where two distinct varieties of a language are used within the same speech community.	Jewish people stick to Standard English when they interact in public. But, among themselves and in religious contexts, they use a type of English mixed with Yiddish and Hebrew languages.

Recap

- ▶ No natural language is completely uniform.
- ▶ Language varies across speakers, groups, places and situations.
- ▶ An idiolect is the distinctive language pattern of an individual.
- ▶ A dialect is a systematic variety associated with a region or social group.
- ▶ Dialect differences may involve pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.
- ▶ Accent refers primarily to pronunciation differences.
- ▶ A standard variety gains prestige through social and institutional processes.
- ▶ Non-standard varieties are rule-governed rather than defective.
- ▶ An isogloss marks the geographical boundary of a linguistic feature.
- ▶ Bundles of isoglosses may help identify dialect regions.
- ▶ Register is language variation according to use or situation.
- ▶ Field concerns the activity or subject matter of communication.
- ▶ Tenor concerns the relationship among participants.
- ▶ Mode concerns the spoken, written or mediated channel.
- ▶ Formal and informal registers differ in vocabulary and structure.
- ▶ Jargon is specialised vocabulary used by a professional or interest group.
- ▶ A pidgin develops as a restricted contact code among groups without a common language.
- ▶ A pidgin initially has no native speakers.
- ▶ A creole develops when a contact language becomes a community's first language.
- ▶ Creolisation expands vocabulary, grammar and communicative functions.
- ▶ Decreolisation may occur under pressure from a socially dominant language.
- ▶ Bilingualism is the ability or practice of using two languages.
- ▶ Individual bilingualism concerns a person; societal bilingualism concerns a community.



- ▶ Balanced bilingual ability is uncommon because proficiency varies by domain.
- ▶ Diglossia involves functionally differentiated high and low varieties.
- ▶ The high variety is commonly used in formal domains.
- ▶ The low variety is commonly used in informal everyday interaction.
- ▶ Language choice can express identity, solidarity, distance and authority.

Objective Questions

1. What is an individual's distinctive language variety called?
2. What boundary marks a linguistic feature geographically?
3. What variety changes according to situation?
4. What contact code initially lacks native speakers?
5. What does a nativised pidgin become?
6. What is proficiency in two languages called?
7. What system assigns varieties to different functions?
8. Which register variable concerns participant relations?
9. Which term mainly concerns pronunciation variation?
10. What specialised group vocabulary is called?

Answers

1. Idiolect
2. Isogloss
3. Register
4. Pidgin
5. Creole
6. Bilingualism
7. Diglossia
8. Tenor
9. Accent
10. Jargon

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Differentiate idiolect, accent and dialect through suitable examples.
2. Explain how isoglosses help linguists map dialect variation.
3. Analyse register through the concepts of field, tenor and mode.
4. Why should non-standard dialects not be described as linguistically inferior?
5. Describe the stages through which a pidgin may become a creole.
6. Compare individual bilingualism and societal bilingualism.
7. Explain diglossia by identifying likely high and low domains in a familiar community.

Assignments

1. Prepare an anonymised language portrait of yourself showing varieties used across home, education, friendship and digital communication.
2. Collect five regional lexical or pronunciation variants and plot them on a simple dialect map.
3. Rewrite the same message for a close friend, a teacher and a government office; analyse the register changes.
4. Investigate the history of one pidgin or creole and prepare a timeline of its social and linguistic development.
5. Interview a bilingual speaker and create a domain chart showing language choice, proficiency and emotional preference.
6. Prepare a comparative case study distinguishing bilingualism, code-switching and diglossia.
7. Design an awareness poster challenging prejudice against non-standard dialects with linguistic evidence.

Suggested Reading

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2. Grosjean, François. *Bilingual: Life and Reality*. Harvard University Press, 2010.
3. Ferguson, Charles A. "Diglossia." *Word*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1959, pp. 325-340.
4. Trudgill, Peter. *The Sociolinguistics of Language*. Blackwell, 2000.
5. Labov, David S. D. *Bilingualism: A Social Approach*. Longman, 1994.





Approaches to the Study of Linguistics

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ differentiate synchronic and diachronic approaches by framing appropriate linguistic research questions
- ▶ apply descriptive principles to analyse actual language use without imposing unsupported value judgements
- ▶ contrast prescriptive, traditional and modern linguistic approaches in terms of aims, methods and evidence
- ▶ evaluate the usefulness and limitations of different approaches for studying changing forms of English

Prerequisite

Suppose you encounter the expressions “They are here”, “They’re here”, and “They be here” in different communities. One response is to declare one form correct and reject the others. Another is to ask who uses each form, in what context, according to what grammatical pattern, and how the forms developed historically. These responses represent different approaches to language study. A linguist may describe English as it functions today, trace the history of a sound or word, formulate rules for formal writing, or examine how earlier grammarians classified words according to Latin models. Each approach answers a different question and uses different evidence. Before beginning, recall that languages change naturally and that everyday usage can be systematic even when it differs from a school grammar rule. The purpose of this unit is not to choose one approach for every task, but to understand when each approach is appropriate and why modern linguistics gives priority to evidence from actual language use.

Keywords

Synchronic and Diachronic approaches, Descriptive and Prescriptive approaches, Modern and Traditional approaches

Discussions

1.4.1 Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches

The grammar of language can be studied diachronically or synchronically.

Let us look at some examples charting the evolution of certain words.

‘Guy’ is a casual word that we use in everyday conversation. As students of linguistics, if we try to find out the meaning and root of this word, it leads us to the early 17th century Gunpowder Plot (1605). Guy Fawkes was one of the plotters who attempted to assassinate King James I. During the time, ‘Guy’ was only a proper name. Even though the efforts failed, his name became synonymous with the Gunpowder Plot. People used to commemorate the event on 5th November by parading the streets and burning his effigies. The effigies were named ‘guys’. This led English people to use the word ‘guy’ for any person having a vulgar or frightening appearance, especially in dress. During the early 19th century, the term gradually began referring to ‘man or fellow’, especially in the US. For e.g., “that guy called for you”. Later, when American pop culture dominated the world, the usage became popular in the English-speaking world.

Did you ever think about the word ‘English’ and its origin? It originates from the word ‘Angles’. Angles along with Jutes and Saxons, invaded Britain after the Romans. They were Germanic tribes. Angles were named so because the place they came from (Jutland

peninsula) resembled a fish hook. The noun ‘angle’ comes from the Indo-European word ‘ank’ meaning ‘to bend’. So, English is ‘Anglish’ which means ‘language of the Angles’.

These examples show the origin of the use of the words ‘guy’ and ‘English’. These examples also trace the development of the use of these words from its original point of emergence. Etymology is the study of the origin and development of words. In both these cases a linguist conducts his study of language over a long period of time. This is what we call the diachronic study of language or the diachronic approach in linguistics. The diachronic approach to linguistics studies the changes in language over a period of time. It is a historical study. It traces the historical development and the evolution of languages and their elements. The term ‘diachronic’ is a combination of two Greek words ‘dia’ + ‘chronos’. Chronos is ‘time’ and dia means ‘across’. Thus, diachronic means ‘across-time’.

Now, we will look into the synchronic approach through examples.

Peter Trudgill, a British linguist, conducted a study on the pronunciation of certain speech sounds by different social classes during the 1970s. He took five social classes in Norwich, England: Middle middle class, Lower middle class, Upper working class, Middle working class and Lower working class. He examined how they pronounced /ng/ in present participle or gerund forms like walking and talking, /t/ in butter, and /h/ in hammer. He found that amongst the higher social classes, the pronun-



ciation of /ng/, /t/ and /h/ would be clearer and complete. Moving down the social classes, there are changes in the pronunciation of the speech sounds. /ng/ becomes /n'/ in shooting (shootin') and singing (singin'). /t/ is the same, but, /h/ is mostly dropped. /hammer/ is pronounced as /æmə (r)/, /h/ being silent. It has also been noted by Trudgill that there are also differences in the pronunciation of men and women. While women usually go for standard pronunciation (adopted by upper social classes), men do not stick to it. Therefore, he concluded that pronunciation is a marker of social class and gender identities.

Was Trudgill mapping the evolution of different speech sounds? Was he making a historical study? The answer is no. He was simply describing how different classes of people and different genders pronounced those speech sounds within a particular period of time. He was investigating how a Norwich person's pronunciation of those speech sounds identifies and marks his/her social class and gender during the 1970s.

William Labove's study in the second unit is also of the same kind. He was also not making a diachronic or historical approach in his study of the pronunciation of people of different social classes in different shopping malls. Here, language is studied at a particular point in time and not over a long period of time. This is called the synchronic study of language or synchronic approach in linguistics. Synchronic study is the study of language at a particular period. This need not be the present moment. It can be any moment in the history of a language. For e.g. we can make a description of Shakespeare's English or English in Chaucer's times or the present-day English. If you try to compare and contrast one such period with another, you will end up in a diachronic study. In a synchronic study, a linguist would look into the components of a language

as it exists, regardless of any historical considerations or future concerns.

Synchronic study is not just the study of language and its elements (speech sounds, words, sentences, etc.) as such at a particular moment. The synchronic study investigates how these elements are related to one another and combine to produce meaning in the larger context at a particular moment. In the aforementioned study of Trudgill, apart from describing the variations in speech sounds of Norwich, he finds that those variations are markers of an individual's social and gender classes.

The term 'synchronic' comes from two Greek words 'syn' and 'chronos' meaning 'with-time'.

Look at another instance of a synchronic approach. Suppose you want to study Shakespeare's use of language in tragedy. First of all, you would list out his plays in the genre of tragedy. There you will not be just listing out the constituents of his language. Instead, you would explore the ways he used English; how he has arranged words and sentences in the plays; how he has combined different elements of language; how he has violated grammatical structures to suit his purpose; and how his use of language differs from that of his contemporaries. Finally, you make a conclusion on how his use of language produced unique styles and ideas in the Renaissance tragedy.

To get a vivid picture of synchronic and diachronic approaches, we can use an analogy of the chess game. Imagine there are two players playing chess. The square-shaped chess board contains 64 small squares. There are 32 pieces and 16 for each player, either in black or white. As each player makes his move, the state of the board is constantly changing. When an outsider comes to watch it at any point during the development of the game, the status or the

state of the game can be fully grasped and analysed in terms of the positions occupied by the pieces. The synchronic study of language is similar to this. It studies the state of a language and how its elements organize to produce meaning at a particular moment in time. How the pieces are strategically positioned by each of the players, at a particular time, to manipulate the game, is more important. The previous moves made or by what route the players have reached the present state is not a matter of concern to appreciate the present state of the game. The viewer need not consider the number, nature or order of previous moves.

However, if a viewer wants to appreciate the whole game, he has to observe the game from the outset until the final move. The number, order and nature of moves and pieces are to be taken into consideration. Only then, the evolution of the game could be grasped in full. This could be compared to the diachronic study of language. Here the linguist is supposed to study language historically or over a period of time. Though language and the chess game are totally different models for analogy, the comparison seems sensible.

When a linguist undertakes a diachronic study of the 'English language', he has to start with the Indo-European language spoken by nomads in Europe. He would describe the invasion of Angles, Jutes and Saxons into the English land; how and when their languages mixed with those of the natives and how old English gradually came into existence. He has to study the evolution of English from Old to Middle and Modern varieties. This, then, is a proper diachronic study. On the other hand, if he studies English at a particular moment like Chaucer's English or King Alfred's English or Shakespearian English, or Victorian English, he is making a synchronic study.

It was Ferdinand De Saussure, the founder of modern linguistics who differentiated between diachronic and synchronic approaches. He pointed out that the study of language in Europe until his time, had undertaken only diachronic study of language. Saussure gave priority to synchronic study. Modern linguistics has, since, focused on that approach. His seminal work, *A Course in General Linguistics*, was an influential book that inaugurated modern linguistics. Actually, the book is a collection of his lectures delivered at the University of Geneva. His students published it posthumously in 1916. In fact, Saussure made the analogy of chess regarding some other concepts.

1.4.2 Descriptive and Prescriptive Approaches

During our school times, English teachers would insist on some *dos* and *don'ts* in the use of the English language. For example:

Never use a double negative as given below.

'I didn't do nothing'

Do not end a sentence with a preposition like the example below.

'Who were you talking to?'

Do not split an infinitive (an infinitive is usually 'to' + 'base form of the verb') like the sentence below

'He determined to gradually get rid of the ill manners he had been used to from his childhood'. Here 'to' and 'get rid of' didn't come together. The adverb 'gradually' came in between.

Here's a meme about the prescriptive use of language. The use of 'whom' :



Whom should be used to refer to the object of a verb or preposition. When in doubt, try this simple trick: If you can replace the word with “he” or “she,” use *who*. If you can replace it with “him” or “her,” use *whom*.

‘Who’ should be used to refer to the subject of a sentence. ‘Whom’ should be used to refer to the object of a verb or preposition.

Who made these delicious cakes? Whom do you believe?

Let us take a classic example.

Student: “Can I go to the washroom?”

Teacher: (laughing) “I hope you can”!

Here the teacher laughs because the modal auxiliary ‘can’ means ‘ability’. Of course, any human being could! A prescriptive grammarian would say the correct usage is ‘May I go to the bathroom’. However, ‘can I go’ is commonly used by most speakers. A descriptive grammarian would be interested in the way language is used by people. She would describe the ways language is used.

Table 1.4.1 Differences between Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches

Synchronic Approach	Diachronic Approach
Study of language at a particular point in time.	Study of language over a period of time.
Analytical and non-historical study.	Historical study.
It investigates how elements of a language are related to one another and combine to produce meaning in the larger context.	It considers language as a collection of many components (words and sentences). How these components are related each other and produce meaning is not regarded.

In the Ebonics dialect of African Americans a common usage is, “I ain’t did nothing”. The prescriptive grammarian would frown on this and correct it to – “I did not do anything”. From the descriptive point of view, on the other hand, this would be of interest to understand this particular dialect.

Here, in all these examples, the teacher or the linguist (traditional grammarian) would insist that we should conform to the standard use of the English language. They are laying norms and prescribing to us what is ‘correct’ and what is ‘incorrect’ or what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’ in the use of language. This phenomenon of laying rules or norms in the use of language is known as prescriptivism or pre-

scriptive approach in the study of language or linguistics. The prescriptive approach to language tells the learners how language should be used in its correct form. It teaches the native users of a particular language the most accurate forms of language. By conforming or complying with the rules, a user achieves correct usages of the standard language. The linguist who adopts a prescriptive approach can be compared to a doctor who prescribes his patients food habits, diet or sleeping time.

In fact, the above given usages like the use of double negative, ending a sentence with proposition or splitting an infinitive, are commonly found in different dialects of English except in RP (RP or Received Pronunciation is the

standard of proper English prescribed). They also cannot be regarded as ungrammatical or harmful to the language.

From the study of sociolinguistics and language varieties, we have understood that no language is spoken or written alike over a geographical area and across different time periods in the history. There are changes and variations in using the same language. What a prescriptive linguist does is to ignore and condemn such variations (like dialects) and prevalent usages in the language of the native speakers and to teach them the rules and usages in the standard variety of the language. Therefore, the prescriptive approach maintains purism and elitism in language study. Purism holds the view that linguistic changes are corruptions in the language. There are people who argue for purism in language.

Usually, there would be a dominant authority of tradition in the prescriptive approach. A prescriptive linguist would insist that 'you should or shouldn't do this because our forefathers did or did not do that'.

Mostly, the literature of a language would be the manifesto for prescriptive linguists. Therefore, conforming to the standards set by the acknowledged and best writers is the benchmark in the use of language. How common men/women speak or write is not a concern for them at all. In English, traditional grammarians made rules and regulations based on the writings of Shakespeare, Dr Johnson, Mathew Arnold, John Keats, Thomas Hardy, etc. Even now, dictionaries in English would abundantly give you usages from previous literatures in the language.

Sometimes, in certain languages, prescriptive linguists or grammarians produce rules modelling upon another language which is considered to be ancient or divine or superior. During the renaissance and neo-classical

times, both grammar and literature in English were modelled upon the Greek and Latin languages and literatures. Parts of speech in English are borrowed from and modelled upon Latin grammar. Neo-classicism in English literature believed in the imitation of classical writers and rules. Alexander Pope and John Dryden wrote poetry imitating Ovid, Virgil and Dante. During the renaissance period in England, playwrights, except a few like Shakespeare, followed the three unities (classical authors insisted on conforming to the unities) in composing plays. Grammar and vocabulary in most Dravidian languages like Malayalam and Kannada are modelled upon Sanskrit which was ancient and considered to be divine.

Prescriptivism was the prevalent approach in Linguistics until the 20th century. Those who practiced a prescriptive approach are known as traditional grammarians. It was replaced by descriptivism with the advent of Ferdinand De Saussure and modern linguistics. Even today, languages are taught using a prescriptive approach in schools and colleges.

Now, think of Peter Trudgill's and William Labove's studies mentioned earlier. Did William Labove pass judgement that the pronunciation of the /r/ sound by the lower class in New York City is correct or incorrect? Did Trudgill insist that the people of Norwich pronounce /ng/ sound according to RP? Both of them simply described how the people of both New York and Norwich pronounce certain speech sounds. They only recorded how the pronunciation of certain speech sounds becomes the marker of social class. They didn't impose rules on the use of language and on the pronunciation. This approach is entirely different from and exactly opposite to prescriptivism. It is called descriptive study of language or descriptive approach in linguistics.



In the descriptive approach, a linguist simply describes how language is used in a speech community. He tries to discover and record the rules that the members of a speech community conform to. He doesn't insist or impose rules on how a language is to be used. He doesn't make any value judgements on people's speech and writing like correct / incorrect usage. Descriptive approach upholds the view that there are no right and wrong usages in a language.

Regarding the English usages of double negative and other examples illustrated above, a descriptive linguist would describe that such usages are interesting among English speaking people. He would find out the contexts in which they are used. He would record the people who probably use them. He also would investigate the social, cultural and political consequences of such usages. He may conclude that they are unique varieties in the use of English language.

Unlike the purist tendency of prescriptivism, descriptivism acknowledges the correctness of all languages and their varieties. Each dialect or variety demonstrates its uniqueness and complexities in its own way. There is no superior or divine language or language variety.

Ferdinand De Saussure's arrival initiated the descriptive approach in the study of language. Modern linguistics adopts a descriptive approach. Except in a few contexts like education, modern linguistics rejects prescriptivism. Descriptivism is also an important aspect of the scientific study of language. In a scientific study, data and facts should be available without personal prejudices and value judgements. But, prescriptivism is purely value judgements and personal opinions. Therefore, it cannot be the basis for scientific study of language.

In *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction*, John Lyons, the renowned linguist, gives us an example that distinguishes between the two approaches. Think of a situation where we are supposed to study the sexual behaviours of a particular community. If we employ a descriptive approach in our investigation, we try to find out whether the members practice premarital sex or not. If they do, then what kind it is and from which age? We also look at whether they practice incest or whether husbands and wives are equally faithful or unfaithful to their partners. It goes on like that. The given community would practice their sexual behaviours based on some principles or rules. The members of the community may be aware of the rules or they may not. Sometimes, there would be written or conventional rules. However, as we undertake a descriptive approach, we record and describe that their sexual behaviours are rule-governed. We do not judge whether their behaviour is right or wrong. We also do not impose any rules that are to be observed for their sexual behaviours. But, undertaking a prescriptive approach would be like a religion or a state or conventional morality insisting and imposing rules to be practised in the sexual behaviours of that community.

Therefore, prescriptive *dos* and *don'ts* are commands. But, descriptive *dos* and *don'ts* are only statements. While the descriptive approach describes how things are, the prescriptive approach prescribes how things ought to be.

A traditional grammarian views that it is his duty to identify and formulate correct and incorrect instances of language use and tell people how they should speak and write. Still, judicial and fair use of prescriptivism is good in the context of education, especially in language teaching. Even now teachers in the primary and secondary levels use the

same prescriptive approach. Some degree of prescriptivism is also necessary in the standardization of a language. When there are different dialects and varieties in a language, it would be extremely difficult and confusing for the people which one is to be used for official and educational purposes. Prescriptivism is to be fairly adopted in such a situation. But, the problem arises when prescriptive linguists condemn normal usages among native speakers and insist upon the age-old use of language.

1.4.3 Traditional and Modern Approaches

Since we have discussed prescriptive and descriptive approaches, our exploration of traditional and modern approaches would be easier. Rather than two approaches in the study of language, both of these are two phases in the history of linguistics. In other words, we call them Traditional Grammar and Modern Linguistics respectively.

Table 1.4.2 Differences between Prescriptive and Descriptive approaches

Prescriptive Approach	Descriptive Approach
Prescribes rigid rules in the use of language.	Simply describes how language is used by the native speakers in a speech community
Insists on people conforming to the rules of language.	It does not insist on people conforming to the standard use of a language.
Purist and elitist attitude.	It acknowledges changes and variations in language and does not make any value judgments.
Tradition is a dominant authority.	It does not consider tradition.
Literature of the language is the manifesto.	Speech, writing and literature of the native speakers are taken into consideration.
It models upon an ancient or a divine or a superior language.	There is no hierarchy in descriptivism.
Traditional grammarians are the practitioners.	Modern linguists adopt this approach.
It is not scientific at all.	It is an important aspect of the scientific study of language.
It gives prominence to writing.	Speech is the primary concern.

Traditional Approach

Tracing the history of the study of language, we understand that the traditional approach prevailed until the early 20th century. The entire body of language study undertaken in the world before the rise of modern linguistics in the 20th century is known as traditional grammar or traditional approach. Traditional grammarians adopted a prescriptive approach. They identify and formulate rules that native users of a language should follow. They give books or booklets detailing grammatical rules, usages, punctuation, spelling and diction. Traditional approach insists on people conforming to pure and correct forms of a language. It was modelled on the writings of great writers of the previous times. It was also modelled upon other languages which were considered to be divine and superior.

Now let's take a look at the history of traditional grammar. The first systematic study of language was done by the Indians. For the effective practice of religious rituals, Indians thought that its language, Sanskrit, had to be preserved in its original grammar and pronunciation. It was the language of the scriptures. Therefore, scholars attempted a comprehensive analysis of Sanskrit. Panini's '*Ashtadhyayi*' or *Eight Books* was the first. Later Patanjali came up with '*Mahabhasya*', a commentary on '*Ashtadhyayi*'. Different features of Sanskrit were elaborately discussed by scholars. Sir William Jones, who initiated Sanskrit scholarship in 1786, viewed that Sanskrit linguistics was much more elaborate and superior to Western linguistics.

The Greek language was also systematically studied at the same time. Plato was concerned with the etymology and origin of words. There was heated debate about the origin of words: whether it was an imitation of nature or based on pure convention. Dionysius Thrax and

Apollonius were the prominent Greek grammarians. Their studies were based on the written language. The classification of the modern parts of speech has Greek origins.

During the Roman times, Latin language was studied and modelled upon Greek. Donatus and Priscian were the major grammarians. They analysed Latin on the basis of classical Latin authors like Virgil and Horace. They also formulated parts of speech following the Greek language elaborately which is largely responsible for parts of speech in the modern European languages.

The European Renaissance revived the interest in classical languages and literature. Modern European languages like French, German and English were analysed modelling upon Greek and Latin. It continued until the 20th century. During the 18th and 19th centuries, prescriptive rules were abundantly written in English.

Modern Approach

Modern approach to modern linguistics is a recent phenomenon. *A Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand De Saussure marks its beginning. Modern Linguistics is the scientific and systematic study of language. Any scientific study requires objective facts and details. That is why modern linguistics undertakes a descriptive approach. Descriptivism records and describes how language is used by the members of a speech community. It doesn't prescribe rules upon the people like prescriptivism.

Attempts to study language scientifically were initiated even before that. Colonial invasion provided scholars access to many languages other than European ones. Sir William Jones' discovery of Sanskrit linguistics was a revolution in the field of language study. Linguists were gifted with new insights from this. His-

torical and Comparative linguistics became the prominent trends then. During the 19th century, both these branches adopted a judicious scientific approach. They sought the roots of languages, comparing and contrasting each other. Different language families were identified then. Rask, Grimm and Von Humboldt were the pioneers in both these branches. Neo-grammarians of the late 19th century tried to give a strong scientific basis for historical linguistics. Their study was purely undertaken by enormous data collection from living languages.

Saussure's findings culminated in the beginning of modern linguistics. Modern linguistics is distinguished by its scientific study of language, descriptive approach and synchronic exploration. His synchronic approach put an end to the historical and comparative linguistics and it looked into the inherent features of language itself. It investigates how elements

of a language are related to one another and combine to produce meaning in the larger context. Leonard Bloomfield and Edward Sapir carried out their study based on the scientific approach. They mainly dealt with the relationship between language and culture. Later Prague Linguistic Circle, under the leadership of Roman Jakobson, continued Saussure's tradition. In the post-World War II, Noam Chomsky's linguistics ruled the field. His TG or Transformational Generative grammar (we will discuss it in the coming blocks) was a revolutionary concept. Other important modern linguists were JR Firth and MK Halliday.

Modern linguistics doesn't give superiority to writing. But, speech is given primacy in the study of language. It acknowledges the equal importance of all languages in the world. No language is superior or divine.

Table 1.4.3 Differences between Traditional Grammar and Modern Linguistics

Traditional Grammar	Modern Linguistics
It has no scientific basis. It is purely based on the personal prejudices and preferences of the scholars.	It is the scientific and systematic study of language.
It adopts a strong prescriptive approach.	Descriptive approach
Writing is primary.	Speech is given primacy.
It is mostly a diachronic study.	It synchronically describes things.
It maintains a purist tendency. It cannot bear changes in language.	It acknowledges that all languages are equal and variations in language are a natural phenomenon. Every language has its own uniqueness.
It was modelled upon Greek and Latin languages.	It does not analyse a language based on the standards of other languages.



Recap

- ▶ An approach determines the questions, evidence and methods of linguistic study.
- ▶ Synchronic study examines a language at a particular point in time.
- ▶ Diachronic study examines language change across time.
- ▶ A synchronic description may focus on present-day English structure.
- ▶ A diachronic enquiry may trace the history of a word or sound.
- ▶ Synchronic and diachronic perspectives can complement each other.
- ▶ Descriptive linguistics records and explains actual language use.
- ▶ Description seeks patterns rather than issuing value judgements.
- ▶ Prescriptive grammar recommends forms for approved or formal usage.
- ▶ Prescription is influential in education, editing and public style guides.
- ▶ Prescriptive rules may be socially useful but are not complete descriptions of language.
- ▶ A form can be non-standard yet grammatically systematic.
- ▶ Traditional grammar developed from classical Greek and Latin models.
- ▶ Traditional grammar commonly emphasises parts of speech and written correctness.
- ▶ Traditional categories remain pedagogically useful in many contexts.
- ▶ Modern linguistics treats speech as a primary object of scientific study.
- ▶ Modern linguistics uses observable data from natural language.
- ▶ Modern approaches examine structure at phonological, morphological and syntactic levels.
- ▶ Modern linguistics recognises variation and change as normal properties.
- ▶ Corpus data provide large collections of authentic language use.
- ▶ Fieldwork supplies evidence from speakers and speech communities.
- ▶ Intuition may guide analysis but should be checked against data.
- ▶ A prescriptive question asks what should be used.
- ▶ A descriptive question asks what is used and how it is patterned.
- ▶ Historical explanation should not be confused with present-day grammatical structure.
- ▶ The suitability of an approach depends on the purpose of the enquiry.

Objective Questions

1. Which approach studies language at one point in time?
2. Which approach studies language through time?

3. Which approach records actual usage?
4. Which approach recommends approved forms?
5. Which model strongly influenced traditional English grammar?
6. Which medium does modern linguistics treat as primary?
7. What large electronic language collection supports analysis?
8. What is natural language investigation among speakers called?
9. Which approach asks what speakers actually say?
10. Which property makes diachronic study necessary?

Answers

1. Synchronic
2. Diachronic
3. Descriptive
4. Prescriptive
5. Latin
6. Speech
7. Corpus
8. Fieldwork
9. Descriptive
10. Change

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Differentiate synchronic and diachronic approaches using two research questions.
2. Why is descriptive linguistics central to the scientific study of language?
3. Identify two legitimate uses and two limitations of prescriptive grammar.
4. How did classical-language models shape traditional English grammar?
5. Explain why speech receives special importance in modern linguistics.
6. Discuss how corpus evidence can confirm or challenge personal intuitions about usage.
7. Evaluate the statement: “Describing a non-standard variety does not mean recommending it for every context.”



Assignments

1. Trace the historical development of five English words and distinguish diachronic findings from their synchronic meanings.
2. Collect ten authentic examples of a contemporary usage and write a neutral descriptive account of the pattern.
3. Compare one rule from a prescriptive grammar with evidence from a small corpus or reliable collection of actual texts.
4. Prepare a debate brief on the proposition: “Grammar teaching should be descriptive rather than prescriptive.”
5. Redesign a traditional parts-of-speech exercise using a modern data-based approach.
6. Conduct a mini field study of one local English feature and report method, data, pattern and limitations.
7. Create a decision guide showing which linguistic approach is most suitable for six different research problems.

Suggested Reading

1. Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Wade Baskin, Philosophical Library, 1959.
2. Jones, William. *The Works of Sir William Jones*. Edited by Lord Teignmouth, S. Bagster & Sons, 1807.
3. Chomsky, Noam. *Syntactic Structures*. Mouton, 1957.
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Language Dichotomies

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ explain Saussure's distinction between langue and parole with reference to shared systems and individual utterances
- ▶ differentiate Chomsky's concepts of competence and performance using evidence from real communicative behaviour
- ▶ compare the two dichotomies and identify both their explanatory value and conceptual limitations
- ▶ Apply language dichotomies to analyse errors, variation, creativity and context in spoken or written data

Prerequisite

A fluent speaker may know that “She goes” is grammatical but accidentally say “She go” when tired, distracted or speaking rapidly. Another speaker may produce a sentence never heard before, yet other members of the community immediately recognise it as well formed. These examples suggest a difference between the shared language system and the actual utterances people produce, and also between underlying linguistic knowledge and observable performance. Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky formulated influential pairs of concepts to explain these differences. Their terms are related but not identical: langue and parole arise from a social-structural view of language, while competence and performance arise from a mental-generative view. This unit builds on your awareness of grammar, variation and actual communication. As you study the dichotomies, keep in mind that real speech is shaped by memory, attention, social context and individual identity, even though speakers rely on an internalised and socially shared system.



Keywords

Langue and Parole, Competence and Performance, Dichotomy

Discussion

1.5.1 Langue and Parole

We use the word language, among various other senses, to refer to speech which is the spoken form or the written form. Saussure used it in a unique sense. He made use of three terms – language, langue and parole. Language, to him, is the ability to speak which all human beings are born with. Langue and parole are two aspects of language. These are French words wherein langue is tongue and parole is the act of speech. Now let us exemplify this.

Most of us are frequent listeners of music. But, each of us has different tastes in listening to it. Some are addicted to Carnatic, while others prefer Western or Sufi music. Sometimes, a particular musical instrument like flute, keyboard or guitar would be our favourite. Each of these music genres or musical instruments has some rules and conventions to be learned by both the practitioner and the listener (in the case of the latter, he is able to appreciate it even without the knowledge of them). These rules and conventions are fixed and do not change constantly. But, when an individual musician performs it, he does it in his own unique way. The rules and conventions would be the same, but each of them produces it in his own style.

Try to compare what we have argued about music and apply it to language. Language also works in the same way. There are rules and conventions that form the basis of a particular language. Based on them, individual speakers produce meaningful utterances in their own ways.

Ferdinand De Saussure identified these two aspects of language for the first time. He calls these underlying rules and conventions that make up a language *Langue*. When an individual produces actual speech sounds, utterances and sentences in speech or writing based on the conventions and rules it is called *Parole*. *Parole* is the individual meaningful utterances.

When an anchor controls a reality show or a debate, an oral war is an outburst. Participants manipulate their language according to their needs and as they wish. Whatever they articulate in speech or writing is a part of *parole*. But the rules and conventions that regulate their articulations and communications are a part of *langue*.

Therefore, *langue* is all the rules and conventions regarding the combination of sounds, formation of words and sentences, pronunciation and meaning. In other words, *langue* can be assumed as the grammar or the structure or the system of a language. A language functions according to these rules and conventions. Meaningful utterances and sentences emerge from the combination and application of these rules by the individual speakers. *Langue* is a prerequisite or essential condition for *parole* to be produced.

There are two important features regarding the *langue*:

Langue is a set of rules and conventions that are practised and shared by all the members of a speech community. Therefore, *langue* is social. It is a social phenomenon. It is the result of social agreement. The native speakers of a language have agreed on certain rules of

speech sounds, words, sentences, and meanings in their use of language by convention. For Saussure, *langue* is not created by an individual speaker and his genius. An individual's influence on a particular language like English is very meagre. An individual poet like John Keats might produce a memorable turn of phrase (like 'beauty is truth; truth beauty') in English, but he is unable to affect its overall structure or *langue*. Though individual speakers cannot manipulate the rules and conventions wholly, the underlying system or *langue* of a language insists and imposes rules and conventions on all the members in a speech community. It means *langue* influences the individuals and not vice versa.

Think about yourself being enrolled on learning a foreign language like Chinese or Spanish or German or French in college or university. On the first day of your admission to the department you might be puzzled by unfamiliar and incongruous utterances (*parole*) made by the seniors. You cannot understand what they speak because the underlying structure and conventions (or *langue*) of the language they speak is not shared with you.

So, *langue* is the underlying system that makes the individual utterances or performances (*parole*) meaningful. Without a proper *langue*, meaningful *parole* is not possible in a language.

Langue is abstract. It has no physical existence as such. These conventions and rules exist in the minds of the members of a speech community who use a particular language. *Langue* exists in their collective consciousness. *Langue* manifests physically only in the form of *parole* or individual utterances when the members of a speech community write or speak.

Now we can discuss *parole*. While *langue* belongs to the social agreement, *parole* is the realm of individual performance of language. *Parole* is the actual sounds and sentences produced by an individual speaker or writer. It is the physical manifestation of the abstract rules and conventions that exist in the minds of individuals in a speech community. *Langue* manifests itself in the form of sounds, words, sentences, etc. that an individual produces in speech or writing. *Langue* is always a limited number of rules and conventions. But, based on that limited *langue*, an individual can produce an infinite number of linguistic utterances (or *parole*) that are meaningful through various permutations and combinations. Each utterance would vary according to the individual who produces it, but *langue* is not amenable to changes.

The following are the characteristic features of *parole*:

It is never a social phenomenon. It is the individual performance or utterance of a language in speech or writing.

Unlike *langue*, *parole* is concrete. It is physically manifested in speech sounds, words and sentences which are either written or spoken.

Saussure makes use of the game of chess to explain how *langue* and *parole* aspects work in a language. We have already discussed the game in Unit - 4 to elaborate on synchronic and diachronic approaches to the study of language. The square-shaped chess board contains 64 small squares situated in eight rows and eight columns. There are 32 pieces and 16 for each player either in black or white. The rules of the game are predetermined. It has rules like delivering a checkmate is the ultimate aim of the game; The queen can move in any direction (diagonally or horizontally or vertically) as long as the squares are vacant;



rooks can move along vacant squares vertically or horizontally, etc. These rules are already learned and acquired by the players and the viewers alike. Otherwise, the players will not be able to play and the viewers will be unable to appreciate the game. They will not be able to manipulate or alter the rules. Therefore, these rules form the '*langue*' of chess. Likewise, these are the rules and conventions that form the basis of a language. They are socially agreed upon and shared among the members of a language community. An individual speaker will not be able to manipulate them. It is the '*langue*' aspect of a language.

On the other hand, when two players are into the game, they play chess based on the predetermined rules. Each game will be different. Each move will show the ingenuity of the player because he plays in his own peculiar style. Still, the rules and conventions of the game remain the same. Every game of chess and every move are physical manifestations of the rules which are shared in the minds of the players and the viewers. Therefore, they can be compared to the *parole* aspect of the language. *Parole* is the individual utterances based on the *langue* (rules and conventions). It is physically manifested in sounds and sentences produced by individual speakers or writers.

Saussure insisted that linguistics and linguists should study the *langue* aspect of a language and not its *parole* aspect. He has given priority to the study of *langue* because it precedes *parole* and it is a prerequisite to *parole*. *Parole* or individual utterances are subject to constant changes and also, they cannot be enumerated. Therefore, it is highly difficult to deal with such an object of study. Linguistic study should be oriented towards *langue* because it is not subject to constant changes.

In the discussion of giving priority to *langue*, we should consider Saussure's preference for *synchronic* approach or study of language over the *diachronic* one. *Parole* or individual utterances in a language are mostly a part of the diachronic study. Diachronic approach undertakes a historical and comparative study of individual elements of a language and of languages in general. But the object of synchronic study is the *langue* of a particular language. It studies the structure or the system, the rules and regulations of certain utterances in a language at a point in time. It investigates how the elements are related to one another and combine to produce meaning in the larger context at a particular moment. Diachronic study is not concerned with analysing structures and systems of language.

Therefore, Saussure gives priority to both *langue* and synchronic approach.

1.5.2 Competence and Performance

Noam Chomsky, the most influential modern linguist, also made a classification of language similar to Saussure's. The famous classification was theorised in his 1965 book, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. For him, language has two aspects: Competence and Performance. Competence is similar to *langue* and performance is exactly what Saussure meant by *parole*.

Observe the native speakers of any language. All of them speak and understand their native tongue without effort. There may not be many errors or mistakes in their use of language. Still, they are not aware of the rules and conventions that regulate their language. But, when someone makes mistakes in the grammar or the usage, they will be able to identify and correct it. For example, if anyone says "I swimmmed at Goa beach last Sunday",

a native speaker of English would recognize a violation in the grammar and he would rectify it as “swam”. He knows that the past form of ‘swim’ is ‘swam’ and not ‘swimmed’. It means that any native speaker of a language is adept in the knowledge of how to use that language. But he may not have conscious access to the rules and the conventions that govern the language.

Here is what Chomsky calls Competence. Competence or Linguistic Competence is an individual native speaker’s implicit and unconscious knowledge of his language to use and comprehend. It means that native speak-

ers may have no conscious knowledge of the rules and conventions that regulate the combination of sounds, words, and sentences in their language. This linguistic competence exists in the mental realm of an individual speaker and thus it is abstract.

Now, performance is an individual speaker’s production of meaningful utterances in real-life situations based on the competence. It is the physical manifestation of abstract competence. Therefore, performance is concrete.

Chomsky shifts the focus of linguistic theory from the study of observed behaviour to an investigation of the knowledge underlying

Table 1.5.1 Differences between Langue and Parole

Langue	Parole
The underlying rules and conventions that form the basis of a language	Individual meaningful utterances based on the <i>langue</i> of a language.
The structure or the system of a language.	Physical manifestation of the <i>langue</i> .
<i>Langue</i> is social. It is the result of a social agreement among the native members of a speech community.	It is the individual performance or utterance of a language in speech or writing.
<i>Langue</i> is abstract. It has no physical existence. It exists in the minds of the speakers.	<i>Parole</i> is concrete.
<i>Langue</i> is always limited in number.	<i>Parole</i> can be infinite in number of utterances.
It is not amenable to changes.	It constantly changes.
<i>Langue</i> is essential for the existence of <i>parole</i> .	<i>Parole</i> is not a prerequisite for <i>langue</i> .
<i>Langue</i> is given priority in the study of linguistics by Saussure.	<i>Parole</i> is not worthy to be studied in linguistics because it is subject to constant changes.



ing this behaviour. While competence is the knowledge of the structures of a language or an implicit mastering of a set of its principles, performance is the actual use of the language in real situations. Competence in a language user enables him to encode and decode a limitless number of utterances in that language. Therefore, competence is an essential prerequisite for performance and not the vice versa.

The difference between competence and performance would be clear if we discuss the errors committed by the speakers in a language. These errors are a matter of performance at the time of speaking. Sometimes, we mishear certain words. When someone tells us “whet your appetite”, we mishear it as “wet your appetite”. “As opposed to” might be misheard as “as a pose to”. “You have got another thing coming” could be misheard as “you have got another think coming”. “Juxtaposition” becomes “just a position”. Sometimes, there would be slips of the tongue when we speak. We might tell someone that “you need to shake a tower” instead of “take a shower” or accuse someone of telling a “lack of pies” instead of “pack of lies”. Sometimes, we start an utterance and then break it off.

During these situations, we cannot say that the person who commits these errors doesn’t know English as much as those who don’t commit them. Each native speaker has the same competence in the language. Every speaker carries the same rules and conventions of that language in their minds. These errors are thus not a part of the competence aspect of a language. Then, where does the problem lie? Every speaker doesn’t have the same ability or capacity to express and comprehend his language based on the same linguistic competence. Hence the difference in performance of a language by different individuals

Performance is determined not only by the speaker’s linguistic competence, but also by a number of non-linguistic factors like the aforementioned errors: both speaker’s and listener’s beliefs about the world, social conventions, emotional attitudes, psychological and physiological mechanisms in the production of utterances, etc.

As we have mentioned, performance is determined by many non-linguistic factors. It is also incomplete in the sense that individuals can produce any number of varied meaningful utterances according to their wishes and needs. Therefore, it is not a pure linguistic realm. That is why Chomsky directed linguistics and himself towards the study of the competence aspect of language. Competence is always linguistically oriented, complete and ideal.

The distinction between competence and performance and the priority of the former constitutes the basis of his future studies and research especially the concepts of Generative grammar and Universal grammar (which we will deal with in the final block).

1.5.3 The difference between the classifications of Saussure and Chomsky

Parole of Saussure and performance of Chomsky are similar in their characteristics. Both are individual meaningful utterances. They are the physical manifestations of the structure of a language. On the other hand, langue and competence are distinct. Langue is the result of a social agreement. It is a set of rules and conventions that are practised and shared by all the members of a speech community. It is the structure or system of a language. It exists in the minds of the speakers. It has physical and individual manifestations only in individual utterances. At the same time, com-

petence is the possession of individual speakers. It is the native speaker's knowledge of the system or structure of language. It is the individual speaker's knowledge of the rules and conventions of a language. Chomsky sees *competence* as a pure psychological realm. Based on this knowledge of the language he produces performance.

The classifications put forward by Saussure and Chomsky were later questioned by scholars, especially by sociolinguists like William Labov.

They argue that:

Langue & parole or competence & performance are deeply interrelated and thus a clear-cut distinction is inappropriate. Langue/competence is not relevant and useful without the existence of parole/performance and the latter has no existence without the former.

parole or performance can also be studied regarding the use of language in different social situations. It gives us insights into the analysis of language acquisition and language processing.

parole or performance ultimately affects and influences langue or competence in the long run.

There was also an allegation that such a distinction was to help the linguist exclude data which are inconvenient to handle.

However, the systematic study of language was possible only with such a distinction. The whole field of modern linguistics testifies it. The central branches of linguistics that we have mentioned in Unit 2 discuss langue or competence aspect of language. Other interdisciplinary branches are built upon the parole or performance aspect of language.

Table 1.5.2 Differences between Competence and Performance

Competence	Performance
It is an individual speaker's unconscious knowledge of his language to use and comprehend.	It is an individual speaker's production of meaningful utterances in real-life situations based on competence.
It exists in the mental realm of an individual speaker and thus it is abstract.	It is the physical manifestation of abstract competence. Therefore, it is concrete.
Competence is an essential prerequisite for performance.	Performance is not a necessary condition for competence.
Competence is a pure linguistic realm without influences from non-linguistic factors.	Performance is determined by a number of non-linguistic factors.



It is complete and limited in number.	Any number of utterances is allowed.
According to Chomsky, linguistics should study competence.	Performance should not be the primary investigation in linguistics because it is subject to constant changes and is influenced by non-linguistic factors.

Recap

- ▶ A dichotomy is an analytical division between two related concepts.
- ▶ Saussure distinguished langue from parole.
- ▶ Langue is the shared abstract system of signs in a speech community.
- ▶ Parole is the individual's actual use of language.
- ▶ Langue is social because it is collectively maintained.
- ▶ Parole is individual because speakers make particular choices.
- ▶ Langue includes conventions and structural relations.
- ▶ Parole includes concrete utterances and speech events.
- ▶ Langue cannot be directly observed in its entirety.
- ▶ Parole provides data through which the system may be inferred.
- ▶ Saussurean linguistics emphasises relations within the language system.
- ▶ Chomsky distinguished competence from performance.
- ▶ Competence is an ideal speaker-hearer's internal knowledge of language.
- ▶ Performance is the actual use of language in concrete situations.
- ▶ Performance may be affected by memory limitations.
- ▶ Performance may be affected by distraction, hesitation and fatigue.
- ▶ A performance error does not necessarily indicate lack of grammatical knowledge.
- ▶ Competence explains the ability to recognise and create novel sentences.
- ▶ Langue is primarily social; competence is primarily mental.
- ▶ Parole and performance both concern observable language use.
- ▶ Langue is not identical to competence.
- ▶ Parole is broader than accidental performance errors.
- ▶ Both dichotomies separate an underlying system from actual use.
- ▶ Actual language data remain essential for investigating underlying knowledge.

- ▶ Variation and context challenge overly idealised accounts of language.
- ▶ The dichotomies are analytical tools, not absolute separations in lived communication.

Objective Questions

1. Who proposed the langue-parole distinction?
2. What is the shared social system called?
3. What is individual language use called?
4. Who proposed competence-performance?
5. What is internal linguistic knowledge called?
6. What is actual language use called?
7. Which concept is primarily social?
8. Which concept is primarily mental?
9. What can disturb performance without changing knowledge?
10. What enables novel sentence formation?

Answers

1. Saussure
2. Langue
3. Parole
4. Chomsky
5. Competence
6. Performance
7. Langue
8. Competence
9. Distraction
10. Competence



Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain langue and parole using an example from a familiar language.
2. Differentiate competence and performance with two original examples.
3. Why can a slip of the tongue be treated as a performance problem rather than a competence problem?
4. Compare the social emphasis of langue with the cognitive emphasis of competence.
5. In what respects are parole and performance similar, and where do they differ?
6. How can linguists infer an abstract system from actual utterances?
7. Critically assess the usefulness of idealisation in linguistic theory.

Assignments

1. Collect ten naturally occurring utterances and identify what they reveal about shared rules and individual choices.
2. Prepare a comparative diagram of langue/parole and competence/performance with examples and cautions against oversimplification.
3. Analyse a recorded speech sample for pauses, repetitions and slips, explaining why these do not automatically imply weak competence.
4. Design a short grammaticality-judgement activity and discuss what it may reveal about linguistic competence.
5. Write a critical essay on whether language can be adequately studied by separating system from use.
6. Compare two speakers' accounts of the same event to illustrate shared language and individual parole.
7. Apply both dichotomies to a bilingual or code-switching example and explain where the models need qualification.

Suggested Reading

1. Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, Translated by Roy Harris, 1st ed., Open Court, 1986.
2. Chomsky, Noam. *Syntactic Structures*. Mouton, 1957.
3. Chomsky, Noam. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. MIT Press, 1965.

BLOCK - 02

Phonetics and Phonology



Speech Sounds and their Production

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ identify and describe the major organs of speech and explain their roles in producing English speech sounds
- ▶ differentiate pulmonic, glottalic and velaric air-stream mechanisms with suitable examples
- ▶ classify English consonants by place and manner of articulation and by the state of the glottis
- ▶ classify English vowels using tongue height, tongue position and lip posture, and apply the criteria to familiar words

Prerequisite

Imagine receiving a voice message in which the words are familiar, yet the pronunciation makes the message difficult to understand. The difficulty may arise from a tiny change in where the tongue touches, how freely the air escapes, or whether the vocal folds vibrate. Speech is therefore not merely 'sound from the mouth'; it is a carefully coordinated physical activity involving breath, the larynx, the tongue, lips, palate and resonating cavities. Before studying individual English sounds, learners need to observe their own speech: place a hand near the throat while saying /s/ and /z/, notice the burst of air in /p/, and compare the lip position in 'see' and 'shoe'. Such observations provide the experiential background for understanding air-stream mechanisms, organs of speech, and the principles used to classify consonants and vowels.

Keywords

Airstream mechanisms, Organs of speech, Classification and description of speech sounds

Discussion

2.1.1 Airstream Mechanisms

First of all, try to pronounce the sounds that are given below-

“Aaaaa..”

“Eeeee..”

“Sssss..”

“Zzzzz..”

Observe the vibration that you feel in your throat. Is it the same when all of these sounds are produced? Of course, they differ from each other. Sometimes you feel a very mild vibration and sometimes you feel a strong vibration. When we speak, we produce many such sounds. As we utter different sounds, the vibration in our throats changes.

What is the position of our mouth when we articulate the above sounds? You open your mouth wide for the first sound; spread your lips for the second sound and so on.

How do you articulate the last sound in the word ‘spill’? Which part of the mouth do you use to produce that sound? You will observe that you use your tongue. Likewise, you will learn that we use several organs to produce speech sounds. The oral cavity, the nose, the palate, the tongue, lips, vocal cords, glottis, lungs- all go into the making of speech sounds.

Have you ever wondered at how sounds come out of our throats when we utter a word? While talking, we need some sort of energy to

produce sounds. This is done with the help of air. When we breathe, we inhale air and then exhale it. The inhaled air goes into our lungs. When we exhale air, it comes out from our lungs. The air stream expelled from our lungs which is called pulmonic airstream is what we use to produce speech sounds. In other words, the pulmonic airstream is modified to form speech sounds. The air that comes from our lungs vibrates our vocal cords. The vocal cords are situated in the larynx. The larynx is also known as the voice box. It is a cylindrical grouping of cartilage, muscles and soft tissue that contains the vocal cords. The pharynx is the muscle-lined space that connects the nose and mouth to the larynx and oesophagus (eating tube). When this air comes out through our mouth or nose, sound is produced. There are different ways in which the air comes out from the lungs through the mouth. The airstream mechanism is the process by which airflow that is created in the vocal tract comes out through the mouth and nose to produce different sounds.

There are three types of airstream mechanisms:

2.1.1.1 Pulmonic Airstream Mechanism

This is the airstream mechanism where the airflow is initiated in the lungs. It is otherwise called the lung-based airstream mechanism. Different sounds are produced when the air-flow initiated from the lungs is modified in the vocal tract and comes out through the mouth and nose. Most of the sounds are produced with the help of this airstream mechanism.



2.1.1.2 Glottalic Airstream Mechanism

Glottis is the part of the larynx consisting of our vocal cords and the opening between the vocal cords. This is the airstream mechanism where the airflow is initiated by the closed

glottis (glottalic closure). Sounds are produced when the airflow initiated is modified in the glottis.

Let us understand this with the help of the following diagram:

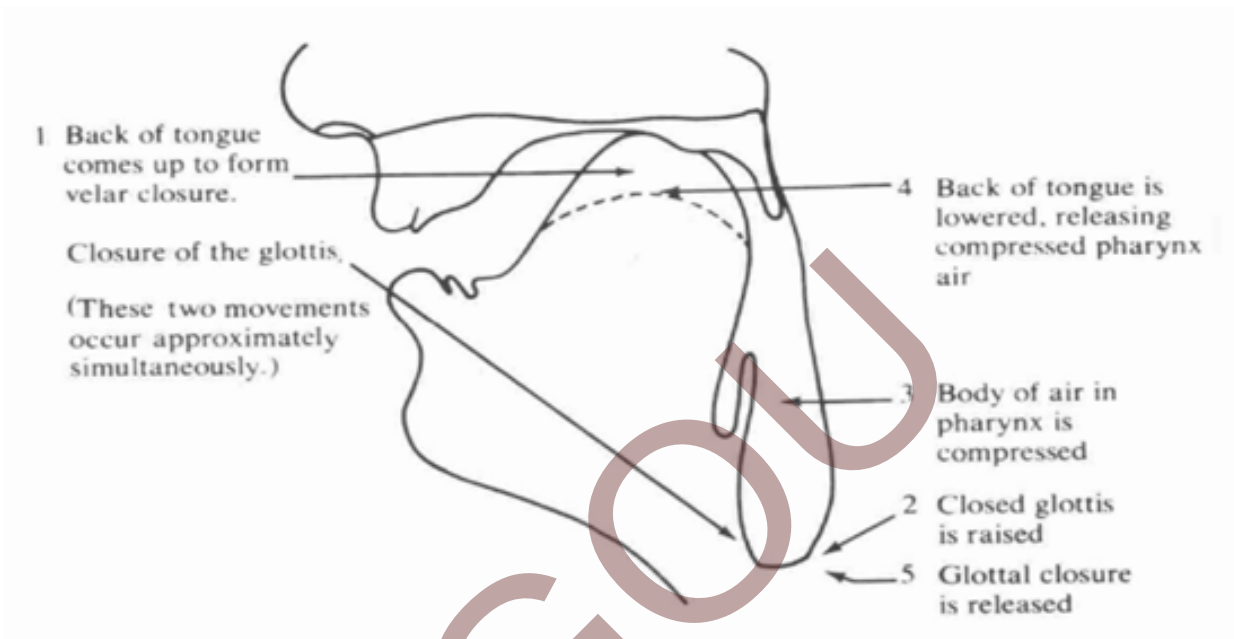


Fig 2.1.1 Glottis Airstream Mechanism

2.1.1.3 Velaric Airstream Mechanism

The velum or soft palate controls airflow through the nasal cavity. Nasals and nasalized sounds are produced by lowering the velum and allowing air to escape through the nose. The velaric airstream mechanism is the airstream mechanism where the airflow is initiated by a velar closure. The airflow initiated gets modified at the velum. Thus, different sounds are produced.

Let us understand this with the help of the following diagram:

You might have noticed that when we speak,

we not only push out the lung air but also take in the air from the atmosphere. In all three airstream mechanisms, both airflows are included. The airstream mechanism in which the air is taken in from the atmosphere is called the ingressive and the airstream mechanism in which the air is taken out from the lungs is called the egressive. Most of the English speech sounds are produced with the help of pulmonic egressive airstream mechanism.

2.1.2 Organs Of Speech

Now let us get into a little bit of biology. Since speech involves certain organs in our body, we need to understand these parts of our anatomy. The air coming out of the lungs, before

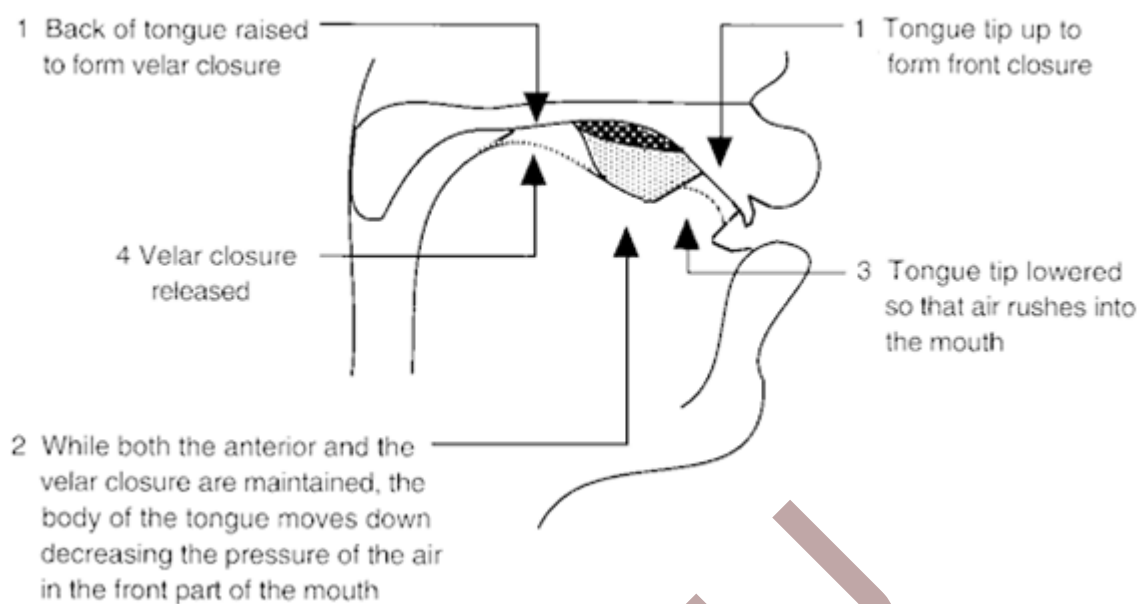


Fig 2.1.2 Velaric Airstream Mechanism

getting released through the mouth or nose, gets modified in its passage from the lungs to the mouth. This modification is done with the help of many organs. The organs of speech can be divided into three groups, namely, respiratory, phonatory and articulatory.

2.1.2.1 Respiratory System

The respiratory system consists of the lungs, the muscles of the chest (diaphragm) and the trachea (windpipe). This system helps us in breathing, which is vital to the whole system of speech sounds. It is responsible for the inward and outward movement of air in our body. The breath that is created in the lungs is the initial source of energy for speech production.

1. Lungs

It is located on either side of the chest and it is the primary organ in the respiratory system. It provides the airflow that is essential for speech production. It takes in the air from the atmosphere and is the source of air that we exhale.

It is this flow of air that makes the production of speech sounds possible in human beings.

2. Diaphragm

It is the muscle that is positioned below the lungs, which is essential for respiration and thus important for the movement of air. When we inhale air from outside, the diaphragm contracts and creates a vacuum that pulls air into the lungs. When we exhale the air from the lungs, the diaphragm relaxes and helps the air to flow out of the lungs.

3. Trachea

Trachea or the windpipe is the tube-like structure that connects the larynx to the lungs. As the name suggests, it is a pipe that enables the movement of air into the lungs as well as from the lungs to the larynx. It acts like a passage for the air to move.



4. Phonatory System

The air that is released from the lungs or the respiratory system next reaches the phonatory system. It is in this system that the air is used to produce sounds. The vibration that we feel at our throat when we speak is generated in the phonatory system.

5. Larynx

The larynx, otherwise known as the voice box, is located on the top of the neck and is connected to the trachea. It is commonly called Adam's apple. It is through the larynx that the air passes to the lungs. The vocal cords that manage the pitch and volume of our speech are located in the larynx. They are liplike

structures placed horizontally from front to back. They are attached in front and can be separated at the back. Sound is produced from the vibration in the vocal cords. Glottis, the opening between the vocal cords, as we have seen in the airstream mechanisms, plays an important role in producing sounds. The larynx is composed of all these that are vital to the speech mechanism.

Observe the diagram given below.

The first image shows the position of the vocal cords and the glottis.

Figure (a) shows the glottal stop. The two vocal cords come closer to shut the glottis completely. This is the position when we eat and drink.

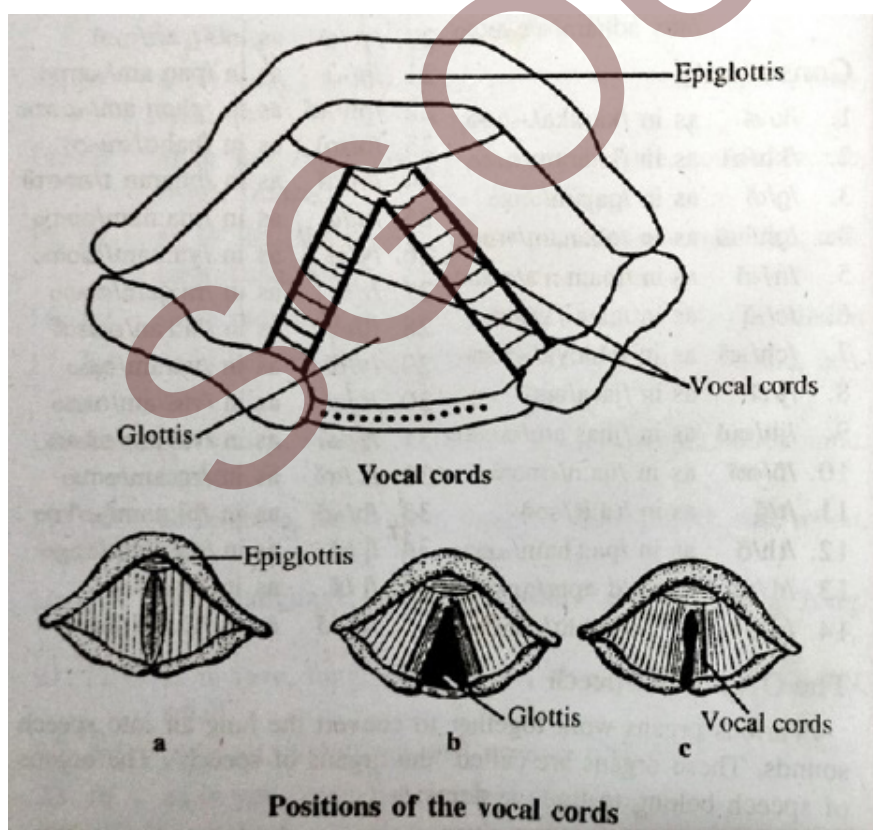


Fig 2.1.3 Vocal Cords

Figure (b) shows the open position of the glottis. The glottis is open when we breathe. Hence it is called the breathed position as well as open glottis position. This is the position for voiceless sounds.

Figure (c) shows the close position of the glottis. The glottis is close together and vocal cords vibrate. This is called the voiced position.

2.1.2.3 Articulatory System

1. The Roof of the Mouth

a. Alveolar Ridge

It is a part of the oral cavity and is located behind the upper front teeth and can be identified as a hard little protrusion behind the middle of the upper front row of teeth. It helps in creating sounds because, while pronouncing consonant sounds, the tongue constantly touches the alveolar ridge.

b. Hard Palate

The alveolar ridge extends into the hard palate. Run your tongue from the alveolar ridge along the roof of the mouth towards the back of the oral cavity. You will feel a hard stretch on the roof of the mouth (palate). The hard palate is a concave-shaped bony plate located on the roof of the mouth. Certain sounds are produced when the tongue touches the hard palate.

c. Velum (Soft Palate)

Velum or the soft palate is the soft muscular part of the roof of the mouth which is a continuation of the hard palate. At the end of the soft palate, there is a fleshy structure hanging, which is called the uvula. Velum plays an important role in the velaric airstream mechanism. When the tongue touches the velum,

a velar closure is formed and this results in the production of certain sounds. Unlike the hard palate, the velum is movable. When the velum is raised, it closes off the nasal cavity and blocks the airflow. This closure is called the velic closure. During this time, the air escapes through the mouth, resulting in the creation of oral sounds. Similarly, when it is lowered, it opens up the nasal cavity and this is called velic opening. During this time, the air escapes through the nose, resulting in the creation of nasal sounds.

2. The Tongue

The tongue is the muscular organ located in the mouth. It is essential in producing speech sounds because most of the sounds are produced when the tongue touches other organs like the hard palate, soft palate or the alveolar ridge. Theoretically, the tongue is divided into many parts for the sake of easy description - the tip, the blade, the front, and the back. The tip refers to the extreme end of the tongue. Next to the tip is the blade, which is the part of the tongue that lies opposite the teeth ridge when the tongue is at rest. Next to the blade is the front of the tongue which lies opposite to the hard palate. After the front, comes the back of the tongue that lies opposite to the soft palate.

3. The Lips

Lips play an important role in producing different sounds. The upper lip and the lower lip move in different ways to produce different sounds. As the position of the lips changes, the sounds created also change. It can manage airflow by closing and opening the lower and upper lips, and thus create a variation in the sounds produced. The position of the lips affects the quality of vowel sounds produced which you will learn later in this unit. Lips



also play an important role in the quality of consonant sounds as they will be influenced by the vowel sounds next to them.

4. Teeth

There are two sets of teeth- the upper set and the lower set. Teeth, when touched by the tongue, produce different sounds. The lips also touch the teeth to produce certain sounds. It also plays its role in controlling the airflow.

5. Nose

It is through the nose that the air from the lungs goes out and the air from outside goes in. When the air escapes through the nose, nasal sounds are produced.

Now, examine the diagram given below to understand the positions of different organs of speech:

Articulators

The organs of speech are also known as the articulators. There are two types of articulators-

1. Active Articulators

These are the speech organs that actively participate in speech production. Active articulators are movable and they can move towards other articulators to generate sounds. The tongue and lower lip are examples of active articulators.

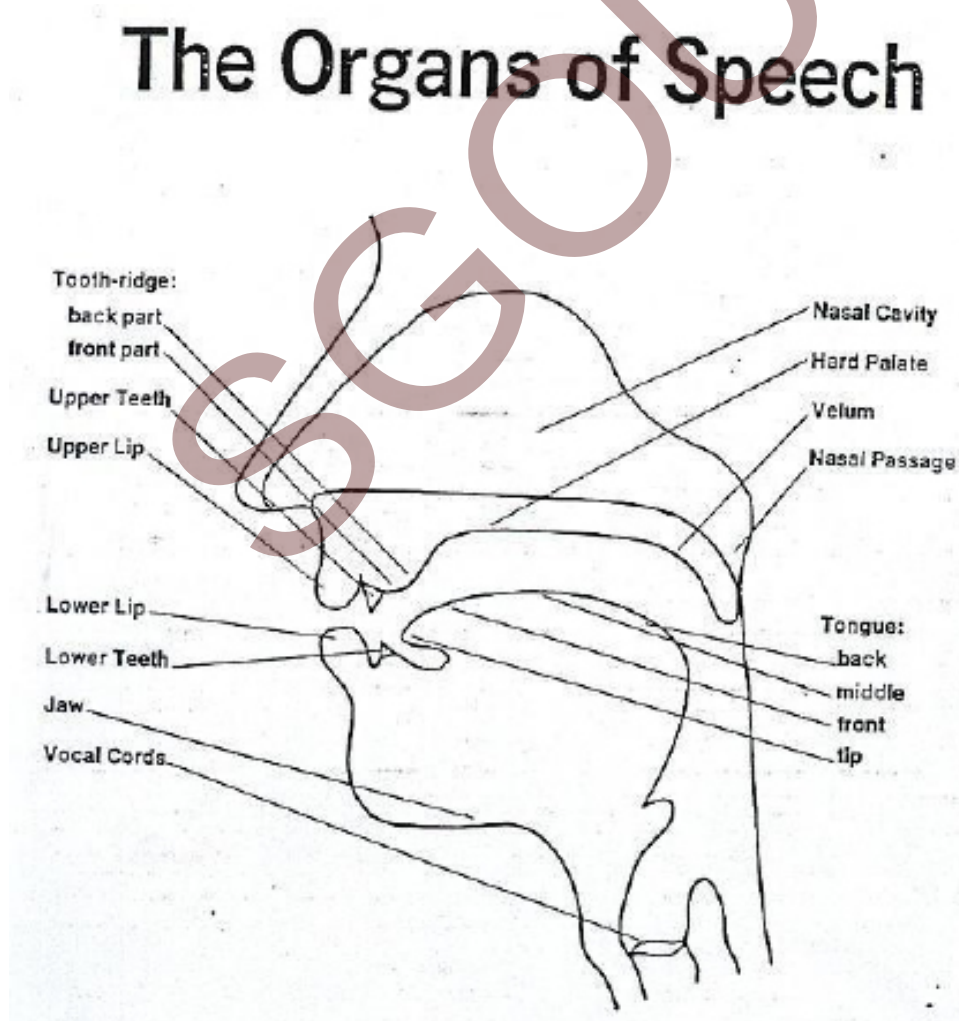


Fig 2.1.4 Organs of Speech

2. Passive Articulators

These are the speech organs that passively participate in speech production. Passive articulators cannot move and they help in generating sound when they come in touch with the active articulators. The upper lip, upper teeth, and roof of the mouth are examples of passive articulators.

2.1.3 Classification and Description of Speech Sounds

Take a look at the following words:

chat, chalk, chase

chef, machine, Chicago

chorus, echo, stomach

How are they pronounced? In all three sets the letters 'ch' in spelling are articulated differently. The 'ch' in the first set is articulated as 'tʃ'. In the second set, it is realised as 'ʃ'. In the third set, it is realised as 'k'. What is the explanation for this? You have to understand that in English the letters 'ch' can be pronounced in three different ways in different words. In the same way, the letter 'c' can be articulated as 's' as well as 'k' ('city', 'cycle' and 'cat', 'cabbage').

Now look at the first set of words- 'chat', 'chalk', 'chase'. How is the letter 'a' pronounced in all three words? They have three different realisations. This is another example to show the same point. Even though we have learnt early on that the vowels of English are 'a, e, i, o, u', you must now understand that these letters also have different phonetic realisations.

English has 26 letters from A to Z. We put these letters together to form words. Does

this mean that there are 26 sounds also in English? Absolutely not! Herein comes the reason for the difficulty in pronunciation for non-native speakers. There is no one-to-one correspondence in English between spelling and pronunciation as there is in Malayalam, Hindi and a number of other languages. So we learn phonetic symbols to help aid us in pronunciation. We learn the symbols with their articulations which will help us get the correct pronunciation. This is what we are going to learn here. We will classify the 44 sounds in different ways and learn the symbols and how to pronounce these sounds.

You would have understood by now that for the 26 letters of the letter, there are more than 26 articulations. To be more precise, while speaking, words formed using the 26 letters of the letter have 44 realisations. These 44 sounds form the speech sounds of English. They are divided into 24 consonants and 20 vowels (broken up into 12 vowels and 8 diphthongs). Technically these 44 sounds are called phonemes.

How do you pronounce the letter 'p' in the word 'pen'? We close our lips and then open them to release air with energy. The flow of air is blocked and then released. How do we pronounce the next letter 'e' in that word? Your lips are not held together here as in the earlier 'p'. Instead, your lips are slightly open so that air flows freely and without the restriction we experience in the production of the sound represented by the letter 'p'. You now understand that there is a difference in airflow for these two sounds.

Speech sounds are broadly classified into two groups according to the flow of air – Consonants and Vowels. All phonemes in English can also be classified into two broad categories- voiced and voiceless- according to whether the glottis is open or closed. All vowels are voiced sounds, whereas some conso-



nants are voiced and some voiceless. This will be explained further below.

2.1.3.1 Vowels

Try to pronounce the letters given below:

“Aaaa..”

“Eeee..”

“Oooo..”

Observe how the air from your mouth is pushed out. When we pronounce the above given letters, there is no obstruction to the air that comes out of our mouth. Vowels are voiced sounds during the production of which air escapes through the mouth freely and continuously without any frictional noise. The air comes out freely through the mouth when vowel sounds are pronounced. Vowel sounds in detail will be discussed in the next unit. Here we will only classify vowels and consonants according to certain criteria.

The vowel sounds are classified into three based on three different criteria. They are height, backness and roundedness- i.e., according to the height to which the tongue is raised, which part of the tongue is used (front or back) and the position of lips(rounded or unrounded). In each of these categories, there are different types of vowels. Let us discuss them in detail.

Height

Try to pronounce the sounds ‘Eee..’ and ‘Aaa..’. Notice the position of the tongue while producing these sounds. While saying ‘Eee..’, the tongue moves towards the roof of the mouth. But while saying ‘Aaa..’, the tongue comes towards the bottom of the mouth. Height refers to how high or low the position of the tongue is when the vowel is

pronounced. The tongue is the active articulator for vowel sounds and the roof of the mouth is the passive articulator. Since air has to flow freely to produce a vowel sound, the tongue can be raised only to that much height towards the roof of the mouth as is necessary to allow free flow of air without any friction. The maximum height to which the tongue can be raised towards the roof of the mouth without any frictional noise is called the vowel limit.

Vowel sounds are classified into three based on height:-

a. Close (High)

Close (High) are those vowels when pronounced, the tongue is positioned high. The tongue will be placed close to the roof of the mouth, without making contact with it.

b. Half open/half close (Mid)

Mid are those vowels when pronounced, the tongue is positioned in the middle, not too high and not too low. The tongue will be placed at the centre of the mouth.

c. Open (Low)

Open (Low) are those vowels when pronounced, the tongue is positioned low. The tongue will be placed towards the bottom of the mouth, without touching the bottom.

Backness

Vowels can be classified according to which part of the tongue is raised towards the palate (front centre or back). The tongue moves forward and backward when we produce different sounds. This movement of the tongue varies according to the sounds. Backness refers to how far in the front or back of the tongue is positioned while pronouncing the vowel. Vowel sounds are classified into three based

on backness. In this classification we theoretically divide the tongue into front, central and back (tip and blade do not come into operation here)

a. Front

Front vowels are those vowels in the production of which the front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate but not touching it. There should be sufficient space between the front of the tongue and the hard palate for the air to escape freely without any friction.

b. Central

Central vowels are those vowels in the production of which the central part of the tongue (the part of the tongue between front and back) is raised towards the centre of the roof of the mouth where the hard and soft palates meet but not touch it. There should be sufficient space between the centre of the tongue and the hard palate for the air to escape freely without any friction.

c. Back

Back vowels are those vowels in the production of which the back part of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate but not touching it. The tongue moves towards the back part of the roof of the mouth (soft palate)

Roundedness

Try to pronounce the sounds ‘Ooo..’ and ‘Eee..’. Notice the shape of the lips when these sounds are produced. While saying ‘Ooo..’, the lips come together to form a round shape. But while saying ‘Eee..’, the lips are not rounded. Roundedness refers to whether or not the lips are rounded when the vowel is pronounced. Vowel sounds are classified into two based on the roundedness of the lips-

a. Unrounded

Unrounded are those vowels when pronounced, the lips don’t form a rounded shape.

b. Rounded

Rounded are those vowels when pronounced, the lips come together to form a rounded shape.

When we classify vowel sounds in English we thus use the three-term label according to height, backness and roundness as explained so far.

2.1.3.2 Consonants

Try to pronounce the words given below:

“Pan”

“Bird”

“Fox”

Observe the pattern of airflow in the articulation of ‘p’, ‘n’, ‘b’, ‘d’, ‘f’, and ‘x’. When you pronounce these sounds, you can feel an obstruction to the air inside your mouth. The air does not come out freely through the mouth. Consonants are those sounds that create a constriction in the airflow when pronounced. Consonants include all breathed (voiceless) sounds as well as voiced sounds produced by means of an obstruction in the mouth or by a narrowing of the air passage giving rise to frictional noise. The air will be blocked by any of the speech organs like the lips or the tongue. Consonant sounds in detail will be discussed in the next unit.

The consonant sounds are classified based on three criteria - voicing, place of articulation and manner of articulation. In each of these categories, there are different types of conso-



nants. Let us look at each one of them in detail:

Voicing

Voicing refers to the position of the glottis and the vocal cords when the air passes through it. This has been explained with a diagram earlier.

Sounds are categorised into two based on voicing:

a. Voiceless Sounds

Voiceless sounds are the sounds produced when the air passes through the open glottis and vocal cords, without creating a vibration. For example, when we pronounce “sss..”, we cannot feel a vibration in our throat when we keep our hand at the position of the larynx.

b. Voiced Sounds

The vocal cords vibrate and the glottis is in close position when certain sounds are produced. Voiced sounds are the sounds produced when the air passes through vibrating vocal cords. For example, when we pronounce “zzz..”, we can feel a vibration in our throat where the larynx is.

Place of Articulation

Place of articulation refers to the place where the constriction to the airflow takes place. There are nine different sounds based on the place of articulation-

I. Bilabial sounds

Bilabials are consonant sounds produced when the two lips join together to constrict the airflow. The lower lip is the active articulator and the upper lip the passive. (Eg. /p/, /b/, /m/, /w/). Word examples: pen, Ben, men, when.

II. Labiodental Sounds

Labiodentals are the consonant sounds produced when the airflow is constricted by the upper teeth and the lower lip. The active articulator is the lower lip and the passive articulator, the upper front row of teeth. (Eg. /f/, /v/) Word examples: fan, van.

III. Dental Sounds

Dentals are the consonant sounds produced when the tip of the tongue is placed between the upper and the lower teeth. This restricts the airflow. The active articulator is the tip of the tongue and the passive articulator, the upper front row of teeth. (/θ/, /ð) Word examples: teeth, then

IV. Alveolar Sounds

Alveolars are the consonant sounds produced when the tip or blade of the tongue is placed at or near the alveolar ridge (teeth ridge) behind the upper front teeth, on the roof of the mouth. The active articulator is the tip or blade of the tongue and the passive articulator is the alveolar ridge. (/t/, /d/, /n/, /l/, /s/, /z/) Word examples: tip, dip, nip, lip, sip, zip.

V. Post-alveolar

These are sounds produced when the tip of the tongue articulates against the space just behind the alveolar ridge. The tip of the tongue is the active articulator and the back part of the alveolar ridge is the passive articulator (that is, the part of the roof of the mouth that lies immediately behind the teeth ridge). (/r/) Word example: record

VI. Palato-alveolar Sounds

Palato-alveolar sounds are consonant sounds produced when the tip or blade of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge and at the same

time the front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate. The active articulators are the tip, blade and front of the tongue and the passive articulators are the alveolar ridge and the hard palate. (/ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/)

Word examples: sheer, genre, cheer, jeer

VII. Palatal sounds

The front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate. The active articulator is the front of the tongue and the passive articulator is the hard palate. (/j/) Word example: you

VIII. Velar Sounds

Velars are consonant sounds produced when the back of the tongue touches the velum or the soft palate, on the roof of the mouth. The back of the tongue is the active articulator and the soft palate (velum) is the passive articulator. (/k/, /g/, /ŋ/) Word examples: kit, get, and sing.

IX. Glottal Sounds

Glottal is the consonant sound produced when the airflow is constricted by the glottis. The two vocal cords are the articulators. Both are active articulators. (/h/) Word example: hat.

There is a sound called glottal stop which is not a phoneme in English but is a sound produced at the juncture of two sounds in certain varieties of English. English speakers usually insert a glottal stop before initial vowels, like in the words *it*, *ate*, and *ouch*. It is a speech sound produced by closing the vocal cords and opening them quickly so that the air from the lungs is released with a force. (/ʔ/) In Arabic it is a standard consonant.

Manner of Articulation

Manner of articulation refers to the manner in which consonants are classified on the basis of stricture involved. Stricture refers to the man-

ner in which air passage is restricted while producing sounds.

Based on the manner of articulation-

1. Stop Sounds (Plosives)

Stops are consonant sounds that are produced when there is a complete closure to the airflow at some point. The articulators come into firm contact with each other, thus blocking the air stream and causing the air pressure to increase. Simultaneously there is a velic closure, blocking the nasal passage of air. When the articulators are suddenly separated and the oral closure is released, the air escapes with a small explosive noise. Sounds thus produced with a stricture of complete closure and sudden release are called plosives.

a. Incomplete plosion

When a plosive consonant is followed by another plosive or an affricate sound in the same word, the first plosive is not fully pronounced. Such plosives are called incomplete plosives. Eg. /k/ in 'act'

b. Nasal plosion

In word sequences when a plosive is immediately followed by a nasal sound, the plosive is not pronounced in the normal way. The explosion for the plosive happens not through the mouth but through the nose because of the influence of the nasal sound following immediately after. This is called nasal plosion. Eg. 'topmost'. /p/ in topmost has nasal plosion.

2. Fricative Sounds

Fricatives are the consonant sounds produced when two articulators are placed close to each other and the air is allowed to escape through the narrow passage with audible friction or a hissing sound. While pronouncing fricatives, the tongue comes closer to the other articulators but does not make contact with them.



Thus, a narrow passage is created through which the air escapes. The fricatives in English are /s/, /z/, /θ/, /ð/, /f/, /v/, /r/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/.

3. Affricate Sounds

In the production of affricates there is complete closure, the oral and nasal passages of air are blocked and then the oral closure is removed slowly resulting in audible friction. It has been pointed out that in the case of plosives, the closure is removed abruptly resulting in a small explosive sound. It begins like a stop sound and releases the air like a fricative sound. The release of air is gradual in affricates and sudden in plosives. The affricates of English are /tʃ/, /dʒ/.

4. Nasal Sounds

In the production of nasal consonants, the soft palate is kept lower so that the nasal passage is open. The oral passage is blocked at some point. As a result, the lung air escapes through the nose. Nasals are the consonant sounds produced when the velum is lowered and allows the air to escape through the nose. Nasals are articulated with a stricture of oral closure. The nasals in English are /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/.

5. Lateral Sounds

A lateral consonant is produced with the oral passage blocked at the centre but open at the sides. The tip of the tongue is raised to the alveolar ridge, blocking the oral passage of air at the centre. The sides of the tongue are lowered allowing air to escape freely through the sides. You can feel the air passage along the sides if, after blocking the air passage through

the centre, you breathe in. A cool draught of air is felt along the sides of the tongue. /l/ is the only lateral sound in English.

6. Glide Sounds

Glides are consonant sounds produced when there is very little constriction to the airflow. The air escapes through the mouth almost freely. Hence these consonants are referred to as semi-vowels. They have a stricture of open approximation. The English semi-vowels are /j/ and /w/.

7. Frictionless Continuants

These are consonants which can be prolonged for a long time without any audible friction. The soft palate is raised and the articulators are brought near each other but not close enough to produce friction. The /r/ in the words 'red', 'right', etc is articulated as a frictionless continuant.

Note: The frictionless continuants and semi-vowels are together called approximants.

8. Trill/Roll and Tap

A trill or roll is produced when the articulators are brought into contact with each other a number of times producing a series of rapid intermittent taps. If you pronounce /r/ with the tongue tip tapping against the teeth ridge it is a trill. In Scottish English this usage is prevalent. However, if just one tap is made by the articulators coming together just once and moving away, we have a tap or flap. When /r/ occurs between vowel sounds it is realised as a tap. e.g., 'very', 'sorry'.

Recap

- ▶ Speech begins with an air stream.
- ▶ The lungs provide the main air source for English.
- ▶ Pulmonic egressive air moves outward from the lungs.
- ▶ Glottalic sounds use movements of the closed glottis.
- ▶ Velaric sounds use a closure near the soft palate.
- ▶ The respiratory system supplies air for speech.
- ▶ The larynx houses the vocal folds.
- ▶ Vocal-fold vibration produces voiced sounds.
- ▶ Absence of vocal-fold vibration produces voiceless sounds.
- ▶ The pharynx acts as a resonating cavity.
- ▶ The oral cavity shapes most speech sounds.
- ▶ The nasal cavity is used when the velum is lowered.
- ▶ The tongue is the most active articulator.
- ▶ The upper teeth and alveolar ridge are passive articulators.
- ▶ Bilabial sounds involve both lips.
- ▶ Dental sounds involve the teeth.
- ▶ Alveolar sounds use the alveolar ridge.
- ▶ Palatal sounds involve the hard palate.
- ▶ Velar sounds involve the soft palate.
- ▶ Stops block the air completely.
- ▶ Fricatives create audible friction.
- ▶ Affricates combine a stop and a fricative.
- ▶ Nasals allow air through the nose.
- ▶ Approximants involve little friction.
- ▶ Vowels are produced without complete obstruction.

Objective Questions

1. Which air-stream mechanism produces most English sounds?
2. Which organ contains the vocal folds?
3. What is the soft palate called?
4. Which articulator is used in /p/ and /b/?
5. What is the place of articulation of /t/?



6. What manner of articulation characterises /f/?
7. Which sound is a bilabial nasal?
8. What distinguishes /s/ from /z/?
9. Which cavity receives air when the velum is lowered?
10. What term describes vowel lip position in /u:/?

Answers

1. Pulmonic
2. Larynx
3. Velum
4. Lips
5. Alveolar
6. Fricative
7. /m/
8. Voicing
9. Nasal
10. Rounded

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Draw and label the major organs of speech, then explain the function of any five.
2. How does pulmonic egressive airflow support the production of English speech?
3. Compare voiced and voiceless sounds through three minimal pairs.
4. Classify /p, d, k, f, z, m, l/ by place, manner and voicing.
5. Explain how the velum distinguishes oral and nasal sounds.
6. What three criteria are used to describe vowels? Illustrate each.
7. Observe your pronunciation of “thin”, “then”, “sip” and “zip”. What articulatory differences do you notice?

Assignments

1. Prepare an illustrated chart of the speech organs and connect each organ to at least two English sounds.
2. Record ten English words, identify their initial consonants, and classify those consonants articulatorily.
3. Conduct a simple voicing experiment using hand-on-throat observation and report the results.
4. Compare the production of one stop, one fricative, one nasal and one approximant in a short analytical note.
5. Create a classroom activity that helps beginners distinguish oral and nasal sounds.
6. Analyse the vowel articulation in ten commonly mispronounced English words used in your locality.
7. Write a reflective report on how articulatory knowledge can improve intelligibility in spoken English.

Suggested Reading

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3. Roach, Peter. *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course*. 4th ed., Cambridge University Press, 2010.
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Unit 2

Phonemes

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ explain the concepts of phone, phoneme and allophone and distinguish among them using English examples
- ▶ use minimal pairs and complementary distribution to identify phonemic contrasts and allophonic variation
- ▶ classify English vowel phonemes as monophthongs, diphthongs and triphthongs
- ▶ describe English consonant phonemes and apply phonemic analysis to familiar words

Prerequisite

Consider the words 'pin' and 'bin'. Only one sound changes, yet the meaning changes completely. Now compare the /p/ in 'pin' with the /p/ in 'spin': the first is strongly aspirated, while the second is not, but English speakers still treat both as the same basic sound. This contrast introduces a central insight of phonology: not every audible difference creates a difference in meaning. Learners enter this unit by listening analytically to sound patterns rather than relying on spelling. Familiarity with basic articulatory terms will help them understand how phones become organised as phonemes, how allophones occur in predictable environments, and how English vowels and consonants form a structured sound system.

Keywords

Phonemes, Cardinal vowels, Monophthongs, Diphthongs, Triphthongs, Consonants

Discussion

2.2.1 Phonemes in English

Try to pronounce the word *rock*. Notice the different sounds that are produced while pronouncing this word. When we pronounce the word *rock*, three different sounds are produced- the 'r' sound, the 'o' sound and the 'k' sound. These are the smallest units of sound that are produced when the word is pronounced. A phoneme refers to the smallest distinctive sound unit in a language.

There are forty-four phonemes in English. Phonemes are also classified into two:

1. Vowels
2. Consonants

Let us discuss in detail the vowels and the consonants.

2.2.1.1 Vowels

Note the last sound in the two words below.

she, free

In the articulation of this last sound there is free unrestricted flow of air. These sounds are vowels. As discussed earlier it is not always easy to know what sounds the letters in the spelling stand for. For example in the words

busy women pretty village

The vowel sound is the same. You will notice this when you say these words aloud. The letters *i, u, o, e* all stand for the same vowel sound which is the same vowel as that which occurs in the word 'sit'. We will now be learning the symbols for these vowel sounds.

Vowels are voiced sounds during the production of which air escapes through the mouth freely and continuously without any obstruc-

tion or frictional noise. All other sounds are consonants. Vowels are thus articulated with a stricture of open approximation. You have learnt this in the previous unit.

CARDINAL VOWELS

Before going into a study of English vowels and their symbols, you need to have a picture of vowels in general. An understanding of the broad framework of possible vowels for any language would be a useful start.

Cardinal vowels are a set of 8 theoretical vowels devised by Daniel Jones to function as reference points in the description of the actual vowels of any language. They are not the vowel sounds of any language. On the other hand, they are reference points within whose framework the vowel sounds of any language can be described. There are eight primary cardinal vowels and ten secondary cardinal vowels. Let us discuss the primary cardinal vowels and their classification.

The cardinal vowels are described based on certain broad positions of the tongue and lips as given below.

1. four positions of the raised tongue and
2. the three theoretical divisions of the tongue.
3. the position of lips

Observe the following diagram to understand the positions of the primary cardinal vowels-

The tongue is actively involved in the description of vowel sounds. The extreme limit to which the tongue can be raised towards the roof of the mouth so as to allow free and continuous flow of air without friction, between the raised tongue and the roof of the mouth, is termed vowel limit. The stricture for vowels is open approximation. Beyond this



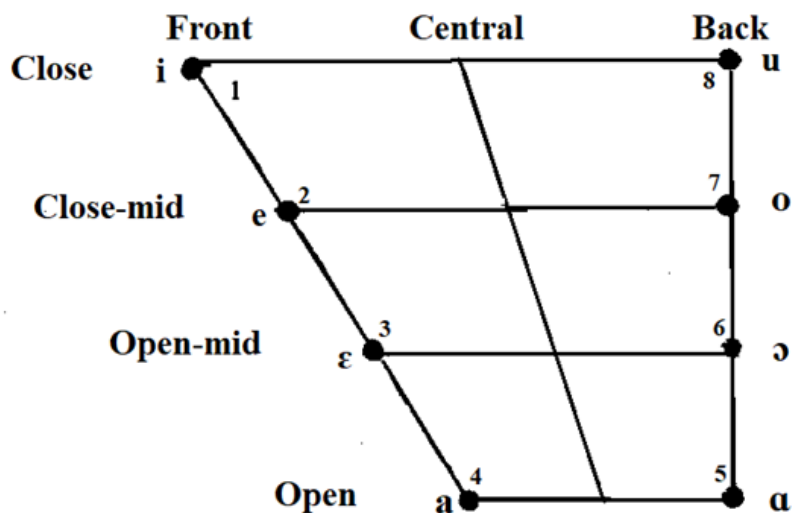


Fig 2.2.1 Cardinal vowel positions

limit it is impossible to make a vowel sound as there will be friction. The top most horizontal line (tongue position) in the diagram is the vowel limit. The four positions of the tongue- open, open mid, close mid, and close show a framework of the height to which the tongue is raised in the production of vowel sounds. Front, central and back are the theoretical divisions of the tongue to enable de-

scription of vowel sounds. The lip positions are not marked on the diagram but the left side describes the unrounded position of lips and the right side the rounded positions. The primary cardinal vowels are described as follows (please note that the close mid position is also termed half close position and open mid is also termed half open position):

Sl. No.	Cardinal Vowels	Description
1	[i]	Front, Close, Unrounded.
2	[e]	Front, Half close, Unrounded.
3	[ɛ]	Front, Half Open, Unrounded.
4	[a]	Front, Open, Unrounded.
5	[ɑ]	Back, Open, Unrounded.
6	[ɔ]	Back, Half open, Rounded
7	[o]	Back, Half close, Rounded
8	[u]	Back, Close, Rounded

Fig 2.2.2 Cardinal vowels

Within this space marked by cardinal vowels, all vowel sounds in any language can be marked.

English Vowels

The 20 English vowels can be divided into pure vowels and diphthongs. Alternately the 12 pure vowels can be termed monophthongs as they comprise a single vowel sound and those vowels that have two sounds in them are called diphthongs. Now, let us discuss in detail the twenty vowel sounds in English speech sounds, of which, twelve are monophthongs and eight are diphthongs. Triphthongs are formed as a combination of a monophthong and a diphthong.

Monophthongs (Pure Vowels)

Let us now learn to describe the monophthongs with a three-term label based on three criteria:
the height to which the tongue is raised.

a. The part of the tongue that is used and

The position of the lips.

1. /i:/

Try to pronounce the word *reel*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'ee'. The tongue will be positioned in the front and close to the roof of the mouth. The lips will not be rounded. It is a long vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letter 'e' as in *complete*, 'ee' as in *tree*, 'ea' as in *sea*, 'ie' as in *field* and 'ei' as in *receive*. The colon symbolises length.

More examples- Needle, Leader, Keep, Clean.

/i:/ is a front, close, unrounded vowel. Eg. 'seat'

2. /ɪ/

Try to pronounce the word *click*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the vowel represented by the letter 'i'. The tongue will be positioned in the front, towards the roof of the mouth. The lips will not be rounded. It is a short vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letter 'i' as in *wish*, 'e' as in *begin* and 'y' as in *city*.

More examples- Think, Ship, Chin, Bin.

/ɪ/ is a front, between close and half-close, unrounded vowel. Eg. 'sit'

3. /e/

Try to pronounce the word *red*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the vowel 'e'. The tongue will be positioned towards the front, in the middle of the mouth. The lips will



not be rounded. It is a short vowel and this vowel sound is produced by the letter 'e' as in *bed*, 'ea' as in *bread*, and 'a' as in *many*.

More examples- Nest, Wet, Better, Head.

/e/ is a front, between half-close and half-open, unrounded vowel. Eg. 'set'

4. /æ/

Try to pronounce the word *hat*. Notice the position of your tongue while pronouncing the vowel 'a'. The tongue will be positioned in the front and towards the bottom of the mouth, below the half open position. The lips will not be rounded. It is a short vowel and this vowel sound is produced by the letter 'a'.

More examples- Apple, Hand, Bat, Cat.

/æ/ is a front, below half-open, unrounded vowel. Eg. 'sat'

5. /ɑ:/

Try to pronounce the word *march*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'ar'. The tongue will be positioned in the back, towards the bottom of the mouth. The lips will not be rounded. It is a long vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letter 'ar' as in *park*, 'al' as in *calm*, 'er' as in *clerk* and 'au' as in *laugh*.

More examples- Hard, Mark, Palm, Farmer.

/ɑ:/ is a back, open, unrounded vowel. Eg. 'cart'

6. /ɒ/

Try to pronounce the word *rock*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the vowel 'o'. The tongue will be positioned in the back, towards the bottom of the mouth. The lips will be rounded. It is a short vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letter 'o'.

More examples- Lock, Cop, Chop, Top.

/ɒ/ is a back, between open and half-open, rounded vowel. Eg. 'cot'

7. /ɔ:/

Try to pronounce the word *order*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'or'. The tongue will be positioned towards the back, in the middle of the mouth. The lips will be rounded. It is a long vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letters 'or' as in *corn*, 'au' as in *cause*, 'oa' as in *board*, 'ou' as in *bought* and 'our' as in *court*.

More examples- Pause, Talk, Caught, Abroad.

/ɔ:/ is a back, between half-open and half-close, rounded vowel. Eg. 'caught'

8. /ʊ/

Try to pronounce the word *wood*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'oo'. The tongue will be positioned in the back, and high towards the roof of the mouth. The lips will be rounded. It is a short vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letters 'oo' as in *look*, 'oul' as in *should* and 'u' as in *uber*.

More examples- Cook, Put, Book, Could.

/ʊ/ is a back, between half-close and close, rounded vowel. Eg. 'cook'

9. /u:/

Try to pronounce the word *room*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'oo'. The tongue will be positioned in the back, towards the roof of the mouth. The lips will be rounded. It is a long vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letters 'oo' as in *cool*, 'ue' as in *blue* 'ui' as in *fruit* and 'ew' as in *crew*.

More examples- Moon, Screw, Clue, Bloom.

/u:/ is a back, close, rounded vowel. Eg. 'cool'

10. /ɜ:/

Try to pronounce the word *girl*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'ir'. The tongue will be positioned in the centre of the mouth. The lips will not be rounded. It is a long vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letters 'ir' as in *bird*, 'ur' as in *turn* and 'ear' as in *earn*.

More examples- Heard, Burn, Learn, Word.

/ɜ:/ is a central, between half-open and half-close, unrounded vowel. Eg. 'curl'

11. /ə/

Try to pronounce the word *about*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the vowel 'a'. The tongue will be positioned in the centre of the mouth. The lips will not be rounded. It is a short vowel and the vowel sound is produced by the letters 'a' as in *ago* and 'e' as in *father*.



More examples- Alone, Every, Brother, Again.

/ə/ is a central, between half-open and half-close, unrounded vowel. Eg. ‘about’

12. /ʌ/

Try to pronounce the word *cut*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the vowel ‘u’. The tongue will be positioned in the centre, towards the bottom of the mouth. The lips will not be rounded. It is a short vowel and this vowel sound is produced by the letter’s ‘u’ as in *luck*, ‘o’ as in *love*, ‘oo’ as in *blood*, ‘ou’ as in *trouble*, and ‘oe’ as in *does*.

More examples- Uncle, Fun, Dove, Monday.

/ʌ/ is a central, between half-open and open, unrounded vowel. Eg. ‘ut’

Observe the diagram given below to understand the positioning of the monophthongs within the cardinal vowel chart. The cardinal vowels are also marked, with a bigger dot.

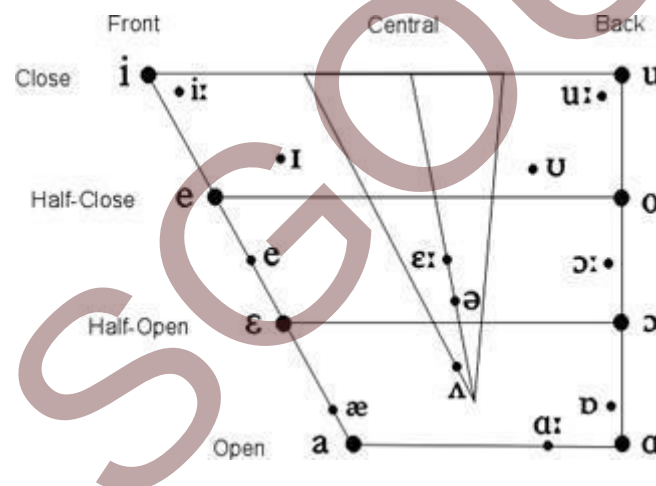


Fig 2.2.3 Cardinal vowels Chart

Diphthongs

Take a look at the examples below

Here (**hɪə**) hair (**heə**) how (**haʊ**) hey! (**heɪ**) high (**haɪ**)

If you observe the vowels in bold in all the examples, you will see that they are composed of two elements, that is, two vowels. This sequence of consecutive vowels is termed diphthongs. ‘Di’ stands for two, as in two elements. A diphthong is a glide from one vowel to another.

They are vowel glides because the movement from the first element to the second element in the diphthong is produced smoothly. The tongue, at first, will be positioned in order to pronounce a particular vowel and then it glides to the position to pronounce another vowel sound. There are 8 diphthongs in English. The diphthongs in English form three groups-

- a. those that end in /ə/ (/ɪə/; /eə/; /ʊə/). These are centring diphthongs as they move towards the central vowel schwa.
- b. those that end in /ɪ/ (/ eɪ/; / ɔɪ/; /aɪ/). These are called fronting diphthongs because of the glide to a front vowel / ɪ/.
- c. those that end in /ʊ/ (/əʊ/; /aʊ/. These are called retracting diphthongs as they glide towards a back vowel /ʊ/.

13. /ɪə/

Try to pronounce the word *tear*. Notice the change in the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'ea'. The tongue will be in the front-high position and it moves towards the central-mid position. The lips will not be rounded.

More examples- Dear, Here, Clear, Near.

/ɪə/ is a glide from a front vowel just above half-close to a central vowel. Eg. 'fear'

14. /eə/

Try to pronounce the word *dare*. Notice the change in the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letter 'a'. The tongue moves from the front- mid position to the central-mid position. The lips will not be rounded.

More examples- Air, Fair, Chair, Wear.

**/eə/ is a glide from a front vowel between half-close and half-open to a central vowel.
Eg. 'fair'**

15. /ʊə/

Try to pronounce the word *duel*. Notice the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'ue'. The tongue will be in the back-mid position and then moves towards the central-mid position. The lips will be rounded.

More examples- Sure, Poor, Fuel, Cure.

/ʊə/ is a glide from back vowel between close and half-close to a central vowel. Eg. 'sure'



16. /eɪ/

Try to pronounce the word *maid*. Notice the change in the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'ai'. At first, the tongue will be in the front-mid position and then it glides to position in the front-high. The lips will not be rounded.

More examples- Date, Wait, Age, Rain.

/eɪ/ is a glide from front half-close vowel to a centralised front unrounded vowel just above half-close. Eg. 'plain'

17. /ɔɪ/

Try to pronounce the word *voice*. Notice the change in the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'oi'. The tongue will be in the back-mid position and then it moves towards the front-high position. The lips will be rounded.

More examples- Toy, Coin, Soil, Choice.

/ɔɪ/ is a glide from a back half-open position to a front vowel just above half-close position. Eg. 'coin'

18. /aɪ/

Try to pronounce the word *light*. Notice the change in the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letter 'i'. The tongue glides from the front-low position to the front-high position. The lips will not be rounded.

More examples- Right, Life, Find, Pride.

/aɪ/ is a glide from a front open position to a centralised front unrounded vowel just above half-close. Eg. 'fine'

19. /əʊ/

Try to pronounce the word *coat*. Notice the change in the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'oa'. The tongue will first be in the central-mid position and move towards the back-high position. The lips will be rounded.

More examples- Stone, Home, Cold, Road.

/əʊ/ is a glide from central position moving towards a back rounded vowel. Eg. 'phone'

20. /aʊ/

Try to pronounce the word *mouth*. Notice the change in the position of the tongue while pronouncing the letters 'ou'. The tongue moves from the back-low position to the back-high position. The lips will not be rounded in the beginning but rounded at the end.

More examples- Sound, House, Owl, Now.

**/aʊ/ is a glide from back-open position to the close position
It begins as an unrounded and ends as a rounded vowel. Eg. 'owl'**

Observe the following diagram to understand the position of diphthongs and how they glide from one position to the other.

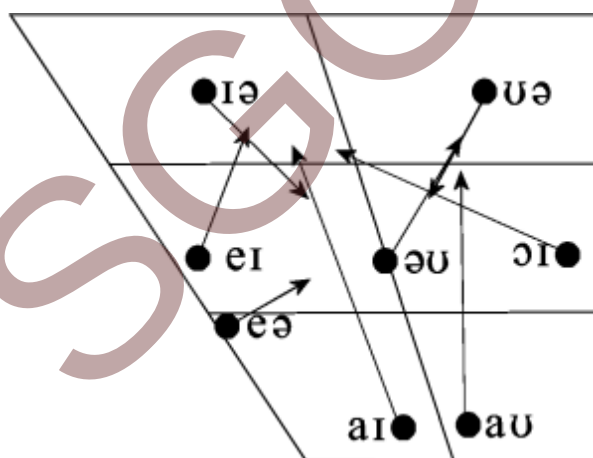


Fig 2.2.4 Position of Diphthongs

Triphthongs

Look at the words below. What do you observe in common among these words?

Shower tower ʃaʊə taʊə

Higher iron haɪə aɪən



Player	sprayer	pleɪə	spreɪə
Employer	lawyers	implɔɪə	lɔɪəz
Grower	thrower	grəʊə	θrəʊə

You will see that the symbols in bold consist of three vowels, that is, a diphthong plus a vowel. Such a sequence of a diphthong and a vowel within a syllable is called a triphthong. A triphthong is a sequence of a diphthong and a weak vowel, schwa (/ə/) within a syllable.

2.2.1.2 Consonants

There are 24 consonants. We will now describe each one of them using a three-term label. The label relates to three criteria based on which consonants are described. These criteria are:

- State of the glottis
- Place of articulation
- Manner of articulation.

Now, let us discuss in detail the twenty-four consonant sounds in English speech sounds.

1. /f/

Try to pronounce the word *finger*. When we pronounce the letter 'f', the lower lip comes very close to the upper teeth to partially constrict the airflow. The air escapes through the narrow passage between the lower lip and the upper teeth. While producing the sound, the air passes through an open vocal cord and so, it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- Fan, Fast, First, Soft.

/f/ is a voiceless, labio-dental, fricative consonant.

2. /v/

Try to pronounce the word *vine*. When we pronounce the letter 'v', the lower lip and the upper teeth come close and the air is constricted partially. The air escapes through the narrow passage between the lower lip and the upper teeth. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Village, Love, Van, Have.

/v/ is a voiced, labio-dental, fricative consonant.

3. /θ/

Try to pronounce the word *thing*. When we pronounce the letter 'th', the tongue comes in contact with the teeth and the airflow gets partially constricted. The air escapes through the gap between the tongue and the teeth. While producing the sound, the air passes through an open vocal cord and thus, it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- Think, Thought, Something, Bath.

/θ/ is a voiceless, dental, fricative consonant.

4. /ð/

Try to pronounce the word *this*. When we pronounce the letter 'th' the tongue touches the teeth to partially constrict the airflow. The air escapes through the gap between the tongue and the teeth. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- There, Weather, Father, Other.

/ð/ is a voiced, dental, fricative consonant.

5. /s/

Try to pronounce the word *soft*. When we pronounce the letter 's', the tongue comes in contact with the alveolar ridge, behind the upper teeth. There is a partial constriction to the airflow and the air escapes through the narrow passage between the tongue and the alveolar ridge. While producing the sound, the air flows through an open vocal cord and so, it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- Song, Salt, Safe, Pass.

/s/ is a voiceless, alveolar, fricative consonant.

6. /z/

Try to pronounce the word *zebra*. When we pronounce the letter 'z', the tongue touches the alveolar ridge, behind the upper teeth. A partial constriction to the airflow is created and the air escapes through the gap between the tongue and the alveolar ridge. While producing the sound, the air flows through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.



More examples- Zoo, Puzzle, Cozy, Lazy.

/z/ is a voiced, alveolar, fricative consonant.

7. /ʃ/

Try to pronounce the word *shop*. When we pronounce the letter 'sh', the tongue comes very close to the alveolar ridge and the hard palate. The airflow is partially constricted and the air escapes through the gap between the tongue and the roof of the mouth. While producing the sound, the air flows through an open vocal cord and hence, it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- She, Shine, Ship, Shoe.

/ʃ/ is a voiceless, palato-alveolar, fricative consonant.

8. /z/

Try to pronounce the word *treasure*. When we pronounce the letter 's', the tongue comes in contact with the alveolar ridge and the hard palate. There is a partial constriction to the airflow and the air escapes through the gap between the tongue and the roof of the mouth. While producing the sound, the air flows through a vibrating vocal cord and hence, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Measure, Pleasure, Casual, Vision.

/z/ is a voiced, palato-alveolar, fricative consonant.

9. /h/

Try to pronounce the word *honey*. When we pronounce the letter 'h', the air coming from the lungs is constricted by the glottis. A partial constriction to the airflow created. While producing the sound, the air comes out through an open vocal cord and so, it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- Hide, Heavy, Whole, Head.

/h/ is a voiceless, glottal, fricative consonant.

10. /p/

Try to pronounce the word *pot*. When we pronounce the letter 'p', the airflow is constricted by the two lips joined together. There is a complete constriction to the airflow and the sound is produced when the constricted air in the mouth is released. While producing this sound, the air flows through an open vocal cord and hence it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- Tap, Pin, Happy, Point

/p/ is a voiceless, bilabial, plosive (stop consonant)

11. /b/

Try to pronounce the word *boat*. When we pronounce the letter ‘b’, the airflow is blocked by the two lips joined together. The airflow is completely constricted and the sound is produced when the constricted air is released from the mouth. While producing the sound, the air flows through a vibrating vocal cord and hence it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Bed, Club, Bulb, Bag.

/b/ is a voiced, bilabial, plosive (stop consonant)

12. /t/

Try to pronounce the word *tea*. When we pronounce the letter ‘t’, the tongue touches the alveolar ridge and the airflow is constricted. There is a complete constriction to the airflow and the sound is produced when the constricted air is released from the mouth. While producing the sound, the air passes through an open vocal cord and so, it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- Take, Table, Time, Train.

/t/ is a voiceless, alveolar, plosive (stop consonant)

13. /d/

Try to pronounce the word *dog*. When we pronounce the letter ‘d’, the tongue touches the alveolar ridge and the airflow is constricted. There is a complete constriction to the airflow and the sound is produced when the constricted air in the mouth is released. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Doctor, Dinner, Delicious, Drink.

/d/ is a voiced, alveolar, plosive (stop consonant)

14. /k/

Try to pronounce the word *kite*. When we pronounce the letter ‘k’, the tongue touches the velum and it constricts the airflow. The airflow is completely constricted and when the tongue moves back from the velum, the constricted air is released. While producing the sound, the air passes through an open vocal cord and hence, it is a voiceless consonant.



More examples- Kind, Cool, Catch, Pick.

/k/ is a voiceless, velar, plosive (stop consonant)

15. /g/

Try to pronounce the word *goat*. When we pronounce the letter 'g', the tongue touches the velum to constrict the airflow. The completely constricted air is released from the mouth when the tongue moves back from the velum. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Gate, Give, Grey, Goat.

/g/ is a voiced, velar, plosive (stop consonant)

16. /tʃ/

Try to pronounce the word *catch*. When we pronounce the letter 'ch', the front and blade of the tongue come in contact with the alveolar ridge and the hard palate. The airflow is completely constricted in the beginning and when the tongue moves back, the air escapes from the mouth slowly. While producing the sound, the air flows through an open vocal cord and so, it is a voiceless consonant.

More examples- Watch, Rich, Church, Munch.

/tʃ/ is a voiceless, palato-alveolar, affricate consonant.

17. /dʒ/

Try to pronounce the word *jug*. When we pronounce the letter 'j', the front and blade of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge and the hard palate to constrict the airflow. The constricted air slowly escapes from the mouth when the tongue moves back. While producing the sound, the air flows through a vibrating vocal cord and hence, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Job, Just, Badge, Stage.

/dʒ/ is a voiced palato-alveolar, affricate consonant.

18. /m/

Try to pronounce the word *man*. When we pronounce the letter 'm', the two lips join together to constrict the airflow. The velum is lowered and the air comes out through the nose. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Mat, Some, Money, Grammar.

/m/ is a voiced, bilabial, nasal consonant.

19. /n/

Try to pronounce the word *name*. When we pronounce the letter 'n', the tongue touches the alveolar ridge to constrict the airflow. The velum is lowered and the air escapes through the nose. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Normal, Know, Note, Sun.

/n/ is a voiced, alveolar, nasal consonant.

20. /ŋ/

Try to pronounce the word *wing*. When we pronounce the letter 'ng', the tongue touches the velum, which is lowered and the air comes out through the nose. While producing the sound, the air flows through a vibrating vocal cord and hence, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Sing, Thing, Among, Monkey.

/ŋ/ is a voiced, velar, nasal consonant.

21. /l/

Try to pronounce the word *leg*. When we pronounce the letter 'l', the tip of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge in such a way that there forms a closure in the middle and the air escapes through both the sides of the tongue. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and hence, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Live, Length, Felt, Ball.

/l/ is a voiced, alveolar, lateral consonant.

22. /r/

Try to pronounce the word *river*. When we pronounce the letter 'r' in the beginning, the tongue comes closer to the part just behind the alveolar ridge in such a way that it creates a gap between them for the air to pass through it without friction. The soft palate will be raised to close the nasal passage. While producing the sound, the air flows through a vibrating vocal cord and hence, it is a voiced consonant.



The consonant sound /r/ is silent when it comes at the end of a word. Thus, the 'r' at the end of the word *river* is silent.

More examples- Ring, Ribbon, Wrong, Orange.

/r/ is a voiced, post-alveolar, frictionless continuant consonant.

23. /j/

Try to pronounce the word *yard*. While pronouncing the letter 'y', the tongue comes close to the hard palate to constrict the airflow. There is a very little constriction to the airflow since there is a gap between the tongue and the hard palate. The air escapes through the mouth almost freely. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- You, Young, Usual, Beyond.

/j/ is a voiced, palatal, semi-vowel

24. /w/

Try to pronounce the word *white*. When we pronounce the letter 'w', the tongue comes in contact with the velum to constrict the airflow and the lips are rounded. While producing the sound, the air passes through a vibrating vocal cord and so, it is a voiced consonant.

More examples- Win, While, Walk, Woman.

/w/ is a voiced, labio-velar, semi-vowel

Recap

- ▶ A phone is an actual speech sound.
- ▶ A phoneme is a contrastive sound unit.
- ▶ An allophone is a contextual variant of a phoneme.
- ▶ Phonemes are written between slashes.
- ▶ Phones are written within square brackets.
- ▶ A minimal pair differs in one phoneme.
- ▶ Minimal pairs establish phonemic contrast.
- ▶ Complementary distribution suggests allophony.

- ▶ Free variation does not change meaning.
- ▶ English spelling does not consistently represent phonemes.
- ▶ Monophthongs have a relatively steady articulation.
- ▶ Diphthongs involve a glide between vowel positions.
- ▶ Triphthongs involve two successive glides.
- ▶ Cardinal vowels provide reference points for vowel description.
- ▶ Front vowels are produced toward the front of the mouth.
- ▶ Back vowels are produced toward the back of the mouth.
- ▶ Central vowels occupy an intermediate position.
- ▶ Long and short vowels may differ in quality as well as duration.
- ▶ Consonants may contrast through voicing.
- ▶ Consonants may contrast through place of articulation.
- ▶ Consonants may contrast through manner of articulation.
- ▶ The schwa is a common weak vowel in English.
- ▶ Phonemic analysis focuses on meaning-distinguishing differences.
- ▶ Context can condition allophonic variation.
- ▶ A phoneme may have more than one phonetic realisation.

Objective Questions

1. What is the smallest contrastive sound unit?
2. What pair differs in only one sound?
3. What brackets enclose phonetic transcription?
4. What brackets enclose phonemic transcription?
5. What is a predictable variant of a phoneme?
6. What vowel is represented by /ə/?
7. What type of vowel has one steady quality?
8. What type of vowel contains one glide?
9. What distribution commonly indicates allophones?
10. Which feature contrasts /p/ and /b/?



Answers

1. Phoneme
2. Minimal pair
3. Square
4. Slashes
5. Allophone
6. Schwa
7. Monophthong
8. Diphthong
9. Complementary
10. Voicing

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Distinguish phone, phoneme and allophone with one example each.
2. How do minimal pairs establish phonemic status?
3. Explain complementary distribution using aspirated and unaspirated /p/.
4. Classify the vowels in “beat, bit, bait, boy, now” as monophthongs or diphthongs.
5. Why is English orthography an unreliable guide to pronunciation?
6. Describe the role of cardinal vowels in phonetic study.
7. Identify the phonemic contrasts in five pairs of English words.

Assignments

1. Compile twenty minimal pairs and classify the contrast involved in each.
2. Record two speakers and note possible allophonic differences in selected words.
3. Prepare a vowel chart containing representative English words for each major vowel phoneme.
4. Analyse the phonemes in a ten-word sentence and present a phonemic transcription.

5. Create an activity to teach the distinction between /i:/ and /ɪ/ to undergraduate learners.
6. Compare spelling and pronunciation in fifteen irregular English words.
7. Write a short report on how phonemic awareness supports pronunciation and listening skills.

Suggested Reading

1. Ladefoged, Peter. *A Course in Phonetics*. 7th ed., Cengage Learning, 2014.
2. Roach, Peter. *English Phonetics and Phonology: An Introduction*. 4th ed., Cambridge University Press, 2009.
3. Crystal, David. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2003.
4. Jones, Daniel. *The Phonetics of English and General Phonetics*. Cambridge University Press, 1967.
5. Gussenhoven, Carlos, and Haïke Jacobs. *Understanding Phonology*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2011.





Phonology

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ distinguish phonetics from phonology and explain how languages organise sound patterns
- ▶ identify syllable constituents and analyse English syllables into onset, nucleus and coda
- ▶ apply phonotactic principles to determine possible and impossible sound sequences in English
- ▶ analyse common phonological processes such as assimilation, elision and linking in connected speech

Prerequisite

A learner may pronounce every sound of an English word correctly and still sound unnatural in a sentence. In rapid speech, 'handbag' may be heard with an altered nasal, 'next day' may lose a consonant, and words may link across boundaries. These are not random mistakes; they reflect the patterned organisation of sounds in a language. Similarly, English allows 'street' but not every imaginable cluster of consonants. This unit invites learners to move from individual sounds to systems and sequences. By clapping syllables in names, separating the beginning and end of words, and listening to natural connected speech, learners can discover how phonology explains syllable structure, permissible sound combinations and systematic sound change.

Keywords

Phonology, Syllable, Syllabic consonants, Consonant clusters

Discussion

2.3.1 Phonology

Examine the following words.

Sit fit bit lit hit kit pit wit

What is common to all? 'it' of course! See how the meaning changes when 'it' is preceded by different phonemes. This means that they are all different words with different meanings. Consequently, we deduce that these sounds /s/, /f/, /l/, /h/, /k/, /p/, and /w/ are different phonemes. Else the meaning would not change. This is one way in which a language establishes its phonological system. It identifies the phonemes in this manner.

Now look at the following words;

mango sing

The 'ng' in the two words is positioned differently. Mango has 'ng' in the middle (word medial position), whereas 'sing' has 'ng' in the final position (word final position)

Can you think of any word in English which starts with 'ng'? Of course not! Why? The phonological system of English does not allow that. The distribution of sounds has already been established by its phonological system. This system has decided how sounds can be distributed.

Now let's take another aspect of phonology.

Class brass splash school please

Sticks plants bricks boxes

You will notice that there are sequences of consonants at the beginning of each word in the first set and at the end of each word in the second set. These sequences are allowed in the English phonological system. Try to find out if such sequences occur in your native language.

Now let us try to understand phonology better.

Phonology is the scientific study of the sound system of a language. Without knowledge of the ways in which each sound or phoneme works in a language it is difficult to use the language. Native speakers learn this without an effort from childhood.

Phonology deals with how sounds function in relation to one another in a language. It has to do with the system of rules relating to patterns of distribution of sounds; which sounds can come together as a sequence, and what positions in a word each phoneme has.

One of the main constituents of phonology is the study and analysis of phonological rules. Phonologists predict how speech sounds change, relying on its position in various speech environments, applying different phonological rules. Phonology additionally enables us to understand how the sounds form and combine into words and illustrates why certain phonetic features are important to identifying a word.

Before going into the details of phonological study there are some terms which you need to understand thoroughly-phoneme, minimal pairs, allophone, phonotactics.



A phoneme is the smallest distinctive unit of sound in the sound system of a language. When we say ‘smallest’ it means that it cannot be subdivided further. It is ‘distinctive’ because each phoneme is different and changing a single phoneme can make a different word with a different meaning.

sit fit bit lit hit kit pit wit

These examples given earlier show how replacing one phoneme with another results in the change to a different word with a different meaning. This makes clear the fact that they are all different or distinctive phonemes.

The phonemes of a language are distinctive as well as contrastive. We have already explained the term ‘distinctive’. By ‘contrastive’ we mean that they stand in contrast to one another in the phonological system of the language. Where we find the phoneme /s/ we cannot have the phoneme /f/ without a change of meaning. ‘sit’ changes to ‘fit’ with a change of meaning. When /p/ is substituted by /b/ in ‘pit’, we get ‘bit’, a different word with a different meaning. This means that /p/ and /b/ and /s/ and /f/ are contrastive in English. These contrasts are functional in English, each one effecting a meaning change when it occurs in the same linguistic environment. These units (phonemes) can thus substitute for one another in the same environment. This means that phonemes are in contrastive or parallel distribution. The above examples illustrate that in the linguistic environment where you have the vowel /i/ and the consonant /t/ you can substitute /p/ with /b/ , /s/ with /f/ and form words with sense. Units that can thus substitute for one another in the same linguistic environment are said to be in contrastive or parallel distribution and units which do not occur in the same linguistic environment are said to be in non-contrastive or complementary distribution. Phonemes are in contrastive or parallel

distribution and allophones are in non-contrastive or complementary distribution. We will explain allophones further down. Thus in the phonemic system of a language the focus is on contrast. While in articulatory phonetics speech sounds are described in terms of their mechanism of production, in phonology (phonemics) they are elements that stand in contrast to one another. They form a network of contrasting sounds. Each language has its own set of phonemes.

2.3.1.1 Minimal Pairs

The phonological system of a language is determined by establishing the phonemes of that language. How do we establish which are the phonemes of a particular language? This can be done using minimal pairs. What are minimal pairs?

Identifying Consonant Sounds

Let’s look at the same examples:

sitfit

hitkit

bitlit

pitwit

From the above cited pairs, we have identified the phonemes/s/, /f/, /h/, /k/, /b/, /l/, /p/, and /w/

lesser letter

Here the contrast is between /s/ and /t/. Similarly, all the consonants of English can be established by setting up minimal pairs. These pairs of words which differ in only one sound, establish the identity of phonemes by showing how the replacement of one phoneme with another changes the meaning of the word.

Identifying Vowel Sounds

Look at the following pairs:

Son	/sʌn/	sin	/sɪn/
Pun	/pʌn/	pan	/pæn/
fin	/fɪn/	fun	/fʌn/
tyre	/taɪə/	tower	ˈtaʊə/
flyer	/flaɪə/	flower	/flaʊə/

Here the contrast is between the vowel sounds. See how the meaning changes when one vowel is replaced by another. Here we have set up these minimal pairs by keeping the initial and final consonants the same and changing only the vowel in between. Likewise, we can identify all the vowels of English.

The above sets of words are called minimal pairs. Minimal pairs of words are words of a pair that differ in only one sound. In phonology, they are used to identify the phonemes of a language.

To sum up, the phonological system of a language can be determined by establishing the phonemes of that language. This is carried out by finding and collecting minimal pairs. Minimal pairs differ in only one phonological element and have distinct meanings. Here are some more examples of minimal pairs in English.

Lot / Not	/lɒt/, /nɒt/	Cloud / Crowd	/klaʊd/, /kraʊd/
Pat / Bat	/pæt/, /bæt/	Fan / Van	/fæn/, /væn/
Pen / Pan	/pɛn/, /pæn/	Root / Loot	/ru:t/, /lu:t/
Save / Safe	/seɪv/, /seɪf/	Lead / Read	/li:d/, /ri:d/
Phase / Case	/feɪz/, /keɪs/	Lamp / Ramp	/læmp/, /ræmp/

2.3.1.2 Allophones

Each phoneme may have a number of variant forms occurring in different linguistic contexts. The variations of the same phoneme are called allophones. Allophones are different ways to pronounce the same phoneme while keeping the same meaning. The allophones of a phoneme have considerable phonetic similarity between them as well as difference. A phoneme and its variant (allophone) do not occur in the same phonetic environment. The different members or variants are grouped together to form a family and this family is called a phoneme.



Allophones are the different, concrete, phonetic realisations of the same phoneme in different phonetic environments. They are in non-contrastive or complementary distribution. Phonemes are in contrastive distribution. Substitution of one phoneme for another will bring about change in meaning. No change in meaning will be brought about by the substitution of one allophone for another of the same phoneme.

Take the words 'pin', 'tin' and 'kin'. You have learnt that the first sounds in all these words are voiceless plosives. English voiceless plosives /p/, /t/, /k/ have both aspirated and unaspirated varieties. Aspirated variety means that the plosive is articulated with a strong puff of air after the release of the plosive. This is felt as a 'h' sound coming after the release of air. The phonological rule explains the phonetic environment where the aspirated variants occur for these three voiceless plosives. It states that when these three voiceless plosives appear at the beginning of a stressed syllable they are aspirated. In all the above monosyllabic words they are aspirated because they appear at the beginning of a stressed syllable.

Allophones of Voiceless Plosives

The letter 'p' is articulated differently in 'pen', 'spin' and 'stop'. They appear in different phonetic environments. In 'pen', the /p/ sound has a strong aspiration or a forceful pronunciation whereas in 'spin' the sound has a weak aspiration because it is preceded by /s/. The /p/ sound in 'stop' has no aspiration (unaspirated) because it is not in a phonetic environment that facilitates aspiration, i.e., it is not at the beginning of a stressed syllable. Allophones are phonemically the same but phonetically different. Here is one more example. The /t/ in 'take' (aspirated) is different from the /t/ in 'stake' (weak aspiration) and both are different from the /t/ in 'outpost' (unaspirated because followed by another plosive). These

three different realisations of the voiceless plosive /t/ are its allophones. Here are more examples:

Aspirated versus unaspirated

Pit - Spit

Top - Bat

Tea - Get

Pet - Top

Little - Ball

Paper - Cap

Poll - Slop

King - Back

Kit - Skill - Sack

Pair - Spare - Tap

Allophones of the Lateral /l/

love like leaf black lose

milk pool full girl

All the above words have the phoneme /l/ in them. Are they articulated in the same manner? No. There is a difference in the way they are articulated because they are in different phonetic environments. In the words 'like', 'love', 'leaf', 'black', and 'lose' /l/ is realised as **clear /l/**. Here, along with the point of obstruction at the teeth ridge, the front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate. This allophonic variant of /l/ occurs in a phonetic environment where /l/ is followed by a vowel sound. In the words 'milk', 'pool', 'full', and 'girl' /l/ is realised as a **dark /l/**. Here /l/ is said

to be velarized. How do we articulate it? In tandem with the tip of the tongue touching the alveolar ridge, the back of the tongue is raised towards the velum. The phonetic environment in which dark /ɫ/ occurs is when /l/ is followed by a voiceless plosive or when it ends a word.

There are a number of allophones in English.

Phonotactics

The distribution of phonemes in each language differs from another language. Each language has its own restrictions regarding the distribution of phonemes and their combination possibilities. In phonology, phonotactics studies the ways in which phonemes are combined in a particular language. The different phonemes in a particular language occur in certain contexts or circumstances. The term distribution in phonology refers to the appearance of phonemes in certain contexts or environments. We have already illustrated that the phoneme standing for 'ng' in spelling does not appear in the word initially in English.

Distribution of RP consonants

All consonants except /ŋ/ as in mango, the middle sound (/ʒ/) in pleasure, /h/, /j/ and /w/ occur in word initial, medial and final positions.

/ŋ/ and /ʒ/ occur in medial position but not in initial.

Mango /mæŋgəʊ/

Pleasure /pleʒə/

/ŋ/ occurs finally too.

Sing /sɪŋ/

In a few exceptions /ʒ/ occurs initially

Genre /ʒɒŋ r ə/

and finally

Garage /gə r ɑʒ/

/h/, /j/, and /w/ occur in initial and medial positions but not finally.

Hat, young, wing – word initial position

Thiti, slayer, awake

Linking /r/

In RP /r/ is articulated only if it is followed by a vowel sound. In word final position /r/ is silent. It is silent also when followed by a consonant.

I have a car (/r/ silent)

My car is in the garage (/r/ articulated)

My car cannot move (/r/ silent since followed by a consonant /k/)

Intrusive /r/

Among native speakers of English a /r/ sound is inserted where there is no 'r' in spelling. That is, when a word ends in a vowel and the next one begins with a vowel a /r/ sound is inserted between the two. This is called intrusive /r/.

In the sequence, 'the idea of it' /r/ is inserted after the word 'idea' and before the word 'of' in the utterance.

Distribution of Vowels

All vowels in English except the following occur in initial, medial and final positions:



/n æʊ ʌ e/

/n æ ʌ e/ occur in initial and medial positions.

/ʊ/ does not occur in word initial position.

Distribution of Diphthongs

All diphthongs in English except /ʊə/ occur initially, medially and finally in a word. /ʊə/ does not occur initially in a word.

Five of the eight diphthongs of RP /ei/, /ai/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/, and /əʊ/ may be followed by /ə/ within a word. Such a combination of a diphthong and a vowel within a word is called a triphthong.

ei + ə player /p l eiə/

ai + ə flyer /f l aiə/

ɔɪ + ə foyer /f ɔɪ ə/

aʊ + ə tower /t aʊ ə/

əʊ + ə slower /s l əʊ ə/

2.3.2 Syllable

Take a look at the following words:

Man /mæn/

trea-ty /'tri:ti/

mu-ti-ny' /mju:tni/

ci-ga-rette /sɪgə'ret/

pros-pe-ri-ty /prɒs'pɛrɪti/

You will find that divisions have been marked within the words. What does this mean? It means that we have divided the words into syllables. The first is a monosyllabic word, the second, a disyllabic word (two parts), the third and fourth trisyllabic (three parts) and the last has four syllables.

Let us now try to understand this better.

We now know that a phoneme is a single unit of sound that has meaning in any language. The English language has 44 phonemes and each one of them represents a different and unique sound. Above the level of a sound segment called the phoneme, there is one more unit called a syllable.

A syllable can be defined as the smallest rhythmic unit of spoken language which is next in hierarchy to the phoneme. It is a unit that is typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word. They act as the building blocks of a word. A syllable is a part of speech that acts as a unit of rhythm, which is visible in English pronunciation. In fact, we can maintain a beat for each syllable. The nucleus of a syllable is the vowel. We cannot have a syllable without a vowel which is its core element. The number of vowels in a word could help us identify the number of syllables. The syllable can consist of a vowel, a syllabic consonant or a vowel plus consonant combination. To put it simply, a syllable is the unit which sounds loud in a spoken word, formed commonly by a nucleus which is the vowel, which stands as the centre of the syllable.

There are two approaches to the understanding of a syllable.

1. The phonetic approach explains the syllable in terms of its prominence. Some sounds are more prominent or loud than others. The number of syllables is decided by the number of peaks or prominence. The peak would be each

vowel. Another way in which this is explained is by chest pulse. Each syllable is produced at a chest pulse.

2. The linguistic approach looks at the syllable as a unit of tone or stress.

A word can be made up of one or more syllable as we have seen in the earlier examples. Those words with one syllable are called monosyllabic-words. Words with two syllables are known as disyllabic-words. Words with more than two syllables are polysyllabic-words. Now look at the following examples in the table given below.

Monosyllabic words	Disyllabic words	Polysyllabic words
Sun /sʌn /	Bi-ble /'baɪbl/	In-ter-val /'ɪntəvəl/
Bus /bʌs/	Ti-ger /taɪgə/	E-ner-gy /'ɛnədʒi /
One /wʌn/	Wo-men /wɪmɪn /	In-di-an /'ɪndiən/
Plot /plɒt/	No-ble /nəʊbl/	E-le-ment /'ɛlɪmənt/
Door /dɔː/	Is-land /aɪlənd/	Vi-si-tor /'vɪzɪtə /
Step /step/	Don-key /'dɒŋki /	Re-li-gion /rɪ' lɪdʒən /
Wrong /rɒŋ/	Scien-tist /'saɪəntɪst /	Cul-tu-ral /'kʌltʃərəl /
Snake /sneɪk/	Fear-ful /'fiəfʊl /	Ar-gu-ment /'ɑːgʊmənt/
School /sku:l/	Cli-mate /'klaɪmɪt/	E-co-no-my /ɪkənəmi/

It is not always easy to represent syllables in the orthographic mode, that is, in spelling. We have already understood that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the spelling and its phonetic realisation.

Usually syllable division is marked with a hyphen:

- ▶ Po-lice /pə-li:s/ (2 syllables)
- ▶ Em-ploy-er /ɪm-plɔɪ-ə/ (3 syllables)
- ▶ E-qua-li-ty /ɪ-kwɒ-lə-tɪ/ (4 syllables)

There are no strict and fixed rules regarding the way in which a word should be divided into syllables. A syllable is a natural division of speech. Interestingly, each puff of air pushed out of the lungs produces one syllable.



2.3.2.1 The structure of the Syllable

In the formation of words or part of words, each language applies specific restrictions to use possible combinations of sounds. In the English language, we cannot produce a complete word containing all consonants or words beginning with a consonant sequence like phg or ywc,, etc. In view of these possible combinations of sounds or syllables, a syllable structure is followed in the English language. According to which a syllable can have three parts

(1) **Onset**

(2) **Nucleus**

(3) **Coda**

The onset (also called releasing consonant) and the coda (also called arresting consonant) are consonants or consonant clusters. The onset appears at the beginning and so it is called releasing consonant. The coda appears at the end of the syllable and so it is called arresting consonant. The nucleus is a vowel which forms the core of the syllable. Thus the elements of a syllable are vowels and consonants. Syllabic structure is marked by using the letter C for consonants and V for vowels.

For example,

- ▶ The word ‘**sit**’ has one syllable where /s/ is the onset, /i/ is the nucleus and /t/ is the coda.

The syllabic structure for ‘**sit**’ is represented as CVC. It is a monosyllabic word.

Here is a list of examples for you.

- ▶ Fun /fʌn/ CVC /f/ the onset, /ʌ/ the nucleus and /n/ the coda
- ▶ Moon /mu:n/ CVC /m/ the onset, / u:/ the nucleus and / n/ the coda
- ▶ About /ə'baʊt/ - V- CVC - disyllabic
- ▶ Submerge /səb'mɜ:dʒ/ - CVC-CVC - disyllabic
- ▶ Camera /'kæməɾə/ - CV-CV-CV - trisyllabic
- ▶ Admission /əd'mɪʃən/ - VC-CVC-VC - trisyllabic
- ▶ Inferiority /ɪn,fiəri'ɒrɪti/ - VC-CV-CV-VC-V-CV- polysyllabic

The onset and coda are not necessarily required in a syllable but the nucleus should always be present. The nucleus can be preceded or followed by consonant or consonant clusters. For example,

- ▶ The word ‘**eye**’ /aɪ/ has only one syllable. It has neither the onset nor the coda but only the nucleus.
- ▶ The word ‘**try**’ /traɪ/ has the onset and nucleus but not the coda.

- The word ‘**eight**’/eɪt/ has the nucleus and coda but not the onset.

In the word ‘**craft**’ /kra:ft/ , /kr/ is the onset, /ɑ:/ is the nucleus and /ft/ is the coda.

In the word ‘try’, the syllable ends with a vowel. Likewise in the word ‘eight’ the syllable ends with a consonant. When a syllable does not have a final consonant, it is called an open syllable (/traɪ/). When a syllable has a final consonant it is called a closed syllable (/eɪt/, /kra:ft/)

2.3.2.2 Strong and Weak Syllables

A notable feature of English pronunciation is that many of its syllables are strong while some are weak. It is important for a learner of phonetics to study how the strong as well as weak vowels are pronounced and where they appear in English. Long vowels (for example, /i:/ in bean) are strong vowels and they are strong syllables. They have full vowel sounds. Strong syllables are stressed syllables. (in phonetics, stress is the degree of emphasis or intensity given to a syllable of speech in utterance.

Weak syllables are unstressed syllables. They are short and often have a reduced vowel sound. For example, in the word, ‘ba-by’ /'beɪbɪ/, the first syllable is stronger than the second which is weaker. Here is a list of words with strong syllables at the beginning and weaker syllables at the end.

Data	-	da-ta	- /'deɪtə/
Father	-	fa-ther	- /'fɑ:ðə/
Stupid	-	stu-pid	- /'stju:pid/
Enter	-	en-ter	- /'entə/
Soccer	-	soc-cer	- /'sɒkə/
Spirit	-	spir-it	- /'spɪrɪt/
Listen	-	lis-ten	- /'lɪsn/

2.3.2.3 Syllabic Consonants

kettle /ke-tl/

kitten /ki-tn/

cattle /kæ-tl/



The above are disyllabic words. This means that they should have 2 vowel sounds, one for each syllable. However, you will notice that they have only one vowel each. How can that be? How is it that the second part of the word is counted as a syllable even though it has no vowel? This is explained by the concept of syllabic consonants.

We have just seen that English syllables usually have a three-part structure made up of an onset (peak), nucleus and coda. English syllables cannot be formed with just consonants. Also, they cannot contain more than one vowel. Besides, the nuclei of syllables are usually vowels. However, it is possible in some instances when the position of the nucleus will be filled by a syllabic consonant. A syllabic consonant is thus a consonant that takes on the function of a vowel. The following are the most frequently appearing syllabic consonants in English - /l/, /n/, /m/, /r/.

Syllabic-l

It is perhaps the most noticeable example of the English syllabic consonants. Examples are –

- Bottle - /'bɒ-tl̩/
- Couple - /'kʌ-pl̩/
- Trouble - /'trʌ-bl̩/

Syllabic-n

It is the most frequently found syllabic nasal consonant. Examples are-

- Garden - /'gɑ:-dn̩/
- Button - /'bʌ-tn̩/
- Seven - /'se-vn̩/
- Often - /'ɒf-tn̩/

Syllabic-m

Here are the examples of syllabic-m

- Rhythm - /'rɪ-ðm̩/
- Bottom - /'bɒ-tm̩/
- Blossom - /'blɒ-sm̩/

Syllabic-r

It is very common in American accents. Examples are-

Preference - / 'prə-fr-əns/

History - / 'hɪs-tɹi/

2.3.2.4 Consonant Clusters

spleen/spli:n /

slate /sleɪt /

product /'prɒdʌkt/

stamp /stæmp/

midst /mɪdst/

The highlighted letters and symbols in the above examples are sequences of consonants.

They are called consonant clusters. They appear together without a vowel in between them.

A consonant cluster is a sequence of two or more consonants occurring within a syllable, at the beginning or end of a syllable. For a sequence of consonants to be called a consonant cluster, it has to be part of the same syllable. For example, the sequence /pl/ in the word monosyllabic word 'plain' /pleɪn/ is a consonant cluster because both the consonants forming the sequence belong to the same syllable. On the other hand, in the disyllabic words 'gender' /'dʒɛn-də/ and /sʌb-mɛdʒ/, the two consonants /n/ and /d/ and /b/ and /m/ respectively, do not form a consonant cluster as they belong to two different syllables. Those consonants that come sequentially but are part of different syllables, do not form a cluster and are known as abutting consonants. In English, clusters up to three consonants can begin a syllable and up to four can end a syllable.

The most commonly appearing clusters in English are given below.

(1) Initial clusters of two consonants

'plot', 'plain' /pl-/ and 'prose', 'priest' /pr-/, etc.

'blend', 'blast' /bl/and beauty, bugle /bj-/, etc.

'truck', 'travel' /tr/ and twinkle, twitter /tw/, etc.



‘drawing’, ‘drone’ /dr/ and during, dew /dj/, etc.

(2) Initial clusters of three consonants

/spl-/ - split, splendour,, etc.

/spr-/ - spring, Spread,, etc.

/str-/ - strong, street,, etc.

(3) Final clusters of two consonants

/- sp/ - clasp, wasp

/-lp/ - help, pulp

/-pt/ - apt, corrupt

/-bd/ - robbed, clubbed

(4) Final clusters of three consonants

/-kst/ - next, context

/-kts/ - acts, contacts

(5) Final clusters of four consonants

/-ksts/ - texts, contexts

/-mpts/ - contempts, exempts

Recap

- ▶ Phonology studies sound organisation in a language.
- ▶ Phonetics studies the physical properties of speech.
- ▶ A syllable is a rhythmic unit of speech.
- ▶ The nucleus is the obligatory part of a syllable.

- ▶ A vowel usually forms the nucleus.
- ▶ The onset precedes the nucleus.
- ▶ The coda follows the nucleus.
- ▶ The rhyme consists of nucleus and coda.
- ▶ An open syllable ends in a vowel.
- ▶ A closed syllable ends in a consonant.
- ▶ A consonant cluster contains adjacent consonants.
- ▶ Phonotactics governs permissible sound sequences.
- ▶ English permits complex onsets and codas.
- ▶ Not all logically possible clusters occur in English.
- ▶ Assimilation makes neighbouring sounds more alike.
- ▶ Progressive assimilation is influenced by a preceding sound.
- ▶ Regressive assimilation is influenced by a following sound.
- ▶ Elision removes a sound in connected speech.
- ▶ Linking joins sounds across word boundaries.
- ▶ Intrusion adds a linking sound between vowels.
- ▶ Weak forms occur in unstressed grammatical words.
- ▶ Syllabic consonants can function as nuclei.
- ▶ Connected speech differs from citation pronunciation.
- ▶ Phonological rules describe systematic patterns.
- ▶ Syllable analysis supports pronunciation and poetic rhythm.

Objective Questions

1. What is the obligatory element of a syllable?
2. What precedes the nucleus?
3. What follows the nucleus?
4. What combines nucleus and coda?
5. What syllable ends in a vowel?
6. What governs possible sound sequences?
7. What process makes sounds more alike?
8. What process deletes a sound?
9. What term describes joining across word boundaries?
10. What can serve as a syllable nucleus besides a vowel?



Answers

1. Nucleus
2. Onset
3. Coda
4. Rhyme
5. Open
6. Phonotactics
7. Assimilation
8. Elision
9. Linking
10. Consonant

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Differentiate phonetics and phonology with examples.
2. Analyse the syllable structure of “plant”, “ago”, “texts” and “student”.
3. Explain open and closed syllables with five examples each.
4. What are phonotactic constraints? Give English examples.
5. Distinguish progressive and regressive assimilation.
6. Identify possible elision in ordinary rapid speech.
7. How do weak forms contribute to the rhythm of English?

Assignments

1. Conduct a syllable analysis of thirty words from a newspaper article.
2. Prepare a list of permissible and impermissible English consonant clusters and explain your criteria.
3. Record a short natural conversation and identify examples of assimilation, elision or linking.
4. Design an infographic explaining onset, nucleus, coda and rhyme.
5. Compare careful and rapid pronunciation of ten phrases.
6. Analyse syllable patterns in a short poem and relate them to rhythm.
7. Develop a learner activity for practising English weak forms in connected speech.

Suggested Reading

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Unit 4

Word Accent

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ explain the nature and functions of stress in English words
- ▶ identify primary and secondary stress in words of different syllabic structures
- ▶ apply common stress rules to derived words, compounds and words with stress-shifting suffixes
- ▶ use stress placement to distinguish meaning and grammatical category in selected English words

Prerequisite

The written word 'record' looks the same in 'Please record the programme' and 'Keep a record of the programme', but many speakers pronounce the two forms with different stress. A misplaced stress can make even a familiar word difficult to recognise. English word accent is therefore not decorative; it helps listeners segment speech, identify word class and interpret meaning. Learners can begin by tapping the strongest syllable in their own names and in words such as 'teacher', 'photograph' and 'photography'. This bodily awareness of prominence prepares them to study primary and secondary stress, stress patterns in simple and complex words, and the effects of prefixes, suffixes and compounds.

Keywords

Word accent, Accent and rhythm in connected speech, Intonation, Assimilation, Contraction and Elision

2.4.1 Word accent

In English we do not articulate all syllables in a word with the same amount of force. In speech, some syllables are pronounced with greater force than others. For example, when we say the word ‘alone’ the second syllable (-lone) is articulated with greater emphasis. In the word ‘tiger’, the force is on the first syllable (ti-). Stress may be described as the degree of force with which a sound or a syllable is pronounced. Every syllable is uttered with a certain amount of force but one syllable is uttered with greater force than the rest. This phenomenon of certain syllables having greater force or emphasis than the others is known as stress. Those syllables that are more prominent than others are said to have an accent. In other words, we accentuate (emphasise) one syllable.

How does a particular syllable acquire prominence? How is it heard as more pronounced than others?

The stressed syllables have four main features. These features make them prominent in speech.

(1) Loudness

The syllable that is louder than other syllables is stressed. For listeners, the stressed syllables are heard louder than the unstressed ones.

(2) Pitch

It is the vibration of the vocal cords while uttering the syllables of a word. If a syllable in a word is heard in high pitch, we can conclude that it is the stressed syllable.

(3) Length

The length of the stressed syllable is always greater than the unstressed syllable of that word.

(4) Quality

The quality of sound of the stressed syllable will always be high compared to the quality of unstressed syllables. For example, vowels are more prominent than consonants. /m/, /n/, /l/, /r/ are more vowel like and so more prominent than other consonants. Fricatives are more prominent than plosives, etc.

How do you present stress at the syllable that is stressed in a word? You utter that syllable with greater energy and a higher pitch.

Stress is both free and fixed in English. It is free in the sense that the main stress could fall on any syllable in a word and fixed in the sense that each word has its own preset fixed stress patterns. In French all words carry stress on the last syllable. In English it is free and could fall on any syllable as already fixed.

Look at the two examples.

Par-ty /'pa:ti/

To-night /tə'nait/

These two words are disyllabic but have different stress patterns. While ‘party’ has stress on the first syllable, the word ‘tonight’ has stress on the second syllable. Thus different words carry stress on different syllables.

Syllables in English words don’t have a similar level of emphasis or loudness. Some are more prominent and others are less prominent. A few are in between. There are three levels of stress.

They are:

1. Primary stress: It is the strongest or the most emphasised syllable in the word. It affects a pitch change. In monosyllabic words, that one syllable has the primary stress. Primary stress is marked in IPA by putting a ver-



tical line at the beginning of the syllable as in,

- ▶ /'fʌn/ (Fun)
- ▶ /'wɪmɪn/ (Women)
- ▶ /æb'sent/ (Absent)

2. Secondary stress: In polysyllabic words, apart from the syllable that carries primary stress, there is another syllable also which carries stress. This syllable is also stressed but not as prominently as the syllable with primary stress. The secondary stress is marked with a lowered vertical line [ˌ], at the beginning of the syllable. Here are the examples:

- ▶ /ˌʌndər'stænd/ (Understand)
- ▶ /ˌɪnfər'meɪʃən/ (Information)
- ▶ /'fəʊtəˌgrɑ:f/ (Photograph)

3. Unstressed syllables: Syllables having no stress at all are the unstressed syllables. When a syllable is unstressed, the vowel in them is often reduced to schwa /ə/. This is a very weak vowel in English and never found in stressed or accented syllables. It is the most common vowel sound in English. The schwa is termed as a lazy one among speech sounds as you hardly open your mouth to pronounce it. Here are the examples:

- ▶ /bə'nɑː.nə/ (Banana)
- ▶ /'prɒbləm/ (Problem)
- ▶ /'bɒtəm/ (Bottom)

As mentioned earlier, a vertical stroke on top at the beginning of a syllable is used to mark the stressed syllables. Look at the following words and see the vertical marks indicating the stress. The stress falls differently on different syllables.

Fun	/'fʌn/
Moon	/'muːn/
Craft	/'kra:ft/
Women	/'wɪmɪn/
Donkey	/'dɒŋ.ki/
Alarm	/ə'la:m/
Examination	/ɪgˌzæmɪ'neɪʃn/
Employee	/ɪm'plɔɪi/
Potato	/pə'tetəʊ/

Tonight	/tə'naɪt/
Shampoo	/ʃæm'pu/
Desktop	/'desk.tɒp/
Insist	/ɪn'sɪst/
Island	/'aɪlənd/

Practice uttering these words with the stress on the syllable that is marked.

Shift in Stress – Functional Accent in Disyllabic Words

Stress is linked to grammar as well as to phonetics. It can shape the form and function of the word in a sentence. The stress patterns in some words affect the grammatical word class. Based on the stress they receive, some disyllabic words alter their grammatical function and change into verbs, nouns or adjectives. Such words take the primary stress on the second syllable when they are verbs and receive primary stress on the first syllable when they are nouns or adjectives.

Here are a few examples for you.

Words	Noun	Adjective	Verb
record	/'rekɔ:d/		/rɪ'kɔ:d/
permit	/'pɜ:mɪt/		/pə'mɪt/
absent	/'æbsənt/		/æb'sent/
accent	/'æksənt/		/ək'sent/
desert	/'dezət/		/dɪ'zɜ:t/
rebel	/'rebl/		/rɪ'bel/
concert	/'kɒnsət/		/kən'sɜ:t/
conduct	/'kɒndʌkt/		/kən'dʌkt/
content	/'kɒntent/		/kən'tent/
export	/'ekspɔ:t/		/'ekspɔ:t/
subject	/'sʌbdʒɪkt/		/səb'dʒekt/



project	<u>/ˈprɒdʒekt/</u>	<u>/prəˈdʒekt/</u>
protest	<u>/ˈprəʊtest/</u>	<u>/prəˈtest/</u>
produce	<u>/ˈprɒdjuːs/</u>	<u>/prəˈdjuːs/</u>

The word ‘record’ receives primary stress on the first syllable when it is used as a noun as in:

- ▶ We should keep a written ˈrecord.

The same word receives primary stress on the second syllable when it is used as a verb as in:

- ▶ They will reˈcord his song tomorrow.

Another example from the table, ‘absent’ receives primary stress on the first syllable when it is used as an adjective as in:

- ▶ The ˈabsent students were asked for an explanation.

The same word receives primary stress on the second syllable when it is used as a verb as in:

- ▶ They abˈsented themselves from school twice a month.

You will have noticed from the above examples in the table that syllables which are not stressed often contain the vowel ‘schwa’ (/ə/) instead of a clearer vowel. /ə/ occurs only in unstressed syllables, never in stressed syllables. In the word ‘permit’ as a noun, for example (/ˈpɜːmɪt/), the vowel is one with length (/ɜː/). However when it becomes a verb and the stress shifts to second syllable, /ɜː/ is replaced by schwa (/pəˈmɪt/). This doesn’t mean that schwa (/ə/) is the only vowel which occurs in unstressed syllables. Other vowels can occur there too, and /ɪ/ is commonly found there, the others less commonly.

There is no simple way of knowing which syllable in an English word must be stressed, but every time you learn a word, you must be sure to learn how it is stressed. There are no set rules for stress in English. You learn it through use and with the help of a pronouncing dictionary. However there are a few rules in the case of certain categories of words.

The following common rules exist for stress. There are many exceptions with these rules as well.

1. All English words have some accent, primary or secondary on the first or second syllable.
2. Words with weak prefixes are accented on the root and not on the prefix.

Eg., aˈcross, beˈcause, aˈlone

3. The following derivational suffixes do not affect accent.

-age	'patron	'patronage
-ance	per'form	per'formance
-en	'take	'taken
-er	'mark	'marker
-ess	'prince	'princess
-fy	'class	'classify
-hood	'child	'childhood
-ish	'fever	'feverish
-ive	'coerce	'coercive
-less	'care	'careless
-ly	'friend	'friendly
-ment	a'gree	a'greement
-ness	'kind	'kindness
-ship	'friend	'friendship
-ter	'laugh	'laughter
-ure	'close	'closure
-y	'blood	'bloody
-zen	'city	'citizen

4. Some derivatives of relational words show shift in stress.

'accident acci'dental acci'dentally

'autumn au'tumnal

'origin o'riginal o'riginally

'photograph pho'tographer photo'graphic

'politics po'litical politician

'patriot patr'iotic

a'cademy aca'demicac acade'mician



'magic ma'gician

'Mechanism me'chanic me'chanical mechani'sation

'democrat de'mocracy demo'cratic

'hypocrite hy'pocrisy hypo'critical

'diplomat di'plomacy diplo'matic

You would do well to practice these derivatives with the right stress.

5. -graphy, -logy, -metry, -sophy, -cracy/crisy, -gamy, -nomy, -phony

Words with these suffixes take the stress on the third last syllable.

pho'tography zo'ology

ge'ography psy'chology

The common nouns derived from these words above, like bi'ographer, bi'ologist, phi'losopher,, etc. also are stressed on the third last syllable.

6. Words with the suffix '-ee, -eer, -aire' take the stress on the last syllable.

- ▶ chimpan'zee
- ▶ appoin'tee
- ▶ volun'teer
- ▶ questio'nnaire

7. Words with the suffixes -ion, -ian, -ic, -ics, -ial, receive the stress on the second last syllable.

- ▶ appli'cation
- ▶ fi'xation
- ▶ auto'matic
- ▶ ar'tistic
- ▶ com'mercial
- ▶ re'medial
- ▶ ma'gician
- ▶ poli'tician
- ▶ 'physics

8. Words with the suffixes -ical, -ity receive the stress on the third last syllable.

- ▶ elec'tricity
- ▶ Uni'versity
- ▶ a'bility
- ▶ astro'nomical
- ▶ eco'nomical
- ▶ eco'nomically (the suffix -ically does not affect stress)

9. The suffixes -es, -ing, -ed, -ous do not affect stress in derivatives

- ▶ En'courage
- ▶ En'couraged
- ▶ En'couraging
- ▶ En'courage's
- ▶ 'Courage
- ▶ 'Courageous

10. In words of more than two syllables ending in -ate the primary stress falls on the third last syllable.

- ▶ Par'ticipate
- ▶ 'Educate
- ▶ 'Fortunate
- ▶ 'Complicate
- ▶ 'Cultivate

11. -less, -ly, -al do not change the stress.

- ▶ 'End 'Endless
- ▶ 'Care 'Careless
- ▶ 'Kind 'Kindly
- ▶ 'Comic 'Comical

Generally, in compound words, the primary stress falls on one of the two elements. But in many of the compound words, the first syllable takes the primary stress. Compound words are those words composed of two separable words. (E.g. House-wife)

- ▶ 'Aircraft
- ▶ 'Courtyard
- ▶ 'Cardboard
- ▶ 'Daytime



2.4.2 Accent and Rhythm in Connected Speech

The individual sounds or phonemes of a language, that is, the vowels and consonants are termed as the segmental features of pronunciation. Whereas the aspects of pronunciation that affect more than just one sound segment such as stress, rhythm and intonation are called the suprasegmental features of pronunciation. They are also the musical aspects of pronunciation. These three aspects, the stress, the rhythm and the intonation are the essential elements of English prosody. They are called suprasegmental because they affect all the segments of the unit. Suprasegmental features operate over longer stretches of speech as opposed to segmental features, which are the individual sounds.

When we talk, we mostly use groups of words spoken continuously without pause. We do not talk in single words all the time. We pause only after a group but not during it. These groups may be long or short. We break longer utterances into manageable groups. Let us examine some utterances.

- ▶ I 'hate 'ghee.
- ▶ 'This is my 'house.
- ▶ 'Where are you 'going 'tomorrow?
- ▶ 'Can you 'help me?
- ▶ I would 'like a 'cup of 'coffee.
- ▶ 'Last 'Sunday, I 'took my 'dog for a 'walk to the 'park. (we have broken it into two groups with a comma)

You will see that stress has been marked for some of the words in each utterance, not all. The words with vertical bar above them stand out from the rest when you say the sentence naturally. Why? Have you noticed what category of words is stressed?

In connected speech in English, all the words are not stressed. Some words are stressed. Some are not. It is the content words that are stressed. Content words are words that carry meaning and are seen in a dictionary. Nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, question words, negatives and demonstratives like 'this', 'that', etc. are content words and are generally stressed in an English sentence. The grammatical words (function class words) are not stressed unless the context demands it. Grammatical words are prepositions, conjunctions, articles, personal pronouns, auxiliaries, relative pronouns, etc.

Let us now take one of the above examples again.

I would 'like a 'cup of 'coffee.

//aɪwʊdlaɪkɪkʌpʊŋkɒfi//

It is never spoken in the above manner. When spoken, this sentence would be as follows:

//aɪd 'laɪk ə 'kʌpʊŋ 'kɒfi //

What differences do you notice between the two? This is because it is continuous speech and also English speech needs to keep time to maintain rhythm like music.

'I', 'would', and 'of' are not stressed. 'Like', 'cup' and 'coffee' are stressed. 'I', 'would', and 'of' are grammatical words. 'Like', 'cup' and 'coffee' are content words. Observe how 'I would' is reduced to /aɪd/. A few phonemes have been dropped. This process is called elision which you will learn further down. Why did we drop these phonemes? In addition, certain vowels are replaced by weaker vowels- 'of' becomes /ɒv/. Notice how /ɒ/ is replaced by schwa? The article 'a' becomes schwa. The content words are kept as they are. Only the grammatical words undergo change. Let us understand this clearly.

Strong and Weak Forms

A noticeable feature of English-connected speech is the occurrence of strong and weak forms. A strong form is the full form of the word pronounced with stress. On the other hand, a weak form has no stress and so they are weakened. Weak forms are often pronounced with a schwa and so they are sometimes difficult to hear properly. English is never spoken with only strong forms. The use of weak forms is an essential part of English speech. You must learn the weak forms of English function words and use them appropriately to sound English. Some words have more than one weak form. As English is a stress-timed language, the strong and weak forms have great importance. It means that when you speak, the stress falls on content words, such as nouns and principal verbs, while structured words such as helping verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, etc are not stressed. Proper usage of strong and weak forms will help you to enhance your English fluency. Take a look at other examples:

- ▶ He can 'speak 'English.
- ▶ We 'are from 'India.

In this case the words 'can' and 'from' are weak forms. The weak form changes the vowel to schwa.

- ▶ **can** in strong form: /kæn/
- ▶ **can** in weak form: /kən/
- ▶ **from** in strong form: /frɒm/
- ▶ **from** in weak form: /frəm/

Of the content words, the syllable that is stressed when the word is said in isolation will be stressed when it forms part of connected speech too.

The function words possess both strong and weak forms. The following table will elaborate the concept better.

Word (Prepositions)	Strong form	Weak form
at	/ æt /	/ət /
for	/ fɔː /	/fə/



from	/ frɒm /	/frəm /
of	/ ɒv /	/əv , v , ə /
to	/ tu: /	/tu/+ vowel /tə/ + consonant

Word (Conjunctions)	Strong form	Weak form
and	/ænd/	/ənd , ən , n/
as	/ æz/	/ əz/
but	/bʌt /	/bət /
than	/ðæn/	/ðən/

Word (Pronouns)	Strong form	Weak form
he	/hi:/	/hi, i:, ɪ /
him	/hɪm/	/ɪm/
his	/hɪz /	/ɪz /
she	/ʃi:/	/ʃɪ/
her	/hɜ:/	/hə, ə, ɜ: /
you	/ju: /	/ju /
them	/ðem/	/ðem, ðm, m /
we	/wi:/	/wɪ/
us	/ʌs/	/əʊs, s/
me	/mi:/	/mɪ/

Word (Relative pronouns)	Strong form	Weak form
who	/hu:/	/hu, u:, u /
that	/ðæt/	/ðət/

Word (Auxiliaries)	Strong form	Weak form
am	/æm /	/əm, m /
are	/ɑ: /	/ə /
is	/ɪz /	/z, s /
was	/wɒz /	/wəz /
were	/wɜ: /	/wə/
has	/hæz /	/həz, əz, z /
have	/hæv/	/həv, əv, v /
had	/hæd /	/həd, əd, d/
can	/kæn /	/kən /
could	/kʊd/	/kəd, d/
do	/du:/	/du, də, d/
does	/dʌz /	/dəz, z, s /
must	/mʌst /	/məst, məs /
shall	/ʃæl/	/ʃəl, ʃl /
should	/ʃʊd /	/ʃəd, ʃd /
will	/wɪl /	/l /
would	/wʊd/	/wəd, əd, d/

Word (Articles)	Strong form	Weak form
a	/eɪ /	/ə/
an	/æn/	/ən/
the	/ði:/	/ ðɪ/ + vowel /ðə/ + consonant

The function words in the above table also have strong forms which are used in certain contexts. Where do we use their strong forms? We use the strong forms of normally weakened forms of function words in the following contexts:



1. At the end of a sentence

- ▶ What are you looking **at** (/æt/)?
- ▶ Where are you **from** (/ frəm/)?

2. In the contrast situations

- ▶ The letter is **from** him, not **to** him. /frəm/ /tu/
- ▶ He likes **her**, but does she like **him**? /hə:/ /him/

3. Stress on opposite prepositions

- ▶ I travel **to** and **from** London a lot. /tu/ /frəm/

4. Stress on the purpose of the meaning.

- ▶ You **must** get the university certificate to have good job in the future. /mʌst/
- ▶ You **must** choose us or them, you cannot have all. /mʌst/

2.4.3 Rhythm

One of the important characteristics of stress in English is that it is a language with a stress-timed rhythm. Rhythm is defined as a sound that occurs at regular intervals. In the context of speech, the rhythm of speech is the pattern of beats or the intervals at which syllables are stressed in a sentence. This is particularly visible in poetry. In English speech also stressed syllables tend to occur at regular intervals of time. Look at the following example:

I took my dog for a walk to the park.

The time intervals between the stressed syllables took, dog, walk, and park will roughly be the same. Irrespective of the number of unaccented syllables between two accented syllables, the time interval between them will be roughly the same. It is this phenomenon that gives English its characteristic rhythm. In order to achieve this regularity of time interval, accented syllables may have to be prolonged and unaccented ones bunched up and pronounced fast. Thus the rhythmic balance of the sentence is brought about by the sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables occurring at regular intervals in connected speech. Now look at how the above example is articulated in connected speech.

//aɪ'tʊkmaɪ'dɒg'fɔrə'wɔ:ktəðə'pa:k//

Note how some of the grammatical words (in bold) have schwa in them and are reduced. The sequences 'for a' and 'to the' are bunched together to maintain rhythm.

Recap

- ▶ Stress gives prominence to a syllable.
- ▶ A stressed syllable is often louder.
- ▶ Stressed syllables may be longer.
- ▶ Stressed syllables may show pitch movement.
- ▶ Stressed vowels are usually clearer.
- ▶ Primary stress is the strongest prominence.
- ▶ Secondary stress is weaker than primary stress.
- ▶ Unstressed vowels often reduce to schwa.
- ▶ English word stress can be contrastive.
- ▶ Stress may distinguish nouns from verbs.
- ▶ Stress placement is not fully predictable in English.
- ▶ Two-syllable nouns often favour initial stress.
- ▶ Two-syllable verbs often favour final stress.
- ▶ Compound nouns often carry early stress.
- ▶ Phrasal constructions often stress the later element.
- ▶ Some suffixes attract stress.
- ▶ Some suffixes shift stress to the preceding syllable.
- ▶ Many neutral suffixes do not change base stress.
- ▶ Prefixes are usually less prominent than roots.
- ▶ Long words may carry secondary stress.
- ▶ Stress can change across related words.
- ▶ Correct stress improves intelligibility.
- ▶ Dictionary stress marks guide pronunciation.
- ▶ Primary stress is commonly marked by a raised vertical line.
- ▶ Stress practice should use words in meaningful contexts.

Objective Questions

1. What is the strongest word prominence called?
2. What vowel commonly occurs in unstressed syllables?
3. Which feature often rises or falls on a stressed syllable?
4. Where is stress often placed in two-syllable nouns?
5. Where is stress often placed in two-syllable verbs?



6. Which element is usually prominent in compound nouns?
7. What mark commonly indicates primary stress?
8. What kind of suffix leaves stress unchanged?
9. What may stress distinguish in “record”?
10. What does correct stress mainly improve?

Answers

1. Primary stress
2. Schwa
3. Pitch
4. Initial
5. Final
6. First
7. Stroke
8. Neutral
9. Category
10. Intelligibility

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Define word stress and describe its main phonetic cues.
2. Distinguish primary, secondary and unstressed syllables.
3. Explain noun-verb stress alternation with examples.
4. How does stress differ in compound nouns and phrases?
5. Classify common suffixes according to their effect on stress.
6. Mark the stress in ten multisyllabic academic words.
7. Why does vowel reduction frequently accompany lack of stress?

Assignments

1. Prepare a stress-marked vocabulary list of fifty words from the course.
2. Record noun-verb pairs such as “import” and “present” and analyse the stress contrast.
3. Investigate stress shifts in a word family such as photograph-photography-photographic.
4. Create a classroom game for recognising primary stress.
5. Compare dictionary transcriptions of twenty complex words and infer recurring stress patterns.
6. Analyse stress errors commonly heard among local English learners and suggest remedies.
7. Produce a short audio-supported presentation on word stress and intelligibility.

Suggested Reading

1. Celce-Murcia, Marianne, et al. *Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide*. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2010.
2. Roach, Peter. *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course*. 4th ed., Cambridge University Press, 2009.
3. Kelly, Gerald. *How to Teach Pronunciation*. Pearson Longman, 2000.
4. Underhill, A. *Sound Foundations: Learning and Teaching Pronunciation*. Macmillan Education, 2005.
5. Wells, John C. *Accents of English*. Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 1982.





International Phonetic Alphabet

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ explain the purpose and organising principles of the International Phonetic Alphabet
- ▶ recognise and produce IPA symbols for major English vowels and consonants
- ▶ transcribe familiar English words and short utterances phonemically with reasonable accuracy
- ▶ compare Received Pronunciation and General Indian English through selected segmental and suprasegmental features

Prerequisite

The same letter may represent different sounds in 'cat', 'city' and 'chorus', while the same sound may be written differently in 'see', 'sea' and 'scene'. Ordinary spelling therefore cannot provide a dependable map of pronunciation. The International Phonetic Alphabet was created to solve this problem by assigning symbols to speech sounds rather than letters. Learners should approach IPA as a practical tool, not as a code to memorise mechanically. Reading dictionary entries, matching symbols to familiar words, and comparing one's pronunciation with recorded models build the background needed for transcription. The unit also encourages a respectful comparison of Received Pronunciation and General Indian English, treating both as systematic varieties rather than ranking one as inherently superior.

Keywords

IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet), IPA symbols, RP (Received Pronunciation), General Indian English

Discussion

2.5.1 International Phonetic Alphabet

Founded in the 19th century by a group of French and British language teachers, led by Paul Passy, the International Phonetic Association is the oldest organization for phoneticians. The acronym IPA stands for International Phonetic Association as well as International Phonetic Alphabet, its meaning discerned by the context in which it appears. The promotion of scientific study of phonetics is the primary mission of the association and for this, they developed an alphabet the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) to represent the pronunciation of languages. This distinctive alphabet aims to present a unique symbol for each sound in any language. It has symbols to represent all the sounds existing in all languages of the world. Thus it became quite convenient for every learner to distinguish one sound from another. A major objective behind the design of this alphabet was the representation of spoken language by avoiding the confusion created by the inconsistent and conventional spellings of every language. In the year 1888, the first International Phonetic Alphabet was published. It aimed at the transcription of multiple languages and if possible, an attempt to fulfil the idea that one set of alphabet be used for all languages. IPA aims at a standardised approach to phonetic transcription. With such an international agreement on standard usage, an almost accurate communication becomes relatively easy.

The International Phonetic Alphabet is a phonetic notation system that uses a series of symbols to represent the sounds existing in spoken language. The IPA mainly uses Roman alphabet (A to Z) but since the 26 letters of the Roman Alphabet are not enough to represent all sounds used by all languages, additional

symbols are included and existing ones are modified when needed. Diacritics (marks that denote a meaning like the ‘:’, a mark that denotes length) are used to differentiate various sounds and their length, stress and tones. The symbols for IPA are mainly based on two basic character types. The first are alphabetic letters that are primarily from the letters of the Latin and Greek alphabets. The second character type is diacritics, which are signs that can be marked above or below a letter. They are used to indicate differences in pronunciation. These two character types make the IPA chart, and they are further subcategorized according to particular sounds.

The International Phonetic Association classifies the letters of IPA into three categories:

1. Vowels
2. Pulmonic consonants
3. Non-pulmonic consonants

Consonants are categorized into two, based on the air mechanism. They are:

1. Pulmonic consonants – when the air is going outward from the lungs
2. Non-pulmonic consonants- when the airflow is not dependent on the lungs.

Pulmonic consonants are further categorized based on the activity area of the vocal system into horizontal and vertical. Vowels are mapped on the IPA chart based on the position of the tongue.

2.5.1.1 IPA Symbols

The following pictures introduce you to the symbols of IPA. These are not the symbols of one particular language. It is a standardised chart of all sounds in any language. Hence it may not, in all cases be the symbols you stud-



ied so far of the English language, though there might be similarities. The charts below are just for you to get introduced to the IPA symbols.

IPA Consonant Chart

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC) © 2015 IPA

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill	ʙ			r					ʀ		
Tap or Flap		ⱱ		ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Symbols to the right in a cell are voiced, to the left are voiceless. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

Fig 2.5.1 IPA Consonant Chart

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

Clicks	Voiced implosives	Ejectives
ʘ Bilabial ǀ Dental ǃ (Post)alveolar ǂ Palatoalveolar ǁ Alveolar lateral	ɓ Bilabial ɗ Dental/alveolar ɟ Palatal ɠ Velar ʛ Uvular	ʼ Examples: pʼ Bilabial tʼ Dental/alveolar kʼ Velar sʼ Alveolar fricative

Fig 2.5.2 IPA Consonant Chart (non- pulmonic)

IPA Vowel Chart

		Front		Central		Back	
		unrounded	rounded	unrounded	rounded	unrounded	rounded
Close (high)	(upper)	i	y	ɨ	ʉ	ɯ	u
	(lower)	ɪ	ʏ				ʊ
Mid	(upper)	e	ø	ə	ɵ	ɤ	o
	(lower)	ɛ	œ	ɜ	ɞ	ʌ	ɔ
Open (low)	(upper)	æ		ɐ			
	(lower)	a	ɶ	(a) ¹		ɑ	ɒ

Fig 2.5.3 IPA Vowel Chart

2.5.2 Received Pronunciation

The phrase Received Pronunciation was coined by the English phonetician Alexander John Ellis in 1869. Received Pronunciation or RP is a non-regional (not restricted to a region but distributed across Britain) accent of British English described in detail by Daniel Jones, Gimson and others. The term became a widely discussed one to describe the elite of the society after the publication of *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (Second edition) in the year 1924. The dictionary was created by the British phonetician Daniel Jones and was first published in 1917. The word ‘received’ means ‘accepted’ or ‘approved’. The ‘accepted’ pronunciation here is the standard accent of English spoken among the aristocratic and privileged class of south-east midlands of the United Kingdom, around London, Oxford and Cambridge. According to Abercrombie, historically, RP developed as an accent of the elite English public school system maintained and transmitted from generation to generation mainly by people educated at these schools. It is characteristic of the upper class and upper middle class and hence has been for long a marker of socio-economic status but not so much now.

Often described as “the typical British accent” RP is traditionally considered the most recognizable accent of English. There are other popular terms associated with RP, such as ‘the Oxford English’, ‘the Queen’s English’ and ‘the BBC English’. Oxford English is the dialect of English spoken at Oxford University and regarded by many as high-sounding and showy. Queen’s English is the Standard English language as written and spoken by educated people in the south of Britain. BBC English is the standard pronunciation of southern British English that is traditionally used by announcers on the BBC. RP is an accent, not a dialect and hence the study of RP is concerned only with pronunciation.

RP is perhaps the most widely studied and the most commonly expressed variety of spoken English in the world. But recent trends suggest that only less than 5% of the UK population speak it. It has a very minor presence in Scotland and Northern Ireland and is gradually losing its esteemed position in Wales. However, it must be noted that RP is the accent on which pho-



nemic transcriptions in dictionaries are based and it is widely used as a standard for teaching English as a foreign language. In India we follow RP while teaching English.

RP received a great momentum when it was chosen in 1922 by the BBC as its standard accent for broadcasting news and other programs. The reason behind the selection was that Standard English spoken with the RP accent, would be the most widely understood variety of English both in the UK and overseas. Also, there was a fear among the British Broadcasting Corporation that choosing any particular regional accent would detach some listeners.

With the passage of time, like any other accent RP has also changed. The early BBC broadcasts with the strict RP accent has now become out-dated. In the contemporary era, due to the impact of social change, virtually every accent is represented in all walks of life. No particular accent has been projected as the best or the most perfect.

The following video links will be useful for you while learning RP from a practical perspective.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htmkbIboG9Q>

(RP Phonemes-Pronunciation tips-BBC Learning English)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDdRHWHzwR4>

(British accents and dialects)

<https://www.youtube.com/user/bbclearningenglish>

(BBC Learning English- channel)

2.5.3 General Indian English

English as spoken in India has different varieties depending on the region where it is spoken. The linguistic variety in India spawns so many variants in English. The influence of the mother tongue is the main reason for these varieties. Indian English is the result of the influence of various Indian languages. The concept of 'Linguistic interference' or L1 interference' is significant here. It is the effect or influence of the speaker's first language L1, (mother tongue) upon the language now they are learning L2 (English). This 'cross-linguistic' influence can be on any aspect of language, such as pronunciation, spelling and grammar. Thus we have Hindi English (Hinglish), Tamil English, Malayalam English and so on. Of course, here we are dealing with pronunciation.

On examination of the different varieties of Indian English, we will see some common phonological features among them that distinguish them from other international varieties of English. If these common features are brought together, leaving out gross regional features, a variety of English will emerge which we call General Indian English (GIE). GIE is a variety of English spoken by the educated speakers of India. It is free from regional features. It is a prescriptive and descriptive model. It is prescribed as a model of spoken English. It also describes its phonological features.

Let us take some samples of GIE and see how it varies from RP.

(1)

Word	GIE	RP
------	-----	----

Zip	/zɪb/	/zɪp/
-----	-------	-------

Simple	/sɪmbɪ/	/sɪmpl/
--------	---------	---------

/p/ is replaced by /b/ in GIE.

Buzz	/bʌs/	/bʌz/
------	-------	-------

Zoo	/su:/	/zu:/
-----	-------	-------

/z/ is replaced by /s/ in GIE

Vest	/west/	/vest/
------	--------	--------

Van	/wæn/	/væn/
-----	-------	-------

/v/ is replaced by /w/ in GIE

Uncle	/'ʌŋgl/	/'ʌŋkl/
-------	---------	---------

Enquiry	/en'gwaɪəri/	/ɪn'kwaɪəri/
---------	--------------	--------------

/k/ is replaced by /g/ in GIE

Such changes happen because of phonological differences between the GIE and RP.

The following table will explain a couple of common mispronunciations in Indian English

(2)

As the /æ/ sound is absent in many Indian languages, the speakers have a tendency to pronounce /j/ sound by adding an 'intrusive y' to the word.

Examples: Cap

Cat

Can

Gas



(3)

Pronunciation of silent sounds in certain words,

Words	Silent sound
Island, debris, Bourgeois, etc.	/s/
Subtle, debt, climb, etc.	/b/
Heir, hour, honour, etc.	/h/
Talk, calf, half, etc.	/l/
Budget, bridge, knowledge, etc.	/d/
Soften, often, match, etc.	/t/
Receipt, cupboard, coup, etc.	/p/
Finger, bird, cart, etc.	/r/

Differences between the consonants systems of RP and the General Indian English (GIE)

1. The voiceless plosives are unaspirated in all positions of General Indian English. But in RP, they are aspirated when they occur initially in stressed syllables.
2. The /ŋ/ sound doesn't occur word finally in GIE. A /g/ is usually introduced by Indian speakers after /ŋ/, may be because word finally /ŋ/ is spelt 'ng' as in 'wing, sing, ping, etc.
3. The sounds /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are palatal affricates in GIE, which means that they are articulated with the tip of the tongue down and so they are not palate alveolar affricates as in RP.
4. The /r/ sound is invariably a rolled or a tap /r/ in GIE, whereas in RP, the sound has various other phonetic realizations. Besides, most Indians pronounce /r/ wherever it is found in spelling.
5. Indians tend to prolong the consonant sound in words with medial double consonant letters because in most of the Indian languages, the spelling represents the pronunciation and double consonants occur among them. The examples are , 'supper, utter , rubber, etc. In RP , double consonants do not occur and these words are pronounced as /'sʌpər/, /'ʌtə /, /'rʌbə/ respectively.
6. GIE doesn't differentiate between the RP fricative /v/ and semi vowel /w/. They are replaced with frictionless continuant.
7. The alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ in RP are replaced in GIE by retroflex plosives /ɖ/ and /ɗ/
8. Dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ of RP are replaced by dental plosives in GIE.

Differences between the vowel systems of RP and the General Indian English (GIE)

1. There are two back vowel sounds in RP. They are /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/. In GIE on the other hand, there is only one back vowel sound - /ɒ/. Therefore, no distinction can be made in the pronunciation of the words 'cot' and 'caught' GIE.
2. We can find three central vowels in RP. They are /ʌ/, /ə/, and /ɜ:/. But GIE has only one central vowel and it is /ə/
3. RP has eight diphthongs whereas GIE has only six. The RP diphthong /eɪ/ as in 'take' is replaced by the pure vowel /e:/ and /əʊ/ as in 'no' is replaced by the pure vowel /o:/ in the English of the Indian speakers.
4. The RP sound /ɑ:/ as in 'far' is more back than the /a:/, which is the GIE equivalent.
5. The GIE equivalent of RP /eə/ as in 'fare' has a closer vowel as the first element.
6. Certain distinctions affected by the use of different vowels in RP are realised in GIE by the use of /r/. The examples are:

	RP	GIE
Shut	/ʃʌt/	/ʃət/
Shirt	/ʃɜ:t/	/ʃɜ:rt/

2.5.4 Phonetic Transcription

The word 'tongue' could cause difficulty, unless you are proficient in English, as it has sounds which are not pronounced. The word 'psychology' too poses the same difficulty. The words 'city' and 'cat' have the letter 'c' but they are pronounced differently. So many such disparities can be solved by using phonetic symbols and transcribing the spelling to symbols. As already mentioned there is no one-to-one correspondence between the 26 letters of the alphabet and the 44 phonemes of English. Each letter of the alphabet does not always represent one sound. English is notorious for the difference between its spelling and pronunciation.

Phonetic transcription is a method which overcomes these difficulties in pronunciation. It has one symbol corresponding to one sound. Phonetic transcription is the process of rendering speech into symbols. You have already learnt the 44 symbols. Hence you can now transcribe words and sentences easily.

There are two types of transcription- allophonic and phonemic

Allophonic Transcription

In this transcription the symbols of variants of phonemes called allophones are used along with phonemic symbols. The symbols for clear and dark /l/, aspirated and unaspirated variants of plosives and other such allophones are also used. Since it is a detailed transcription, it is also called narrow transcription.



Phonemic Transcription

This type of transcription is also called broad transcription. It is based on the principle of one phoneme one sound. Here only the 44 phonemes are used. The variants of a phoneme, that is, its allophones are not used. The transcription is placed between two slant lines. This is the transcription that you are expected to write.

2.5.4.1 Practice in Phonetic Transcription

Take a look at the following set of words and their corresponding transcriptions.

Wit, stick, rich	/ wɪt/ , / stɪk/, / rɪtʃ/
Beat , sheep, please	/bi:t/, / ʃi:p/, / pli:z/
Let, rent, health	/let/ ,/rent/ ,/helθ/
Fat, cat, lamp	/fæt/, /kæt/, /læmp/
Blush, couple, blood	/blʌʃ/, /'kʌpl/, /blʌd/
Class, clerk, laugh	/klɑ:s/, /klɑ:k/, /lɑ:f/
Sorry, holiday, what	/'sɒri/, /'hɒlədeɪ/, /wɒt/
Wall, war, horse,	/wɔ:l/, /wɔ:(r)/, /hɔ:s/
Woman, would, courier	/'wʊmən/, /wʊd/, /kʊr.i.ər/
Lose, food, juice	/lu:z/, /fu:d/, /dʒu:s/
First, learn, work	/fɜ:st/, /lɜ:n/, /wɜ:k/
Terrible, oppose, postman	/'terəbl/, /ə'pəʊz/, /'pəʊst.mən/
Train, lady	/treɪn/, /'leɪdi/
Affair, rare	/ə'feə(r)/, /reə(r)/
Sphere, clear	/sfɪər/, /klɪə(r)/
Toil, coin	/tɔɪl/, /kɔɪn/
Try, light	/traɪ/, /laɪt/
Role, so	/rəʊl/, /səʊ/

While transcribing sentences and passages, you need to follow certain rules:

- ▶ While transcribing words in isolation, put them between single slant lines as shown above.
- ▶ For polysyllabic words stress has to be marked on the correct syllable as marked in the above examples.
- ▶ While transcribing sentences, the whole sentence is to be put within double slant lines. Clauses are to be differentiated by a single slant line. The content words in a sentence are to be marked with stress but not to be put within slant lines.
- ▶ The tonic syllable in a sentence is to be marked with intonation diacritic.
- ▶ The function words are not to be marked with stress. The weak forms of function words are to be used. In fact, remember to transcribe as you would speak the sentences in continuous speech.
- ▶ Observe linking /r/ rule and rules for the past tense and plural ending.
- ▶ Before practising transcription two sets of rules would be useful:

Phonetic realisations of plural ending –s/-es and past tense endings –d/-ed

1. Past tense ending

a. /t/ is used after voiceless consonants except /t/.

passed /pɑːst/

worked /wɜːkt/

talked /tɔːkt/

guessed /gest/

b. /d/ is used after voiced consonants except /d/.

loved /lʌvd/

famed /feɪmd/

used /juːzd/

caged /keɪdʒd/

c. /ɪd/ is used after /t/ and /d/.

rejected /rɪˈdʒektɪd/

waited /ˈweɪtɪd/

ended /ˈendɪd/

decided /dɪˈsaɪdɪd/

2. Plural ending

a. /s/ is used after voiceless consonants other than the sibilants /ʃ/, /s/ and /ʒ/.

maps /mæps/

cats /kæts/

maths /mæθs/

tracks /træks/



b. /z/ is used after voiced consonants other than the sibilants / dʒ/, /z/ and / ʒ/.

boys /bɔɪz/

dogs /dɒgz/

friends /frɛndz/

days /deɪz/

c. /ɪz/ is used after the sibilants / ʃ/, / ʒ/, / s/, / z/, / dʒ/ and / ʒ/.

foxes /'fɒksɪz/

bunches /'bʌntʃɪz/

losses /'lɒsɪz/

beaches /'bi:tʃɪz/

Now examine the transcriptions of the following sentences.

What is your name?

/wɒt ɪz jɔ: neɪm/

Do you like mangoes?

/du: ju: laɪk 'mæŋgəʊz/

Will you come here?

/wɪl ju: kʌm hɪə/

They make kites.

/ðeɪ meɪk kaɪts/

We are leaving for London tomorrow

/wi: ɑ: 'li:vɪŋ fɔ: 'lʌndən tə'mɒrəʊ/

Cats chase rats

/kæts tʃeɪs ræts/

Sun rises in the east

/sʌn 'raɪzɪz ɪn ði i:st/

Children like cookies

/'tʃɪldrən laɪk 'kʊkɪz/

It is raining

/ɪt ɪz 'reɪnɪŋ/

These toys are expensive

/ði:z tɔɪz ɑ:r ɪks'pensɪv/

We have finished our examinations

/wi: hæv 'fɪnɪʃt 'aʊər ɪg,zæmɪ'neɪʃənz/

Please choose one from the box

/pli:z tʃu:z wʌn frɒm ðə bɒks/

This flower smells good

/ðɪs 'flaʊə smelz gʊd/

Bees make honey

/bi:z meɪk 'hʌni/

I work every Sunday

/aɪ wɜ:k 'evri 'sʌndeɪ/

Dogs eat meat

/dɒgz i:t mi:t/

She is sleeping right now

/ʃi: ɪz 'sli:pɪŋ raɪt naʊ/

You are getting fat

/ju: ɑ: 'getɪŋ fæt/

I think my neighbour is a good man

/aɪ θɪŋk maɪ 'neɪbər ɪz ə gʊd mæn/

We are late

/wi: ɑ: leɪt/

Go ahead

/gəʊ ə'hed/

Take a look at the transcription of the following paragraphs.

(1)

Nature, however, turned an indulgent eye to the death of the poet. The wolves ran about the forest, the river not attracted by the harbours, flowed through the countryside. The poet died

and his death was mourned by the world, but his works remain unaffected. His poems, his art, will go on living. It was the last afternoon of the poet.

//neɪʃə / haʊ'evə / tʃ:nd ən m'daɪdʒənt aɪ tu: ðə deθ ɒv ðə 'pəʊɪt // ðə wɜ:lvs ræn ə'baʊt ðə 'fɔ:rist / ðə 'rɪvə nɒt ə'træktɪd baɪ ðə 'hɑ:bəz / fləʊd θru: ðə 'kʌntri saɪd // ðə 'pəʊɪt daɪd ænd hɪz deθ wɜ: mɔ:nd baɪ ðə wɜ:ld / bʌt hɪz wɜ:ks rɪ'meɪn ,ʌnə'fektɪd // hɪz 'pəʊɪmz / hɪz ɑ:t / wɪl gəʊ ɒn 'lɪvɪŋlɪt wɜ: ðə lɑ:st 'ɑ:ftə'nu:n ɒv ðə 'pəʊɪt //

(2)

Our hero was born into a middle-class family. His father was neither very rich nor highly educated. Yet he was a man of wisdom. His mother was generous enough to feed more people than the members of his family. She belonged to a distinguished family with one of her ancestors having one a great title from the British government. The hero was short and not very good looking though his parents were tall and handsome. They lived in their ancestral house built in the nineteenth century. Though he enjoyed very little luxuries in his childhood, his life was materially and emotionally secure.

//aʊə 'hɪərəʊ wɜ: bɔ:n ɪn tu: ə 'mɪdl klɑ:s 'fæmɪli hɪz 'fa:ðə wɜ: 'naɪðə 'veri rɪʃ nɔ: 'haɪli 'ed-ju:kertɪd // jət hi: wɜ: ə mæn ɒv 'wɪzdəm hɪz 'mʌðə wɜ: 'dʒenərəs ɪ'nʌf tu: fɪ:d mɔ: 'pi:pl ðæn ðə 'membəz ɒv hɪz 'fæmɪli // ʃi: bɪ'ləŋd tu: ə dɪs'tɪŋgwɪʃt 'fæmɪli wɪð wʌn ɒv hɜ:r 'ænsɪstəz 'hævɪŋ wʌn ə greɪt 'taɪtl frəm ðə 'brɪtɪʃ 'ɡʌvnmənt // ðə 'hɪərəʊ wɜ: ʃɔ:t ænd nɒt 'veri gʊd 'lʊkɪŋ ðəʊ hɪz 'peərənts wɜ: tə:l ænd 'hænsəm // ðeɪ lɪvd ɪn ðeər æn'sestrəl haʊs bɪlt ɪn ðə 'naɪn'ti:ŋθ 'sentʃʊri // ðəʊ hi: ɪn'dʒɔɪd 'veri 'lɪtl 'lʌkʃəɪz ɪn hɪz 'ʃaɪldhʊd / hɪz laɪf wɜ: mə'tɪəriəli ænd ɪ'məʊʃənli sɪ'kjʊəl //

(3)

They offered bowls of water into which his father used to dip his fingers and utter a prayer. They believed that the water thus sanctified was good for the sick. Some of them used to come later to thank the old man, but he humbly attributed the cure to the almighty. He and his friend, the chief priest of the nearby temple, used to sit together and discuss spiritual matters. The boy learnt from his father that prayer was merely a communion of the spirit between people.

//ðeɪ 'ɒfəd bəʊlz ɒv 'wɔ:tər ɪntu: wɪʃ hɪz 'fa:ðə ju:zd tu: dɪp hɪz 'fɪŋgəz ænd 'ʌtər ə preə // ðeɪ bɪ'li:vd ðæt ðə 'wɔ:tə ðʌs 'sæŋktɪfaɪd wɜ: gʊd fɔ: ðə sɪk // sʌm ɒv ðem ju:zd tu: kʌm 'leɪtə tu: θæŋk ði əʊld mæn / bʌt hi: 'hʌmbli ə'trɪbjʊ:tɪd ðə kʃʊə tu: ði ɔ:l'maɪti // hi: ænd hɪz frend / ðə ʃɪ:f pri:st ɒv ðə 'nɪəbaɪ 'templ / ju:zd tu: sɪt tə'geðər ænd dɪs'kʌs 'spɪrɪtʃʊəl 'mætəz // ðə bɔɪ lɜ:nt frəm hɪz 'fa:ðə ðæt preə wɜ: 'mɪəli ə kə'mju:njən ɒv ðə 'spɪrɪt bɪ'twi:n 'pi:pəl //

(4)

He was on the list of selected candidates seeking admission to the Indian Institute of Technology, but education in that prestigious institution was an expensive affair. Around a thousand rupees, which was a huge sum in those days, was immediately required. His father could by no means spare the amount. But the tide swept in favour of him. His sister mortgaged her gold



bangles and chain for his education. He was deeply moved by her desire to see him educated and her willingness to make any sacrifice for it. She had absolute confidence in his abilities and was, therefore, aware that her efforts would never come to nought.

//hi: wɒz ɒn ðə lɪst ɒv sɪ'lektɪd 'kændɪ,deɪts 'si:kɪŋ əd'mɪʃən tu: ði 'ɪndiən 'ɪnstɪtju:t ɒv tɛk'nɒlədʒi/ bʌt ,ɛdju:'keɪʃən ɪn ðæt prɛ'stɪdʒəs ,ɪnstɪ'tju:ʃən wɒz ən ɪks'pensɪv ə'feə//ə'raʊnd ə 'θaʊzənd ru:'pi:z/ wɪʃ wɒz ə hju:dʒ sʌm ɪn ðəʊz deɪz/wɒz ɪ'mi:diətli ɪ'kwaɪəd// hɪz 'fɑ:ðə kʊd bə nəʊ mi:nz speə ði ə'maʊnt//bʌt ðə taɪd sweɪpt ɪn 'feɪvər ɒv hɪm//hɪz 'sɪstə 'mɑ:ɡɪdʒd hɜ: ɡəʊld 'bæŋɡlz ænd ʃeɪn fɔ: hɪz ,ɛdju:'keɪʃən//hi: wɒz 'di:pli mu:vd bə hɜ: dɪ'zərə tu: sɪ: hɪm 'ɛdju:kertɪd ænd hɜ: 'wɪljənɪs tu: meɪk 'eni 'sækɪfais fɔ:r ɪt// ʃɪ: hæd 'æbsəlu:t 'kɒnfɪdəns ɪn hɪz ə'bɪlɪtɪz ænd wɒz/ 'ðeəfɔ:/ ə'weə ðæt hɜ:r 'ɛfəts wʊd 'nevə kʌm tu: nɔ:t//

(5)

The major issue of feminism is the equality of men denied to women. Women are often exploited and abused in a male-dominated society. They have to struggle continuously to maintain their dignity in a world which is controlled by male folks. The character in the novel had a very miserable childhood. The novel also deals with the issue of the stigma associated with untouchability.

//ðə 'meɪdʒər 'ɪʃu: ɒv 'femɪnɪzəm ɪz ði i:'kwɒlɪti ɒv men dɪ'naɪd tu: 'wɪmɪn// 'wɪmɪn ɑ:r 'ɒfən ɪks'plɔɪtɪd ænd ə'bju:zd ɪn ðə meɪl'dɒmɪneɪtɪd sə'saɪə-ti//ðeɪ hæv tu: 'strʌɡl kən'tɪnjuəsli tu: meɪn'teɪn ðeə 'dɪɡnɪ-ti ɪn ə wɜ:ld wɪʃ ɪz kən'trəʊld bə meɪl fəʊks//ðə 'kærɪktər ɪn ðə 'nɒvəl hæd ə'veɪ 'mɪzərəbl 'ʃaɪld-hʊd//ðə 'nɒvəl 'ɔ:lsoʊ dɪ:lz wɪð ði 'ɪʃu: ɒv ðə 'stɪgmə ə'səʊʃɪeɪtɪd wɪð ʌn,tʌʃə'bɪlɪti//

Recap

- ▶ IPA represents speech sounds consistently.
- ▶ The International Phonetic Association developed the IPA.
- ▶ IPA symbols represent sounds rather than spelling letters.
- ▶ One symbol ideally corresponds to one sound value.
- ▶ Phonemic transcription records contrastive sounds.
- ▶ Phonetic transcription records finer detail.
- ▶ Slashes enclose phonemic transcription.
- ▶ Square brackets enclose phonetic transcription.
- ▶ Diacritics add detailed phonetic information.
- ▶ English consonant symbols largely resemble Roman letters.
- ▶ Several vowel symbols are unfamiliar to beginners.
- ▶ Length may be marked with /:/.
- ▶ Stress can be marked in transcription.

- ▶ The schwa represents a common weak vowel.
- ▶ Dictionaries use IPA to guide pronunciation.
- ▶ Transcription reveals silent letters.
- ▶ Transcription distinguishes homographs with different pronunciation.
- ▶ Received Pronunciation is a reference accent of British English.
- ▶ RP is not the speech of all British people.
- ▶ General Indian English is a systematic variety.
- ▶ Indian English reflects multilingual influence.
- ▶ Some RP vowel contrasts may differ in Indian English.
- ▶ Rhoticity may vary between English accents.
- ▶ Accent difference does not imply linguistic deficiency.
- ▶ IPA supports pronunciation teaching, listening and linguistic analysis.

Objective Questions

1. What does IPA stand for?
2. Which organisation developed the IPA?
3. What do slashes indicate?
4. What do square brackets indicate?
5. What symbol represents the weak central vowel?
6. What sign marks vowel length?
7. What is a standard British reference accent called?
8. What variety is abbreviated GIE?
9. What adds fine detail to an IPA symbol?
10. What does IPA represent directly?

Answers

1. International Phonetic Alphabet
2. IPA Association
3. Phonemic
4. Phonetic
5. /ə/



6. Colon
7. RP
8. General Indian English
9. Diacritic
10. Sounds

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Why is ordinary English spelling insufficient for pronunciation guidance?
2. Distinguish broad phonemic and narrow phonetic transcription.
3. Transcribe ten familiar monosyllabic words using IPA.
4. Explain the functions of length, stress and diacritic marks.
5. Compare selected features of RP and General Indian English.
6. How can IPA support dictionary use and autonomous learning?
7. Identify and correct errors in a sample phonemic transcription.

Assignments

1. Prepare an IPA symbol chart with a keyword example for every major English phoneme.
2. Transcribe a fifty-word passage phonemically and provide the orthographic version alongside it.
3. Compare IPA transcriptions from two reputable dictionaries and explain any accent-based differences.
4. Record your reading of a short passage and annotate five pronunciation features using IPA.
5. Develop a beginner-friendly worksheet for teaching ten difficult IPA symbols.
6. Prepare a comparative note on RP and General Indian English without treating either as linguistically inferior.
7. Create a pronunciation portfolio containing transcription, recording, self-evaluation and an improvement plan.

Suggested Reading

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BLOCK - 03

Morphology



Introduction to Morphology

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ explain morphology and accurately distinguish morphemes, morphs and allomorphs using appropriate linguistic examples
- ▶ segment simple and complex English words into constituent morphemes and classify each as free, bound, lexical or grammatical
- ▶ analyse how prefixes, suffixes, bases and roots contribute to the form and meaning of English words
- ▶ apply morphological principles to identify inflection, derivation and compounding in unfamiliar words and short passages

Prerequisite

Every familiar word carries a hidden architecture. Consider the word “unhappiness.” A learner may initially see it as a single item, but a closer look reveals three meaningful parts: un- + happy + -ness. Each part contributes something specific: the prefix reverses the meaning, the base supplies the central idea, and the suffix converts an adjective into a noun. This ability to look inside words is the starting point of morphology.

You already know that language is built from sounds and that words function inside sentences. This unit now shifts attention from sound patterns to word structure. Before proceeding, recall basic grammatical categories such as noun, verb, adjective and adverb, and notice how words change in ordinary use: book/books, walk/walked, kind/kindness and legal/illegal. Such changes show that words are not indivisible blocks; many are constructed from smaller meaningful units.

Imagine sorting a box of building pieces. Some pieces can stand independently, like “book” or “write,” while others work only when attached, like -s, -ed or un-. Morphology studies these pieces, the rules by which they combine, and the meanings produced by their combinations. The unit therefore prepares you to recognise morphemes, differ-



entiate free and bound forms, and understand why one morpheme may appear through different spoken forms called allomorphs.

Keywords

Morphology-Morpheme, Allomorph, Morph-Free, Bound Morphemes-Compounding, Inflection, Derivation, Word formation processes

Discussion

3.1.1 Morphology

For every word we know, we have some knowledge of its internal structure. For instance, we conclude intuitively that it is not possible to divide the word tree into any meaningful parts. Our intuition tells us that the word tree is made up of two parts: the word tree and an extra element -s (called the plural ending). Morphology is a branch of linguistics that examines the internal structure of words and the interconnectedness among words.

There are many questions that have been posed by morphology.

- ▶ Firstly, it asks us what are words.
- ▶ It also asks us what are the building blocks in the formation of complex words and how more complex words are built up from simpler parts.
- ▶ Further, it poses the question of how the meaning of a complex word is related to the meaning of its parts.
- ▶ It also provides scope for exploring how the individual words of a language are related to other words of the language.

3.1.2 Morpheme

Simply speaking, morphemes are the smallest units in a language that have meaning. It is widely acknowledged that words must be classified into at least two divisions: simple and complex. A Simple word such as 'tree' is a minimal unit; there seems to be no way to break it down into meaningful parts. In contrast, the word 'trees' consists of two parts: the noun 'tree' and the plural ending -s. The basic parts of a complex word-in other words, the building blocks that make it up are called morphemes. We can say that the word 'trees' is made up of two morphemes- the base morpheme 'tree' and the plural morpheme -s, which is attached to the base morpheme. In short, morphemes are the minimal units of word formation in a language which cannot be broken down further into meaningful, recognisable parts.

In other words, morphemes can be defined as the smallest meaningful unit in the structure of a language. The smallest meaningful unit implies a unit that cannot be subdivided into further units without destroying or significantly altering the meaning. For example, 'unhappiness' can be further divided into three meaningful units and as such it consists of three morphemes 'un', '-happy' and '-ness.' There are cases where a single phoneme may be a

morpheme. For example, the indefinite article 'a', the 's' in 'boys', etc. Thus, a morpheme may be a meaningful phoneme or group of phonemes which cannot be divided further without destroying or changing the meaning in a given language. The sentence "the girls laughed at the boys" has nine morphemes, namely:

The + girl + -s + laugh + -ed + at + the + boy + -s

3.1.2.1 Free And Bound Morphemes

Before discussing the types of morphemes, it is very important for us to know about the terms affix, prefix and suffix. An affix is a morpheme added to the base or root of a word to form a new word. They are of two types: prefix and suffix. A prefix is an affix that is added to the front of a root or stem. They are also called pre-base. Suffixes, on the other hand, are affixes added to the end of a word. It may be inflectional such as the plural endings (-s in boys) or derivational such as '-ness' in 'kindness'. They are also called endings.

Morphemes can be of two types: free morphemes and bound morphemes. A free morpheme is capable of standing alone as an independent word in a phrase. For instance, the word 'tree' in *John sat on the tree* is a free morpheme. Most lexical morphemes are free morphemes. Some common examples include 'boy', 'Tree', 'animal', 'sit', etc. A bound morpheme cannot stand alone as an independent word but must be attached to another morpheme-as, for instance, the plural morpheme '-s' which can exist only in combination with nouns or 'cran-', which has to be combined with 'berry'. They do not have meaning in isolation. For example, -s in boys, '-ing' in doing, '-ed' in resurrected, 'un-' in unhappy, etc. Bound morphemes occur with other morphemes that may be free or bound. Certain

bound morphemes are known as affixes (eg: '-s') whereas others are known as bound base morphemes (eg: 'cran-'). Affixes assume the name prefixes when they are attached at the beginning of another morpheme, as for example, 're-' in words like rewrite and rethink. They are referred to as suffixes when they are attached at the end of another morpheme as for instance, '-ize' in words like equalize and modernize. The morpheme to which an affix is attached is called the base morpheme.

Hence a word like 'house' or 'dog' is called a free morpheme as it can exist in isolation and cannot be subdivided into smaller meaningful parts. The word 'quickest' consists of two morphemes, one bound('-est') and one free('quick'). The '-est' is a bound morpheme since it cannot stand alone and be meaningful.

3.1.3 Morphs And Allomorphs

In the branch of morphology, morphemes are the fundamental, indivisible units of a word that possess lexical and grammatical meaning. Morphs and allomorphs are two entities that are seen as the phonological manifestation of a morpheme. A morph represents the formation of a morpheme; in other words, its phonetic realisation whereas an allomorph helps us understand how that morpheme sounds when a speaker pronounces it in a particular language or its phonological realization. Sidney Greenbaum, in his book *The Oxford English Grammar*, clearly states the difference between morphs and allomorphs. "When a morpheme is represented by a segment, that segment is a morph. If a morpheme can be represented by more than one morph, the morphs are allomorphs of the same morpheme: the prefixes in-(insane), il-(illegible), im-(impossible), ir-(irregular) are allomorphs of the same negative morpheme."

Morphs and allomorphs are both means to understand the phonetic expressions of mor-



phemes which are the basic meaningful units of language in the study of morphology. For example, the word “unhappy” has two meaningful parts: “un” and “happy”. Each of these parts is a morpheme and the phonetic realizations of these morphemes are called morphs. Morphs can be of two types: lexical or grammatical. Lexical morphs are the meaningful roots; words that are able to stand alone as an independent word such as “happy” or “man”.

Grammatical roots, on the other hand, modify the root in a meaningful way, but may not stand alone as an independent word; suffixes like *-able* or prefixes like *un-* are examples of grammatical morphs.

Allomorphs can be understood as phonetic variants of a morph. A classic example of allomorph can be seen in the plural suffix in English, which has the allomorphs *-s*, *-z* or *-ez* depending on the phonetic environment.

Recap

- ▶ Morphology studies the internal structure and formation of words.
- ▶ A morpheme is the smallest meaningful or grammatical unit.
- ▶ A simple word may contain only one morpheme.
- ▶ A complex word contains two or more morphemes.
- ▶ “Trees” contains the morphemes *tree* and *-s*.
- ▶ “Unhappiness” contains *un-*, *happy* and *-ness*.
- ▶ A free morpheme can occur independently as a word.
- ▶ A bound morpheme must attach to another morpheme.
- ▶ Lexical morphemes carry central dictionary meaning.
- ▶ Grammatical morphemes express relations or grammatical information.
- ▶ An affix is a bound morpheme added to a base.
- ▶ A prefix occurs before a base.
- ▶ A suffix occurs after a base.
- ▶ The form to which an affix is attached is called the base.
- ▶ A root carries the central lexical meaning of a word.
- ▶ A morph is the concrete spoken or written form of a morpheme.
- ▶ Allomorphs are variant forms of the same morpheme.
- ▶ The English plural morpheme has */s/*, */z/* and */ɪz/* allomorphs.
- ▶ *In-*, *im-*, *il-* and *ir-* can realise the same negative morpheme.
- ▶ Morpheme boundaries help explain relationships among words.
- ▶ Morphological analysis connects word form with word meaning.
- ▶ Inflection adds grammatical information without creating a new lexeme.
- ▶ Derivation commonly creates a new word or changes word class.
- ▶ Compounding combines free forms to create a new lexical item.

Objective Questions

1. What branch of linguistics studies the internal structure of words?
2. What is the smallest meaningful unit of language?
3. What type of morpheme can stand alone?
4. What type of morpheme must attach to another form?
5. What is an affix placed before a base called?
6. What is an affix placed after a base called?
7. What term denotes the concrete realisation of a morpheme?
8. What are variant realisations of one morpheme called?
9. How many morphemes occur in “unhelpful”?
10. What is the central meaning-bearing element of a word called?

Answers

1. Morphology
2. Morpheme
3. Free morpheme
4. Bound morpheme
5. Prefix
6. Suffix
7. Morph
8. Allomorphs
9. Three
10. Root

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Define morphology and explain why the internal structure of words deserves systematic study.
2. Distinguish a word from a morpheme, supporting your answer with two examples.
3. Segment “disagreement,” “teachers” and “reusable” into morphemes and label each part.



4. Explain free and bound morphemes with examples from everyday English.
5. Differentiate root, base and affix and illustrate their relationships in one complex word.
6. Explain the relationship among morpheme, morph and allomorph.
7. Analyse the plural endings in cats, dogs and buses as allomorphic realisations.

Assignments

1. Prepare a morphological analysis of twenty words from a newspaper article, identifying roots, affixes and morpheme types.
2. Construct a chart showing at least ten free morphemes and the different bound morphemes that can combine with each.
3. Investigate the English plural and past-tense allomorphs and explain the phonological environments in which they occur.
4. Compare the morphological structures of five simple words and five complex words, explaining how meaning is built in each.
5. Collect ten words containing negative prefixes and classify the prefixes as un-, in-, im-, il-, ir-, dis- or non-.
6. Create a short teaching activity that helps beginners identify morpheme boundaries in English words.
7. Write an analytical note on how morphological awareness improves vocabulary learning, spelling and reading comprehension.

Suggested Reading

1. Bloomfield, Leonard. *Language*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1933.
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Word Formation Processes

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ differentiate inflectional and derivational processes by examining their grammatical, semantic and word-class effects
- ▶ analyse compound words and determine their heads, structures and grammatical categories
- ▶ identify and illustrate major English word-formation processes, including affixation, blending, clipping, acronymy, borrowing, coinage, back-formation and conversion
- ▶ apply word-formation knowledge to explain how social change, technology and contact with other languages expand the English lexicon

Prerequisite

Language grows whenever speakers need names for new objects, experiences and ideas. The words smartphone, podcast, selfie and webinar were not part of everyday English a few decades ago, yet they now appear naturally in conversation. Each entered the language through a recognisable process: compounding, blending, shortening, borrowing or coinage. Word formation is therefore not merely a grammatical topic; it is a record of social and technological change.

Recall from the previous unit that words may contain roots and affixes. Now compare walk, walks, walked and walking. These forms belong to the same basic word and differ mainly in grammatical information. Contrast them with happy, unhappy, happiness and happily, where affixes alter meaning or word class. The first group illustrates inflection; the second demonstrates derivation. Recognising this contrast is essential for understanding how English grammar and vocabulary interact.



Before studying the unit, observe words around you: newspaper headlines, mobile applications, advertisements and campus conversations. You may find compounds such as classroom, clipped forms such as lab, blends such as infotainment, acronyms such as UNESCO, borrowings such as bungalow and back-formations such as edit from editor. These examples show that English creates words through multiple productive strategies. The unit will help you classify these strategies and evaluate their contribution to lexical growth.

Keywords

Inflection, Derivation, Compounding, Affixes, Blending

3.2.1 Word Formation Processes

3.2.1.1 Inflection and Derivation

Inflection refers to the ways in which bound grammatical morphemes join with root words to be realized as grammatical words. Now let us list out some affixes of English that are known as inflectional affixes:

a. Plural Marker -s

girl-girls

(The girls are there)

b) Progressive marker -ing

sing-singing

(He is singing)

c) Past Tense marker -ed

walk-walked

(She walked)

It should be noted that all inflectional affixes

in English are suffixes, unlike in the case of derivational affixes which include both suffixes and prefixes.

Derivation, on the other hand, refers to the ways in which bound lexical morphemes join with root words to be realised as lexical words. Examples of derivational affixes include de-, re-, -ize, -ation, etc.

Now let us examine some basic points of difference between inflectional and derivational affixes in English.

1. Firstly, inflectional affixes do not change the grammatical class of the base morpheme. For example, both 'sit' and 'sits' are verbs; both 'boy' and 'boys' are nouns. However, derivational affixes often alter the grammatical category of the base morpheme. For instance, 'read' is a verb but 'readable' is an adjective.
2. Secondly, inflectional and derivative suffixes position themselves in a certain relative order within words; that is inflectional

suffixes follow derivational suffixes. For instance, in *modernize-modernizes*, the inflectional suffix -s follows the derivational suffix -ize.

3. Finally, for inflectional affixes, the relation between the meaning of the root and the root+ affix is quite regular. However, in the case of derivational affixes, the relation between the meaning of the root and the root+ affix is often unpredictable; for instance, there are pairs like *read-readable* and *wash-washable* in which the -able form has attained additional meaning and has undergone 'semantic drift'. Such semantic drift is not seen in the case of a root+ inflectional affix; for instance, a word like 'trees' is simply the plural of 'tree' and has not attained any additional meaning.

3.2.1.2 Compounds and Compounding

Compounding is a technique by which new words can be formed from already existing ones. In this process, what we do is that we form a 'compound' word by joining together individual words. For example, we can join the noun 'ape' with the noun 'man' to form the compound noun 'ape-man'; the adjective 'red' can be combined with the adjective 'hot' to form the compound adjective 'red-hot'; similarly, the adjective 'sick' can be joined together with the noun 'room' to get the compound noun 'sickroom'.

It must be remembered that the part of speech of the whole compound word will be the same as that of the rightmost member of the com-

pound, called the head of the compound. For instance, the head of the compound 'high chair' is a noun (the noun 'chair') and hence the whole compound 'high chair' is also a noun. Similarly, the head or the rightmost member of the compound 'overdo' is a verb (the verb 'do') and as such the whole compound is also a verb.

Coined words

These are previously non-existent words that keep entering a language. This happens when a speaker coins a new word by inventing a new sound sequence and associating it with a new meaning. For instance, adolescent slang has contributed words like 'geek' and 'dweeb' to English language.

Acronyms

In words like RADAR and LASER each of the letters in them is the first letter (or letters) of some other complete word. For instance, RADAR originates from 'radio detecting and ranging' and LASER derives from 'light amplification (by) stimulated emission (of) radiation'. It should be noted that although these words are originally created as acronyms, we tend to forget such origins and the acronyms become part of English vocabulary.

Blends

New words can be formed from existing ones through many blending processes; for instance, 'brunch' (from 'breakfast' + 'lunch') and 'edutainment' (from 'education' + 'entertainment')

Clipped words

One subcategory of blending is the condensation of a word to one of its parts. For example,

fax(facsimile)



flu(influenza)

ad(advertisement)

Please note that these clipped words may not retain their original meaning.

Generified words

Words such as 'Kleenex' and 'Xerox' demonstrate another strategy for the creation of new words, namely, using particular product brand names as names for the products in general. For instance, 'Kleenex', a brand name for facial tissue is now used to denote facial tissue itself. Similarly, Xerox is the name of the business company that produces a photocopying machine; however, it has lost its brand-name connotation and is now used to denote the ac-

tivity of photocopying in general.

Borrowings

Another way of forming new words is to "borrow" words from other languages. Examples include 'kindergarten'(German), 'croissant'(French) and 'sushi'(Japanese).

Prefixes

We insert prefixes before the base or stem of a word. They are added to the beginning of a word to create a new word with a different meaning. They are used to create a new word opposite in meaning to the word the prefix is attached to. Prefix can also make a word negative.

Base word	Prefixed word	Type of meaning
Possible	impossible	opposite
Able	unable	opposite/negation
Payment	non-payment	negation

Suffixes

We add suffixes after the base of a word to show what class of word it is. A letter or group of letters is added at the end of a word thereby

forming a new word. The word class of the new word thus formed is different from that of the original word. For instance, -ful changes verbs to adjectives; -ment and -ion changes verbs to nouns.

Words	suffix	New words
forget	-ful	forgetful
govern	-ment	government
create	-ion	creation

Back formation

This is a process in which we remove part of a word, usually something that we think is a suffix or sometimes a prefix. For example,

to liaise(back formed from the noun *liaison*)

Can you please liaise with John and agree about the decision?

To enthuse(back formed from the noun *enthusiasm*)

He is always enthusing about his new companion.

Declension

The inflection of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, determiners, participles, prepositions, articles etc is called declension. For example,

smart-->smarter

glass-->glasses

John-->John's

Her-->Herself

them-->themselves

Recap

- ▶ Word formation explains how new lexical items are created.
- ▶ Inflection modifies a word for grammatical purposes.
- ▶ Inflection does not normally create a new lexeme.
- ▶ English inflectional affixes are suffixes.
- ▶ Plural -s is an inflectional suffix.
- ▶ Past-tense -ed is an inflectional suffix.
- ▶ Progressive -ing is an inflectional suffix.
- ▶ Derivation creates a new word or new lexical meaning.
- ▶ Derivational affixes may be prefixes or suffixes.
- ▶ Derivation may change the grammatical category of a base.
- ▶ Readable is derived from the verb read.
- ▶ Inflectional suffixes follow derivational suffixes.
- ▶ Compounding joins two or more existing words.
- ▶ The rightmost element often functions as the head of an English compound.
- ▶ The head usually determines the compound's word class.
- ▶ Blending combines shortened parts of two words.
- ▶ Brunch is a blend of breakfast and lunch.
- ▶ Clipping shortens a longer word without major change in meaning.
- ▶ Lab is clipped from laboratory.
- ▶ Acronyms are formed from initial letters and pronounced as words.



- ▶ Initialisms are pronounced letter by letter.
- ▶ Borrowing adopts words from other languages.
- ▶ Coinage creates a previously nonexistent lexical form.
- ▶ Generification turns a brand name into a general expression.
- ▶ Back-formation removes a supposed affix from an existing word.
- ▶ Conversion changes word class without adding an affix.
- ▶ Prefixes usually modify meaning.
- ▶ Suffixes often signal or change word class.
- ▶ Language contact is a major source of vocabulary expansion.
- ▶ Word-formation patterns reveal the creativity and adaptability of English.

Objective Questions

1. What process adds grammatical information without creating a new lexeme?
2. What process commonly creates a new word by adding an affix?
3. What word-formation process produced “toothbrush”?
4. What is the rightmost determining element of a compound called?
5. What process produced “brunch”?
6. What process shortened “laboratory” to “lab”?
7. What process produced “radar” from initial letters?
8. What process brought “sushi” into English?
9. What process formed “edit” historically from “editor”?
10. What process changes “email” from a noun into a verb without an affix?

Answers

1. Inflection
2. Derivation
3. Compounding
4. Head
5. Blending
6. Clipping
7. Acronymy
8. Borrowing

9. Back-formation
10. Conversion

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain inflection and derivation and state three differences between them.
2. Analyse the morphemic structure of “modernisations” and identify the order of affixes.
3. Explain how the head determines the grammatical category of an English compound.
4. Distinguish blending, clipping, acronymy and initialism with examples.
5. Explain borrowing and discuss why languages borrow words.
6. Differentiate back-formation and conversion with suitable examples.
7. Assess how digital technology has stimulated new word formation in English.

Assignments

1. Compile fifty recently used English words from digital media and classify each according to its word-formation process.
2. Prepare a comparative table of inflectional and derivational affixes, including at least fifteen examples of each.
3. Analyse twenty English compounds, identify their heads and classify them as nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs.
4. Conduct a small survey of borrowed words used in Indian English and trace the donor language wherever possible.
5. Create a glossary of blends, clippings, acronyms and initialisms used in education, media, science and technology.
6. Write a case study of one brand name that has undergone generification, discussing linguistic and social implications.
7. Design an outcome-based classroom exercise through which learners create and justify ten plausible new English words.



Suggested Reading

1. Bauer, Laurie. *English Word-Formation*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.
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SGOU



Form Class and Function Class Words

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ identify content/form-class words and structural/function-class words in authentic English sentences
- ▶ explain the lexical and grammatical functions performed by nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, auxiliaries, determiners, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions
- ▶ differentiate open and closed word classes by applying tests involving meaning, membership, affixation, stress and syntactic distribution
- ▶ analyse how form-class and function-class words jointly create meaning, grammatical cohesion and rhythm in spoken and written English

Prerequisite

Take the sentence “The young researcher will present the findings at the conference.” Some words immediately create a picture: young, researcher, present, findings and conference. Other words - the, will and at - do not supply the main message, yet the sentence would become incomplete or grammatically unstable without them. This contrast introduces two broad kinds of words: those carrying lexical content and those organising grammatical relationships.

You are already familiar with traditional parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, articles, prepositions and conjunctions. Modern linguistics groups these items according to their behaviour. Nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs form large, expandable categories. New members such as podcast, google, viral and digitally can enter them easily. Articles, auxiliaries, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions form relatively fixed categories to which new members are rarely added.



This distinction also affects pronunciation. In normal English speech, content words generally receive stress because they carry the central message, while function words are often reduced and unstressed. Read aloud: “THE STUDENTS HAVE COMPLETED THE PROJECT.” You will probably emphasise students, completed and project more strongly than the, have and the. The unit builds on this observation to explore content and structural words, form and function classes, and open and closed categories.

Keywords

Identifying the grammatical labels and functional labels of words, content/lexical words, functional/structural words, form class and function class words, open and closed classes

At the beginning of this unit, we learned about the classification of words into different syntactical units (parts of speech). However, theorists have identified certain problems associated with such a classification and hence this system has become outdated now. In its place, linguists have introduced a new system in which they have classified words into two-word classes namely content words (form class/open class words) and structural words (function class/closed class words). In this unit, we are going to study this new classification. First, we will look at content words and structural words. Then we will discuss the details of form class and function class words followed by open class and closed class words.

3.3.1 Content Words and Structural Words

Consider the following sets of sentences.

He is a **handsome** man.

I bought a **radio** yesterday.

He **often** comes to my house.

My name is **Raju**.

Upon close observation, it becomes clear to us that the words in bold give us information/meaning/has content. Such words are called content words.

Now consider the following sentences.

You **must** study hard to get good marks.

There is a cockroach **behind** the curtain.

I ate **an** orange yesterday.

He is sick **so** he can't come to the party.

This pen belongs to **her**.

In the above sentences, the words in bold carry the function of stitching together the content words and do not have meaning as such. Such words are called structural words.

Each word in English is either a content word or a structural word. Let us discuss in detail what these two types of words mean. But before that, you should always keep in mind the two equations given below:

Content=meaning, information

Structural=words for grammar

First, let us discuss Content Words.

Now let us consider some examples to understand content words better.

I bought a **Television** yesterday. (noun)

The **glass** is on the **table**. (noun)

My name is **George**. (noun)

He **believes** in God. (verb)

Raju **works** in LIC. (verb)

Hema **jumped** from the wall. (verb)

She is a **beautiful** girl. (Adjective)

It is a **difficult** problem. (Adjective)

This shop sells **cheap** goods. (Adjective)

The bus stopped **suddenly**. (Adverb)

He **often** comes to my house. (Adverb)

She walks **slowly**. (Adverb)

In the above examples, we note that

Noun=person, place, object or abstract idea

Verb=action or state

Adjective=qualifies or describes a person, place or thing.

Adverb gives us information on how, where or when something happens.

It is clear that the meanings of the above words can be obtained directly from the dictionary. Such words are called content words. 'Lexicon' means dictionary and 'Lexical

means 'relating to dictionary'. Hence content words are lexical words. They include: Nouns, Adjectives, Main verbs, Adverbs

While nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are the most important content words, there are quite a few other words as well that belong to the category of content words. Examples:

a) Negatives like no, not, never

b) Demonstrative pronouns like this, that, these, and those.

c) Question words like what, where, when, how, why

Now let us consider some sentence examples to understand these better.

I have **no** enmity against you. (Negative)

He **does** not smoke. (Negative)

She **never** becomes late to school. (Negative)

This is my uncle. (Demonstrative pronoun)

That is my house. (Demonstrative pronoun)

These are my cousins. (Demonstrative pronoun)

What is your name? (Question word)

Where is your house? (Question word)

When is your marriage? (Question word)

Now let us shift our discussion to Structural Words. Now let us consider some examples to understand structural words better.



They do not have any money.

He **has** cleared the exam. Auxiliary verbs

She **will** come at 5 pm.

He is cooking rice.

The box is on the table.

Raju lives **in** Hyderabad.

Please **be** here at 4pm.

Prepositions

Ram sat between Raju and Sravan.

A plane is flying **above** the city.

A bird is sitting on the tree.

An apple a day keeps **the** doctor away

Articles

Ram and Raju are friends.

Raju is good in Maths **but** weak in English.

Conjunctions

He won't come **since** he is out of station.

I am a teacher by profession.

You should respect your parents. Pronouns

I asked **him** a doubt.

They invited **us** for the function

Auxiliary verbs are used to set up the tense, prepositions indicate relationships in time and space, articles tell us of something that is spe-

cific or one of many, and pronouns refer to other nouns.

Auxiliary verbs=establish the tense

Preposition=shows relationships in time and space

Articles=used to indicate specific or non-specific nouns

Conjunctions=connecting words

Pronouns=Act as substitutes for nouns

The above words are used to connect or stitch together important information. They structure or give shape to the sentence grammatically. They are important for understanding but they don't add any meaning beyond defining the relationship between two words. Such words are called structural words. Structural words include Auxiliary verbs, Prepositions, Articles, Conjunctions, and Pronouns.

It is important for you to know the difference between content words and structural words as it affects proper articulation. English has a stress-timed rhythm. Content words are stressed in conversation, whereas structural words are unstressed. In other words, structural words are not emphasized in speech, whereas content words are emphasized in speech. This will affect the intonation pattern of an utterance. You will learn more about intonation in the subsequent block. Knowing the difference between content words and structural words can help us in developing pronunciation skills.

Table 3.3.1 Differences between Content and Structural Words

Content words	Structural words
They give us information	They are used to stitch together content words. In other words, they are words for grammar.
They are words whose meaning we can obtain directly from the dictionary.	They don't add any meaning beyond defining the relationship between two words.
They include nouns, adjectives, main verbs and adverbs.	They include auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, articles and pronouns.
They are also known as lexical words.	They are also known as structural words.
They are also known as form class words	They are also known as function class words
They are open class words.	They are closed class words.
They are stressed in conversation.	They are unstressed in conversation.

3.3.2 Form Class and Function Class

Now let us examine the other nomenclatures for these word classes in English, namely form class and function class.

The linguists of the 1940s and 1950s identified many problems in the English grammatical structure. As a result, the term 'part of speech' fell out of favour and in its place a new term called 'word class' was introduced.

In English, a word class is a group of words that show the same formal properties, especially their inflections and distribution. Word classes are the same as parts of speech, but they have been renamed as per strict linguistic criteria. You should remember that it is the difference between lexical and grammatical meaning that is the basis of our division of word classes into form classes and function classes. In general, form classes give the lexical content; the function classes explain the structural or grammatical relationship. Just think of form class words as the bricks of the language and function class words as the cement that binds them together. This simple analogy will help you understand them better.

From the above definition, it must be clear to you that the content words that we studied earlier come under form class words and the structural words explained above are function class words.



Now let us tabulate the points of difference between form classes and function classes.

Table 3.3.2 Differences between Form and Function Classes

Form classes	Function classes
Form classes have a well-defined lexical meaning given in the dictionary	Function class words do not have a well-defined meaning but serve as grammatical links.
The number of form class words is much larger than the number of function class words. Every day, new items are being added to form class words and hence they are called open-ended.	Function class words are fixed in number and hence they are called closed class.
Form class words occur more frequently.	They occur less frequently.
Form class words often take affixes. Eg. Slow- slowly; watch- watched; Panel- empanel, etc.	Function class words do not take any inflectional or derivational affixes after them. We cannot add any affix to a determiner like 'the' or a preposition like 'with', etc
Form class words can have free utterances.	They cannot have free utterances.
They can be translated into other languages.	Translation cannot be done fully.

3.3.3 Open Class and Closed Class

Let us now look into open-class words and closed-class words.

In English, open class refers to the word classes that readily accept new members. This is the rationale for the new terminology, open class words, for the earlier terms content/lexical/form words.

Open-class words include content words like nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. They constitute a large portion of any language. The possibility of adding new words to an open

word class is practically infinite. For example, the class of nouns is infinite, since it is being expanded continuously as new scientific discoveries are made, new products are created and new ideas are articulated. In the twentieth century, for instance, developments in Information Technology have led to the emergence of many new nouns like:

Internet
Website
Multimedia
CD-ROM

URL

Some new verbs have also been introduced like:

Upload

Download

Double click

Reboot

Now let us look at closed class words.

In English grammar, closed class refers to the category of function words that we studied earlier is word classes that don't readily accept new members.

Closed-class words belong to the grammatical/structural or function classes. Function words, as you already know, include conjunctions, articles, demonstratives and preposi-

tions. As a specific case, consider the word 'and'. The basic feature of the word 'and' is that it functions grammatically to stitch together words and phrases, as is evident in the combination of two noun phrases 'the cat' and 'the mouse' in 'the cat and the mouse'. Any change in membership in such a class occurs only very slowly and in small increments. Thus, an English speaker may see dozens of new nouns and verbs during the coming year but it is highly unlikely that the same will happen in the case of a conjunction or an article in English.

Thomas Murray, in his book *The Structure of English*, writes: "All the words in a language can be broadly divided into two categories, open and closed. The closed category does not readily accept new words. Its members are fixed and usually do not change. Nouns, verbs, adverbs and descriptive adjectives, on the other hand, belong to open categories that remain open to new additions."

Recap

- ▶ Word classes group words with similar grammatical behaviour.
- ▶ Content words carry the main lexical information.
- ▶ Structural words express grammatical relationships.
- ▶ Content words are also called lexical words.
- ▶ Structural words are also called function words.
- ▶ Form-class words broadly correspond to content words.
- ▶ Function-class words broadly correspond to structural words.
- ▶ Open-class words readily accept new members.
- ▶ Closed-class words rarely accept new members.
- ▶ Nouns belong primarily to the form class.
- ▶ Main verbs belong primarily to the form class.
- ▶ Adjectives belong primarily to the form class.
- ▶ Adverbs belong primarily to the form class.
- ▶ Auxiliary verbs belong to the function class.
- ▶ Determiners belong to the function class.



- ▶ Pronouns generally belong to the function class.
- ▶ Prepositions belong to the function class.
- ▶ Conjunctions belong to the function class.
- ▶ Form-class words usually have identifiable dictionary meanings.
- ▶ Function-class words mainly organise grammatical structure.
- ▶ Form classes are larger than function classes.
- ▶ New technology frequently adds nouns and verbs to open classes.
- ▶ Closed-class membership changes slowly.
- ▶ Form-class words often accept derivational or inflectional affixes.
- ▶ Function-class words generally resist ordinary affixation.
- ▶ Content words are usually stressed in connected speech.
- ▶ Function words are often unstressed or reduced in connected speech.
- ▶ Lexical stress helps listeners locate important information.
- ▶ Function words create cohesion and clarify relations among content words.
- ▶ Complete communication requires both lexical content and grammatical structure.

Objective Questions

1. What type of words carry the main dictionary meaning?
2. What type of words primarily express grammatical relationships?
3. What class includes nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs?
4. What class includes auxiliaries, articles and conjunctions?
5. What class readily accepts new members?
6. What class changes its membership only slowly?
7. Which word class does “beautiful” belong to?
8. Which word class does “and” belong to?
9. Which type of words normally receives greater stress in connected speech?
10. What grammatical category substitutes for a noun?

Answers

1. Content words
2. Function words
3. Form class
4. Function class
5. Open class
6. Closed class
7. Adjective
8. Conjunction
9. Content words
10. Pronoun

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Distinguish content words from structural words with examples from two original sentences.
2. Explain the relationship among the labels lexical, content, form-class and open-class words.
3. Explain the relationship among structural, functional, function-class and closed-class words.
4. Classify every word in “The diligent students have completed their work successfully” as form class or function class.
5. Discuss why open classes expand rapidly while closed classes remain comparatively stable.
6. Explain how affixation helps distinguish form-class words from function-class words.
7. Analyse the role of content-word stress and function-word reduction in English rhythm.



Assignments

1. Select a 150-word news report and classify every word as form class or function class; present the results in a table.
2. Record a short spoken paragraph and mark the stressed content words and reduced function words in the transcript.
3. Compile twenty English words that have entered open classes during the digital age and explain their grammatical categories.
4. Compare the distribution of form-class and function-class words in a poem and in a formal notice.
5. Prepare a visual concept map connecting parts of speech, content/function words, form/function classes and open/closed classes.
6. Design seven diagnostic questions that test a learner's ability to distinguish lexical meaning from grammatical function.
7. Write an analytical essay on how content words and function words cooperate to produce clarity, cohesion and natural rhythm.

Suggested Reading

1. Crystal, David. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2003.
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BLOCK - 04

The Sentence



Word Order and Sentence Pattern

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ identify the subject, predicate, verb, object, complement and adverbial in English sentences
- ▶ apply the normal English word order to construct grammatically acceptable and meaningful sentences
- ▶ distinguish major sentence patterns by analysing the type and number of elements required by the verb
- ▶ create and revise sentences using appropriate complements and adverbials for clarity, accuracy and emphasis

Prerequisite

Imagine receiving the message “Tomorrow at ten the committee in the seminar hall will meet.” Even before studying grammar formally, you can recognise who performs the action, what the action is, when it happens and where it happens. If the same words are rearranged as “Meet tomorrow committee will the hall seminar in at ten,” the vocabulary remains familiar, but the message collapses. This simple contrast shows that English meaning depends not only on the words selected but also on the positions they occupy.

Every complete sentence organises information around a subject and a predicate. The subject normally identifies the person, thing or idea being discussed, while the predicate says something about it. Within the predicate, the verb acts as the structural centre. Some verbs can stand alone, some require an object, and others need a complement or an adverbial to complete the meaning. Compare “The baby slept,” “The learner opened the book,” “The sky became dark,” and “She placed the file on the table.” Each verb creates a different structural expectation.

This unit begins with knowledge learners already possess through everyday language use and makes that knowledge explicit. Familiarity with nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, determiners, prepositions and conjunctions will be useful. Learners should also be able to recognise a phrase as a group of words functioning together. The unit develops this background into a systematic understanding of English word order and the principal sentence patterns.

Keywords

Subject and Predicate, Sentence pattern and word order.

Discussion

Let's us begin by analysing the following sentences-

- ▶ Amrutha sang. (Statement)
- ▶ She sang a song. (Statement)
- ▶ Did she sing a song? (Question)
- ▶ She did not sing a song. (Negative statement)
- ▶ Sing a song, Amrutha. (Command)

After observing these sentences,

What differences do you identify in the following sentences?

Is the order of words or the pattern of sentences different?

How does the difference in order affect the meaning of the sentences?

From the above sentences you would have noticed that the sentences are not all the same

with regard to word order. You will see two statements, a question, a negative statement and a command among the given statements. The word order is different in different types of sentences. The difference in word order does affect the meaning of the sentences too.

Each language owns its own unique word order. You can compare English word order with the word order of your native language. After making a comparative study of English word order with any other language, you will be able to understand that the

- ▶ Word order varies from language to language.
- ▶ Word order varies within a language according to the type of sentence.

This unit will help you to understand word order of the English language with various illustrations.

Word order, as the name implies, is how words are arranged in a sentence.



Take a look at the sentences given below-

- a. I spoke English
- b. I English spoke.
- c. Spoke I English.

The words “I spoke English” can’t be rearranged as “I English spoke”, “Spoke English I” or any other configuration without changing the meaning. But if you were to translate this sentence into another language, the word order would need to change to suit the norms. One of the important reasons why translating a sentence word-by-word doesn’t work is this uniqueness in word order of every different language. In translation, because the word order in two languages might be different, the whole sentence will have to be restructured and rewritten.

If words are not arranged in their correct order, the expression may lack the intended meaning or idea. This will be clear to you after going through a few more examples:

- 1. She has two sons and one daughter at home. **CORRECT**
- 2. Two sons and one daughter she has at home **INCORRECT**
- 3. I am in my twenties. **CORRECT**
- 4. In my twenties I am. **INCORRECT**

To understand word order you need to understand the concepts ‘subject’ and ‘predicate’.

4.1.1 The Subject and the Predicate

Analyse the sentence given below:

She	Walks
-----	-------

Here, ‘she’ is the subject and ‘walks’ is the predicate which has only a verb. Thus a com-

plete sentence has at least a subject and a main verb to state a meaningful thought.

A Subject is a noun or pronoun who is doing the action or is being asked to do it. The predicate has at least a main verb which is the action that the subject is doing. In English and many other languages, the written sentence begins with a capital letter. At the end of the sentence there is a punctuation mark depending on whether it is a statement, a question, a command, a request or an exclamation.

Every word in a sentence performs a particular function within the structure of that specific sentence. As the rules of grammar are problematic sometimes, let us discuss the basic sentence pattern here for the sake of easy understanding. The two basic structural parts of a sentence are: The Subject and the Predicate. As already discussed, a subject is usually a noun: a person, place or thing. The predicate says something about the subject. It consists of the ‘verb’ and ‘complement’ which comes after the ‘verb’. The Complement is a word or word group that completes the predicate in a sentence. Complements are significant to a sentence as they complete the meaning of a sentence or a part of the sentence.

In the example

Birds	build nests
-------	-------------

‘Birds’ fall under the definition of Subject whereas ‘build the nests’ is the ‘Predicate’. ‘Nests’ is the complement which completes the meaning of the sentence. It is in the object position. It gives an answer to the question, “What do birds build”? Hence it is a subject complement.

A subject complement is the adjective, noun, or pronoun that follows a linking verb. The most common linking verb is the verb ‘to be’ in all of its forms, (e.g., am, is, are, was, were,

will be, was being, has been). Other common linking verbs relate to the five senses (to look, to feel, to smell, to sound, and to taste). To appear, to become, and to seem are common linking verbs too.

The underlined words in the following sentences are complements.

Ravi is strong.

She seems happy.

(‘strong’ and ‘happy’ are adjectives which serve as subject complements)

There are other elements, contained within the subject or predicate, that add meaning to the sentence and such elements include the direct object, indirect object and object complement.

Look at the sentence below:

Ravi gave the parcel. (Subject=Ravi; Verb=gave; Object=parcel)

An object is the part of a sentence that gives meaning to the subject’s action of the verb. A direct object answers the question of who(m) or what. In the sentence above, you could determine that ‘parcel’ is a direct object by asking the question: What did Ravi give? He gave the parcel. ‘Parcel’ is the direct object.

Now look at the following sentence:

Ravi gave *Arjun* **the parcel**.

Or

Ravi gave **the parcel** *to Arjun*

An indirect object answers the question of to whom, for whom, or for what. Ravi (subject) gave (verb) the parcel (direct object) to

whom? He gave it to Arjun. Here we can see that ‘the parcel’ is the direct object of the verb ‘gave’. Arjun is the indirect object that completes the meaning. Arjun tells us something about the direct object ‘parcel’

An object complement is the adjective, noun, or pronoun that follows a direct object (shown in bold above) to rename the direct object or state what it has become. The following examples will help you understand further.

Ravi is in the room.

S V A

Ravi is clever.

S V Cs

Ravi threw the ball

S V DO

Ravi threw the ball on the table

S V DO A (place)

Ravi has proved him wrong

S V DO Co

Ravi teaches him football.

S V IO DO

Ravi played.

S V

S= Subject; V= Verb; O= Direct Object; IO= Indirect Object; Cs= Subject Complement; Co= Object Complement; A= Averbial;



4.1.2 Word order

Sentences are composed of parts of speech (words) in a certain order which is called word order.

The cat killed the rat.

The rat killed the cat.

In the first sentence 'the cat' is the subject and 'the rat' is the object.

In the second sentence 'the rat' is the subject and 'the cat' is the object.

It is easy to see how the change in word order in subject and object positions affects the meaning of the sentences. This is because the functions of words change with a change in word order. When 'the cat' is shifted from the subject position to the object position, the meaning changes. In object position, it becomes a subject complement with a different function. The function of the noun 'the cat' depends on its position.

Now look at the following pairs of sentences.

You are strong. Are you strong?

He can sing. Can he sing?

You can see how the word order in the pairs of sentences determines whether it is a statement or a question.

Word order affects the function of the words leading to change in meaning.

Word order changes the type of sentence leading to a change in meaning

Theoretically, in traditional grammar, there are two possibilities of word order in English:

(1) **S- P** (Subject- Predicate)

(2) **P- S** (Predicate-Subject)

The **P** in possibility (2) can be divided into two more parts. The first part may be used before **S** and the remaining part can be used after **S**. Thus we get a third possibility

i.e. **P- S – P** (Predicate- Subject-Predicate).

(1) Students learn (**S - P**)

(2) Do students learn? (**P -S - P**)

The **S – P** order becomes **S – V – O** when the Verb is transitive.

Transitive Verbs are action verbs that have a direct object.

Example: The students **learn** English.

(*Learn* a transitive verb with *English* as the direct object)

S – P is the normal word order in declarative or statement sentences.

P- S and **P – S – P** are the usual word order in interrogative sentences. (Declarative and Interrogative sentences are explained in detail in UNIT 3).

On the assumption that **S-P** is the normal word order, **P-S** and **P-S-P** are called the Inverted word order and placing the Subject after the predicate is known as Inversion.

Examples :

(1) The dog chased the kid. (**S - P**)

(2) The grass is green after the rain. (**S - P**)

(3) My new washing machine is black and white. (**S - P**)

(4) She doesn't speak Tamil, does she? (P - S)

(5) Do you teach History? (P - S - P)

4.1.2.1 The Standard Word Order

The standard word order of a sentence in the English language is

Subject + Verb + Object (SVO).

Examples:

The baby (S)	drinks (V)	milk. (O)
Canadians(S)	Speak (V)	English. (O)

In the first example

The baby is the Subject, **drinks** is the Verb and **milk** is the direct Object.

In the second example

Canadians is the Subject, **speak** is the Verb and **English** is the object.

The subject i.e. **the actor** or doer comes first in a sentence because it makes our meaning clear when writing and speaking. The verb i.e. the action comes after the subject, and the object i.e. the acted upon comes after the verb, and that's the common word order.

4.1.2.2 Word order in Simple Sentences

Simple sentences are those sentences with only one clause with a single subject and a predicate. A clause is a group of words that includes a subject and verb. Simple sentences have a normal word order which differs according to whether the sentence is:

a statement,

1. I saw her at the bookstall on



Monday evening. (affirmative)

2. I didn't see her at the bookstall on Monday evening. (negative)

a question,

1. Did I see you at the bookstall on Monday evening?
2. Didn't I see you at the bookstall on Monday evening?

a command.

1. See you at the bookstall on Monday evening.

4.1.2.3 Word order in Declarative sentences

Declarative sentences are the most frequent utterances in the English language. It can be affirmative (positive) or negative and, sometimes, may also appear with a different sentence structure. An English declaration always contains at least two constituents, a subject and a predicate. The predicate can be the verb alone or verb + object or adverbials. Adverbials or Adverbial clauses modify or improve a verb, an adjective or an adverb. Also note that in an English statement or Declaration, the Subject must come before the Verb i.e. the Verb must come after the Subject.

Now look at the examples given below-

1. **Some creatures can't swim. (SVO)**

(The sentence is negative and contains two verbs **can't** and **swim**)

2. **Her daughter is listening at the moment.**

(The sentence is affirmative and contains the subject, **her daughter**, the verbs **is** and **listening** and the adverbial **at the moment**).

4.1.2.4 Word order in Interrogative sentences/Questions

In questions, we follow a different order

auxiliary verb/modal auxiliary + subject + verb (ASV)

Auxiliary verbs “help” other verbs form different tenses and moods. They are also called helping verbs. The word that the auxiliary verb is “helping” is called the main verb or full verb. The most common auxiliary verbs are forms of be (am, is, are, were, was, were, being, been), do, (do, does, did) and have (has, have, had, having).

Modal Auxiliaries are those verbs that combine with other verbs to indicate mood or tense. They are ‘can’, ‘could’, ‘may’, ‘might’, ‘shall’, ‘should’, ‘will’, ‘would’, ‘ought to’ and ‘must’.

An important feature of interrogative sentences is that they normally have a subject that comes after an auxiliary verb.

Thus questions follow the form ASV; or, if they have an object, ASVO.

Here are some examples:

1. Can they fly? ‘Can’(auxiliary) ‘they’ (subject) ‘fly’ (verb)
2. Does the cook prepare food? ‘Does’ (A) ‘the cook’ (S) ‘prepare’ (V) ‘food’(O)
3. Are you listening to the music? ‘Are’ (A) ‘you’ (S) ‘listening to’ (V) ‘the music’ (O)
4. Where do they sit? ‘Where’ (Question Word) ‘do’ (A) ‘they’ (S) “sit”

4.1.2.5 Word order in Imperative sentences

Imperative sentences are used to express commands and orders. The form of the verb used for the imperative is the base form of the main verb, which is used without a subject. For example-

1. **Walk** to the park,
2. **Turn** left.
3. **Cross** the bridge.
4. **Open** your bag and **show** what’s inside.

Imperative sentences do not have a grammatical subject but they do have an understood or implied subject, “baby” as shown in bold below. The basic form of the imperative remains the same whether it is addressed to one or more people. Look at the examples:

1. Come on, **baby**; I’m waiting.
2. Come on, **kids**; you’re slow.

There is also a type of imperative, using **let’s** (Let+us), that is used when you want to include the speaker. It includes both the speaker and the hearer, so the subject that is understood is represented by the plural “we”. Look at the examples:

1. **Let’s** meet Govind this weekend.
2. Please **let’s** visit the mall tonight.

The word order in an imperative sentence is: **verb + object** (if needed). The negative imperative is made with **do + not or don’t**. Take a look at the examples -

1. Don’t forget that book.
2. Do not come back without the gift.

Recap

- ▶ A sentence expresses a complete thought.
- ▶ English normally follows Subject–Verb–Object order.
- ▶ The subject identifies what the sentence is about.
- ▶ The predicate says something about the subject.
- ▶ The verb is the structural centre of the predicate.
- ▶ An object receives or is affected by the action.
- ▶ A direct object answers “what?” or “whom?” after a transitive verb.
- ▶ An indirect object commonly identifies the recipient or beneficiary.
- ▶ A subject complement describes or identifies the subject.
- ▶ An object complement describes or renames the object.
- ▶ An adverbial supplies information such as time, place, manner or reason.
- ▶ Intransitive verbs do not take a direct object.
- ▶ Transitive verbs require a direct object.
- ▶ Ditransitive verbs may take both indirect and direct objects.
- ▶ Linking verbs connect the subject with a subject complement.
- ▶ Complex-transitive verbs may take an object and an object complement.
- ▶ The pattern SV contains a subject and an intransitive verb.
- ▶ The pattern SVO contains a subject, transitive verb and object.
- ▶ The pattern SVC contains a linking verb and subject complement.
- ▶ The pattern SVA requires an obligatory adverbial.
- ▶ The pattern SVOO contains indirect and direct objects.
- ▶ The pattern SVOC contains an object and object complement.
- ▶ The pattern SVOA contains an object and obligatory adverbial.
- ▶ Optional adverbials may be moved without destroying grammatical completeness.
- ▶ Correct word order supports clarity, coherence and intelligibility.

Objective Questions

1. In the sentence “The children laughed,” which element follows the subject?
2. What is the usual basic word order of an English declarative sentence?
3. Which sentence element receives the action of a transitive verb?
4. In “Maya gave Rani a book,” what is “Rani”?



5. In “The soup tastes delicious,” what is “delicious”?
6. Which sentence pattern is illustrated by “The baby slept”?
7. Which pattern is illustrated by “They elected Arun captain”?
8. In “She placed the keys on the shelf,” what is “on the shelf”?
9. What type of verb connects the subject to a subject complement?
10. Which element normally contains the verb and completes the statement about the subject?

Answers

1. Verb
2. SVO
3. Object
4. Indirect object
5. Subject complement
6. SV
7. SVOC
8. Adverbial
9. Linking verb
10. Predicate

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Identify the subject and predicate in five sentences taken from a newspaper or textbook.
2. Differentiate direct objects, indirect objects and complements with suitable examples.
3. Explain why the sentence “Placed she the file table on” is unacceptable in standard English.
4. Analyse the sentence pattern of: “The committee appointed her secretary.”
5. Compare the functions of obligatory and optional adverbials.
6. Write one original sentence for each of the patterns SV, SVO, SVC, SVA, SVOO, SVOC and SVOA.
7. Revise a short paragraph containing faulty word order and explain the changes made.

Assignments

1. Collect fifteen authentic English sentences from print or digital media and classify them according to their sentence patterns.
2. Prepare a chart explaining the seven major sentence patterns with two examples for each.
3. Create a short dialogue in which at least five different sentence patterns occur; label each pattern.
4. Analyse ten sentences from a literary passage by identifying subject, verb, object, complement and adverbial.
5. Write a 300-word note on how verb meaning determines sentence structure, using original examples.
6. Design a peer-editing activity that helps learners detect and correct word-order errors.
7. Compare English SVO order with the normal order of another language known to you and discuss two learning difficulties that may arise.

Suggested Reading

1. Johnson, Mark. *The Structure of English Sentences*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.
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Phrases

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ define a phrase and distinguish it from a word, clause and complete sentence
- ▶ identify noun, adjective, adverb, verb and prepositional phrases and determine their heads and modifiers
- ▶ analyse the grammatical functions performed by different phrase types within sentences
- ▶ construct and expand phrases accurately to produce clearer and more varied English sentences

Prerequisite

Consider the sentence “The remarkably talented young musician from Kozhikode performed extremely well.” The message is not built by placing isolated words randomly. Several words cluster around central words: “the remarkably talented young musician from Kozhikode” centres on the noun “musician,” while “extremely well” centres on the adverb “well.” These word groups behave as units and can often be moved, replaced or expanded together. Such units are called phrases.

A phrase is larger than a single word but does not normally contain a complete subject–predicate relationship. The most important word in a phrase is its head. The head determines the name and grammatical behaviour of the entire phrase. Thus, “those three old books on the shelf” is a noun phrase because “books” is its head; “very proud of her work” is an adjective phrase because “proud” is its head.

Learners entering this unit should know the basic parts of speech and the sentence elements introduced in Unit 1. The aim is to move from naming individual words to seeing how words form hierarchical groups. This understanding is essential for analysing sentence structure, improving punctuation and producing flexible, precise writing.

Keywords

Phrase, Noun Phrase, Adjective Phrase, Verb Phrase, Adverb Phrase, Prepositional Phrase, Phrasal verbs

Discussion

Take a look at the following sentences.

- ▶ He walked in a slow manner.
- ▶ He walked slowly.

Here the phrase 'in a slow manner' is replaced by a single word, 'slowly'.

Another example:

- ▶ My friend wrote the poem in a beautiful way.
- ▶ My friend wrote the poem beautifully.

Phrases, in another sense, can be perceived as expansions, or projections, of a single word. Conventionally, therefore, in a sentence, a phrase may be replaced by a single word, without affecting the structure of the sentence as can be seen in the examples above.

Now look at the following groups of words. Do they convey complete meaning? As mentioned above, they convey some meaning but not complete meaning. To communicate complete meaning they have to be placed with other words in a sentence.

- a. The dog
- b. The dog is barking
- a. In the park
- b. The child is playing in the park.
- a. Very slowly

b. He walked very slowly

- a. Very dark
- b. The room is very dark

- a. Little red box
- b. The little red box is beautiful.

- a. Many big yellow mangoes.
- b. The shop had many big yellow mangoes.

The underlined words in each sentence complete the meaning of the group of words. The group of words is called a phrase. In fact, the underlined words are also groups that make sense but not complete sense on their own. A *phrase* is a group of words that expresses a concept and is used as a unit within a sentence. They form part of a sentence or a clause. You have studied clauses and sentences in other units.

In the above examples, look at the words on the right of each group. To which grammatical category does the word on the right of each group of words belong?

Dog= noun

Park= noun

Slowly= adverb

Dark= adjective



Box=noun

Mangoes=noun

Within a phrase, one-word functions as the head of the phrase. The head is the only necessary element in the phrase, and other elements in the phrase serve to improve the meaning of the head. The words, 'dog', 'park', 'slowly', 'dark', 'box' and 'mangoes' are all heads in each phrase. A phrase can be written as a noun, verb, adverb, adjective or preposition in a sentence. Based on their functions, phrasal verbs can be divided into various categories –

(1) Noun Phrase

(2) Adjective Phrase

(3) Verb Phrase

(4) Adverb Phrase

(5) Prepositional Phrase

Let's examine the types of phrases one by one in detail now.

(1) Noun Phrase

Look at the examples:

- ▶ The dog is hungry.
- ▶ The child is happy.

Here 'the dog' and 'the child' are noun phrases. The head of these phrases are 'dog' and 'child' respectively.

A noun is a part of speech that names a person, place, thing, idea, action or quality. The head of a noun phrase is a noun. The head determines such features of the noun phrase as number (singular or plural) and gender (masculine, feminine or neuter). Examples:

The dogs are barking. (Plural number)

The dog is running. (Singular number)

The girl looks healthy. (Female gender)

The boy looks energetic. (Male gender)

The computer stopped working.
(Neuter gender)

A noun phrase plays the role of a noun and modifiers can come before or after the noun. *Modifier* is a word, phrase, or clause that provides additional information about another word or word group. 'The' in the phrase, 'the dog' is a determiner and it modifies the noun 'dog'.

Let us now examine noun phrases within sentences:

- a. The dog is in the kennel.
- b. The dog in the kennel is big.
- c. The dog in the kennel is chewing a bone.

The underlined are noun phrases. Observe that they all have a noun as head, i.e 'dog', 'kennel', 'bone'. These nouns are modified by the determiners 'the' and 'a'. Further, observe the positions of the noun phrases. In sentence (a) 'The dog' is in the subject position and 'the kennel' in the object position. In (b) 'the dog in the kennel' is in the subject position. In (c) 'a bone' is in object position and acts as the complement of the verb. *Complement* is the term used for a word or words that are needed to complete the meaning of an expression. For example, in the sentence 'Trigonometry is difficult', the word difficult is the complement.

From the above examples, we can deduce that the only thing that is compulsory in a noun phrase is a noun. It could be a common noun like 'dog' or a proper noun as the name of a dog like 'Bruno'. Here are a few more examples:

- ▶ The **continent** covers approximately thirty per cent of the planet. (Common Noun)
- ▶ **Asia** is the most populous continent. (Proper Noun)
- ▶ **Eggs** are cheap. (Countable Noun)
- ▶ **Milk** is a complete food. (Uncountable Noun)

A major distinction among nouns is that between proper nouns and common nouns. Proper nouns are nouns that function as names of people, cities, countries, etc. Typical examples are *Deepa*, *Mumbai*, and *China*. All other nouns are common nouns, e.g. *scooter*, *rain*, and *equality*. Common nouns can be divided into Countable nouns and Uncountable nouns. As the name suggests countable nouns can combine with numbers like *one*, *two*, *three*, etc., whereas uncountable nouns cannot. Moreover, uncountable nouns are always singular, whereas most countable nouns may be either singular or plural.

The only thing that is compulsory in a noun phrase is the noun. Everything else is optional. The noun in an NP is the head of the phrase. But all heads cannot stand alone. 'Dog' cannot stand alone. We cannot say 'dog in the kennel'. We have to add 'the' or 'a'. The/A man ate the apple. The/A are determiners. Other determiners are numbers, many, most, few-many dogs, most dogs, a few dogs, etc.

In a NP noun is a must. A determiner is optional. We can say 'The dog is angry' but not 'The is angry'.

We cannot repeat nouns in a noun phrase. We can say 'the dog is angry' but not 'the dog cat is angry'.

Can the determiner be repeated?

'The a dog is angry' is wrong. We cannot repeat a determiner in a noun phrase. So determiners are optional and we only allow one determiner.

Adjectives can be added in number. The determiner has to precede the adjective. You can't say 'big the ferocious black dog. In the same way, we cannot say 'the big black dog ferocious'. Instead, we should say it as, 'The big ferocious black dog'. The adjectives have to precede the noun. You have learnt this in the unit Word Order and Sentence pattern.

The big ferocious black dog is sleeping. NP

The (D) big (AdjP) ferocious (AdjP) black (AdjP) dog N

AdjP is an adjectival phrase which we will be dealing with later on in this unit.

(2) Adjective Phrase

Examine the following examples:

- ▶ The black dog
- ▶ The big black dog
- ▶ The big black angry dog

All the underlined words in the above examples are adjectives.

An adjective describes or modifies noun/s and pronoun/s in a sentence. It usually indicates quality, size, shape, duration, feelings, contents, and more about a noun or pronoun. A few more examples are given below.



1. I love this violet flower.
2. He has twelve cards in his pocket.
3. She may serve a delicious lunch.
4. We have a tiny house.

Adjective phrases consist of adjectives together with elements which complement or modify them in different ways. A typical adjective phrase thus will have a head in the form of an adjective sometimes accompanied by modifiers. Look at the following examples

1. The big black dog jumped at the cat.
2. Humans can be fairly cruel animals.
3. Nazeer has lost his dark blue handkerchief.
4. The girl in the black churidar is my sister.
5. He looked very courageous.

(3) Verb Phrase

Take a look at the following sentences:

1. The big dog has been barking for hours.
2. The girl may choose white salwar for the program.
3. We will buy a tiny house.

The underlined phrases containing verbs are known as Verb phrases. A verb phrase is composed exclusively of verbs. In most verb phrases, one verb, called the main verb, carries information about what kind of event, activity, state, etc. the verb phrase refers to. Other verbs in the verb phrase called auxiliary verbs or helping verbs, contribute additional information on the meaning of the verb phrase, relating to time and modality (possibility, necessity, volition, prediction). Now look at the example given below.

1. He may have missed the opportunity of a life time.

Here 'May' (modal) and 'Have' are auxiliary verbs and missed is the main verb. The main verb is the head of the verb phrase, just as a noun or pronoun is the head of a noun phrase. In a verb phrase with more than one verb, the main verb always comes last.

Here are a few more examples of Verb Phrases

2. They have been waiting for a long time.
3. She might speak to me again
4. I have finished the assignment.
5. We must leave right now.

The class of verbs that act as main verbs in verb phrases can be divided into subclasses in different ways. Two types of sub-classification are to be explained here: the distinction between stative and dynamic verbs and the classification of verbs in terms of transitivity.

The difference between stative and dynamic verbs is based on the meaning of a verb. Verbs that denote a stable state of affairs with a short duration of time are referred to as stative verbs. This class of verbs includes verbs describing mental states (e.g. *feel, believe, recognize*) and emotions (e.g. *taste, like, love, hate*). Dynamic verbs are verbs that typically denote an action which is controlled by an active 'doer' or agent. Examples include, among many others, verbs like *jump, move, write, play, and build*.

Examine the following examples

1. She loves books.
2. I respect your views.
3. They lose the game.

A verb can be described as *transitive* or *intransitive* based on whether it requires an object

to express a complete thought or not. A transitive verb is one that only makes sense if it exerts its action on an object. An intransitive verb will make sense without one. Some verbs may be used both ways.

A transitive verb is the verb that is used with an object: a noun, phrase, or pronoun that refers to the person or thing that is affected by the action of the verb. In the above given sentences, *loves*, *respect*, and *lose* are transitive verbs:

Now turn to a few more examples

1. The child was weeping
2. I work for an American company.
3. We chatted for hours

An intransitive verb does not have an object. In the above-given sentences, *weep*, *work*, and *chat* are intransitive verbs.

(4) Adverb Phrase

Take a look at the following sentences:

- The dog barks loudly.
- The worker hit the nail with a hammer.
- He buys two books every month.

Here, the underlined phrases in the given sentences modify the verb. You have already learned the function of an adverb. An adverb is a word that describes a verb (she talks slowly), an adjective (she is very intelligent) or another adverb (she talks too slowly).

Adverb phrases consist of adverbs together with elements which modify them in different ways. A typical adverb phrase consists of a head in the form of an adverb sometimes accompanied by modifiers, as in the following example:



- Water heats *comparatively slowly*.

Here, the adverb head *slowly* is modified by the adverb (phrase) *comparatively*.

Please examine the following examples for Adverb Phrase.

1. Time moves very quickly.
2. This works really well for my life.
3. He has kept the kerosene quite separately in the room.
4. The Jasmine will bloom in spring.
5. My uncle spoke in a polite way.

Adverb phrases can be used in any position in a sentence. Consider the examples given below and observe the position of various adverb phrases.

1. My friend nodded like a doll.
2. Meet me at the office later this noon.
3. They must meet before sunset to sign the agreement.
4. The reader went online for more details.
5. In the darkness, many criminal activities take place.
6. Honestly happy, I chose the first option.
7. They played the match patiently and skilfully.
8. He responded very quickly.

(5) Prepositional Phrase

Look at the following sentences.

- The dog jumped on the sofa.
- We live in an apartment.
- We may fly above the clouds.
- What is the cost of this pencil?

The underlined words are examples of prepositions in English. They serve to connect different nouns, pronouns, and phrases in a sentence.

A preposition functions to introduce or precede the word or phrase to be connected, called the object of the preposition. Prepositions generally indicate the relation between the words it is connecting. It tells whether the words are connected in actual space or a place, or related through time. Now look at the following examples:

- ▶ The dog is under treatment for infection.
- ▶ The girl described the event in detail.
- ▶ She became a professional singer at the age of twelve.
- ▶ Please relax for a while.

The underlined phrases in the sentences given above contain a preposition and an object of preposition. They are termed as prepositional phrases.

A prepositional phrase is a group of words consisting of a preposition, its object, and any words that modify the object. Most of the time, a prepositional phrase describes or modifies a verb or a noun. These two kinds of prepositional phrases are called adverbial phrases and adjectival phrases, respectively.

The prepositional phrase as a whole can also be used as a noun, adverb or adjective.

Example:

- (1) He kept the book **on** the desk.

Here the preposition is ‘**on**’ as it shows the relation in place between the book and the desk. The prepositional phrase is ‘**on the desk**’ which is acting as an adverb telling where the book was kept.

- (2) She went **to** start the game again.

In this sentence the preposition is ‘**to**’ which is introducing where or in what state had the noun gone into.

- (3) Their church was **beside** a narrow river.

The preposition here is **beside** which is telling the place where the church was. The prepositional phrase is ‘**beside a narrow river**’ which is acting as an adverb.

Prepositional phrases are generally placed near what they describe. Sometimes they fit best at the beginning of the sentence too. The place they do not belong is near a word that they don’t describe. Examples:

1. I drink soda in moderation.
2. In theory, winters should be cold.
3. In the end, family and friends are the most important in life.
4. I am at work right now.
5. There is a stranger at the door.
6. By the time I had reached there, he had gone.
7. All sang at the same time.
8. I am in the mood for a holiday.

6. Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are very common in informal contexts in English. They constitute a verb and a particle, sometimes, two particles. The particle often changes the meaning of the verb. A particle is a word that has a grammatical function but does not fit into the main parts of speech (i.e. noun, verb, adjective). For example, the infinitive ‘to’ in ‘to walk’ is an example of a particle, although it can also act as a preposition, e.g. I am going to Mumbai next month.

Now look at these phrasal verbs:

- ▶ Call **on**
- ▶ Look **after**
- ▶ Get **up**.

The underlined words are the particles, and they are attached to verbs, and thus they form phrasal verbs. Examine the following sentences:

1. I **called** Riya to know how she was.
2. Riya is planning to **call on** Jiya today.

Please note that, the underlined phrasal verb containing ‘call’ in the sentence (2) has a different meaning. The meaning of ‘call on’ is not to make a call but to make a short visit. Thus, the particle ‘in’ changes the meaning of the sentence. Here are a few examples of phrasal verbs and their meanings are given in the brackets.

1. Please **go on**, you will win the game. (to continue)
2. I can’t find my shoes, I will **look**

around. (to search)

3. Members may **call for** his resignation. (to demand)
4. The police will **carry out** a thorough investigation. (to do or complete)
5. I hope you won’t **give up** working hard. (to quit)
6. I used to **hang out** in malls. (to spend doing nothing in particular)
7. **Hang on**; let me check your details. (wait a moment)
8. He **passed away** last night. (to die)
9. They have **put off** the degree exams. (to postpone)
10. Our proposal was **turned down** by the principal. (to refuse)

Now look at the table given below. There is a handy list of the most common phrasal verbs in English.

Table 4.2.1 A list of phrasal verbs and their meanings

Phrasal Verb	Meaning
Count on	To depend on / to trust
Call off	Recall / to cancel
Put up	To build a structure
Put aside	Save
Put on	Start wearing something
Put up with	To tolerate
Break down	Get upset/ stop functioning



Break up	End a relationship
Break away	Escape from a person
Give in	Stop fighting reluctantly
Give out	To distribute
Get off	To leave a place
Get over	To overcome
Point out	Make someone aware of something
Set out	Arrange
Set up	Establish
Look up	Search for information
Look after	Watch / protect
Take on	To accept
Pick up	Answer a telephone call
Chill out	Calm down or relax
Run out of	Finish one's supply of something
Blow up	Explode
Kick out	Expel
Play around	Be silly

Recap

- ▶ A phrase is a group of words functioning as one grammatical unit.
- ▶ A phrase usually lacks a complete subject–predicate structure.
- ▶ The head is the central word of a phrase.
- ▶ The phrase type is named after its head.
- ▶ A noun phrase has a noun or pronoun as its head.
- ▶ Noun phrases may function as subject, object or complement.
- ▶ Determiners commonly introduce noun phrases.
- ▶ Premodifiers occur before the head noun.
- ▶ Postmodifiers occur after the head noun.
- ▶ An adjective phrase has an adjective as its head.

- ▶ Adjective phrases modify nouns or function as complements.
- ▶ Degree words such as very and extremely may modify adjectives.
- ▶ An adverb phrase has an adverb as its head.
- ▶ Adverb phrases may modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs.
- ▶ A verb phrase contains a main verb and may include auxiliaries.
- ▶ A finite verb phrase shows tense or agreement.
- ▶ A non-finite verb phrase may use infinitive, -ing or -ed forms.
- ▶ A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition.
- ▶ The complement of a preposition is usually a noun phrase.
- ▶ Prepositional phrases may function adjectivally or adverbially.
- ▶ Phrases can be embedded within larger phrases.
- ▶ One phrase may perform different functions in different contexts.
- ▶ Phrase expansion adds detail without changing the head.
- ▶ Phrase analysis reveals the internal organisation of sentences.
- ▶ Accurate phrase construction improves clarity and stylistic variety.

Objective Questions

1. What is the central word of a phrase called?
2. Which type of phrase is “the old wooden bridge”?
3. In “very difficult,” what is the head word?
4. Which phrase type begins with a preposition?
5. What kind of phrase is “has been working”?
6. In “extremely slowly,” which word is the head?
7. Which phrase can function as the subject of a sentence?
8. What is a modifier placed before the head called?
9. What is a verb form without tense marking generally called?
10. In “under the table,” what is “the table”?



Answers

1. Head
2. Noun phrase
3. Difficult
4. Prepositional phrase
5. Verb phrase
6. Slowly
7. Noun phrase
8. Premodifier
9. Non-finite
10. Complement

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Define a phrase and explain how it differs from a clause.
2. Identify the head and modifiers in “those two exceptionally useful reference books.”
3. Explain three functions of noun phrases with examples.
4. Distinguish finite and non-finite verb phrases.
5. Analyse the internal structure of “very proud of her achievement.”
6. Explain how a prepositional phrase may function as either an adjective or an adverb.
7. Expand the phrase “students” into a detailed noun phrase without changing its head.

Assignments

1. Prepare a phrase-analysis table for twenty phrases collected from a newspaper, identifying type, head, modifiers and function.
2. Rewrite a plain 200-word paragraph by expanding selected noun, adjective and adverb phrases; underline every expansion.
3. Create ten sentences in which prepositional phrases perform different adjectival and adverbial functions.

4. Construct a tree-style or bracketed analysis of five complex noun phrases.
5. Compare the structures of finite, infinitive, participial and gerundial verb phrases with examples.
6. Develop a classroom worksheet containing phrase-identification and phrase-expansion tasks, together with an answer key.
7. Analyse a short literary paragraph and explain how phrase choice contributes to imagery, rhythm or emphasis.

Suggested Reading

1. Biber, Douglas, et al. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Pearson Education, 1999.
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3. Quirk, Randolph, et al. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Longman, 1985.
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Types of Sentences

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ classify sentences as declarative, interrogative, imperative or exclamatory according to communicative function and grammatical form
- ▶ form yes/no, wh-, alternative and tag questions using appropriate inversion and auxiliaries
- ▶ construct affirmative and negative commands, requests, instructions and exclamations suited to different contexts
- ▶ analyse how sentence type, punctuation, intonation and context work together to convey purpose, attitude and emotion

Prerequisite

A teacher says, “Open your books.” A learner asks, “Which page should we read?” Another learner exclaims, “What an interesting topic!” Finally, the teacher states, “To-day we are studying sentence types.” All four utterances concern the same classroom situation, yet each performs a different communicative act: commanding, questioning, expressing emotion and stating information.

English sentence types are identified through both form and function. A statement usually places the subject before the verb. A question may invert an auxiliary and the subject. An imperative commonly omits the understood subject “you” and begins with the base form of a verb. An exclamation often uses “what” or “how,” strong intonation and an exclamation mark. However, form and function do not always match perfectly: “Could you close the door?” is interrogative in form but functions as a polite request.

Before beginning this unit, learners should recognise subjects, verbs, objects and complements and understand normal English word order. They should also know the

basic use of auxiliaries such as be, have, do, can, will and should. The unit builds on this knowledge to show how speakers and writers select sentence types to achieve particular purposes.

Keywords

Types of sentences based on function, Word order, Assertive, Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative, Exclamatory

Discussion

According to word order and meaning, sentences can be divided into four types:

- a. Assertive or Declarative
- b. Interrogative
- c. Imperative
- d. Exclamatory

Let us analyse them one by one now.

4.3.1 Types of Sentences based on Word order, Meaning and Function

This classification of sentences is based on their function and meaning which depends on word order and they are usually referred to as 'types of sentences' or 'kinds of sentences'.

4.3.1.1 Assertive, Declarative sentences or Statements –

Look at the examples:

- (1) **Renuka is** a dancer.
- (2) **Renuka is not** a singer.

(3) **Dev ate** his lunch.

(4) **Dev didn't eat** his breakfast.

In the above examples, the subjects are present and occur before the verb. Such sentences are called Declarative sentences. These sentences end with a full stop. The usual word order for a simple declarative sentence is subject-verb-object-place-time. Declarative sentences simply give facts or opinions or information. They always end with a period (full stop). Phonetically, they end with a falling intonation. They may be affirmative or negative. The negative is formed by the addition of 'not' after the auxiliary be/do. Examine the examples (2) and (4).

4.3.1.2 Interrogative Sentences or Questions

Look at the examples

- (1) Is Renuka a dancer?
- (2) Isn't Renuka a singer?
- (3) Did Dev eat his lunch?
- (4) Didn't Dev eat his breakfast?

If you observe the questions closely, you can understand that the word order has changed.



Their word order is auxiliary + subject+ verb. A sentence that has a Subject-Auxiliary inversion and begins with an auxiliary verb or 'Wh' word or expression, in the beginning, is called an Interrogative sentence. The above type of sentence thus asks questions. They end with a question mark.

Interrogative sentences are mainly of three kinds:

1. Yes/no questions

2. Wh- interrogatives

3. Tag questions

Yes/no questions

Yes/no questions or closed questions are often defined as questions for which either "Yes" or "No" is the expected answer. They do not take question words such as what, where, why, etc.

For example,

(a) Are you ready for the picnic?

The question will have two possible answers containing either yes or no. They are

(1) Yes, I am.

(2) No, I am not.

Yes /no questions can be formed by the use of auxiliary verbs and modal verbs. They are placed at the beginning of a sentence and the subject and verb change their position in statement and question as in,

(1) She **will** reach here (Statement)

(2) **Will** she reach here? (Yes/no question)

Please notice the inversion of the auxiliary verb 'will' in the example (2)

Before jumping in to more examples, let's go through a list of auxiliary verbs and modal verbs for a quick understanding.

This is the list of English auxiliary verbs:

- ▶ Be (am, are, is, was, were, being),
- ▶ Can
- ▶ Could
- ▶ Do (did, does, doing)
- ▶ Have (had, has, having)
- ▶ May
- ▶ Might
- ▶ Must
- ▶ Shall
- ▶ Should
- ▶ Will
- ▶ Would

Here is the list of the modal verbs in English grammar

- ▶ Must / have to
- ▶ Shall
- ▶ will
- ▶ Should
- ▶ Would
- ▶ Can
- ▶ Could
- ▶ May
- ▶ Might

Let's examine a couple of examples of yes/no questions using aforementioned the verbs.

1. Are you alright today?

2. Do you speak English?
3. Is it 6'O clock now?
4. Can a mechanic repair my vehicle?
5. Has a donkey got four legs?
6. Must they reach today?
7. Shall I join you?
8. Would he like milk?
9. Can you repeat this?
10. May I ask you something?

Wh- interrogatives

Wh-interrogatives are questions that start with question words. A question word or interrogative word is a function word whose function is to ask a question. They are also called wh-words because all the other question words start with wh- except 'how'. The question words of the English language are who, where, when, why, what, which, whose, whom, and how. A question word can be subject, object, complement, or adverbial. Inversion of subject and verb doesn't occur here and the word order will be the same as in a statement. Here are the examples:

1. What is that?
2. When does the train leave?
3. Where do you stay?
4. Which one do you prefer?
5. Who is the cinematographer of this film?
6. Whom did you meet yesterday?
7. Whose baby is crying there?
8. Why did they go out?
9. How old is your mother?

Tag questions

Tag questions are questions created by linking question tags onto the end of the declarative sentences, i.e., statements. When the statement is positive the tag will be negative and vice versa. Your queries get confirmed when you ask tag questions.

Examples:

1. Gopan is weeping, isn't he?
2. Mary went up the hill, didn't she?
3. He loves pets, doesn't he?
4. We should write fast, shouldn't we?
5. She cannot sleep, can she?
6. You are not reading, are you?

In the examples (1), (2), (3) and (4), the statements are positive and the tags are negative. The underlined part in every sentence is the tag. Examples (4) and (5) have statements which are negative so that the tags are positive.

Rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions are those questions that do not expect an answer. In order to draw attention towards something or somebody, such questions are raised.

The following are a few rhetorical questions which we hear in our life-

1. What is happening to our children today?
2. Do you think we are fools?
3. Can't you do anything right?
4. Are you kidding here?
5. Are we human beings?



4.3.1.3 Imperative sentences- (Patterns those express com- mands, suggestions, requests, instructions)

Look at the examples

1. Open the door. (Command)
2. Don't open the door. (Negative)

For the negative, 'do not' or 'don't' is put before the verb.

In the example (1) & (2) the second person subject i.e. "you" is understood.

3. Let us open the door. (Suggestion)
4. Let them open the door.
5. Let us not open the door (Negative)

Here in the first person and third person imperative 'let' is used as follows: let us/ him, etc+ bare infinitive. In 'let us', 'us' includes the first and second persons – the speaker and the person or persons spoken to. For the negative imperative (5) above, 'not' is inserted before the infinitive.

6. Will you please open the door?
(Requests/polite expressions)
7. Open the door, please. (the imperative form but with 'please')

Requests are expressed with can/could/may/might+ I/We +have + noun/pronoun as in example (6). Here in polite expressions the inverted form is used, (Auxiliary +you). Markers of politeness like 'please' are used.

Imperative sentences are said to be in the imperative mood, i.e., to express commands, requests and instructions. In the imperative

mood only the base form of the verb is used (The base or root form of the verb is the version of the verb without any endings such as -s, -ing, and ed. Eg:- walk, sleep, go, run, etc. A sentence that has no subject and has only the base form of the verb that comes at the beginning of the sentence is called an imperative sentence. The word order is Verb + Complement/ Object/ Adverbial

4.3.1.4 Exclamatory sentences or Exclamations

Look at the examples

1. What pretty hair she has!
2. What pretty hair!
3. How beautiful the house is!

The above sentences are exclamatory sentences. Such sentences make statements that contain strong emotions like anger, joy, excitement or fear. From the above examples you can understand that the exclamatory sentences begin with "what" or "how" plus a noun or noun phrase or adjective or adverb. The verb can be omitted. The exclamatory phrases are followed by the subject and the rest of the predicate. The exclamatory sentence sometimes stands alone when it ends with a noun, noun phrase or an adjective as in-

4. What a beauty!
5. How sweet!
6. What an idea!

Also note that sentences that are declarative in form may also be spoken and written as exclamations as in:

7. Here they are! / They are here.

Exclamatory sentences may be negative also as in:

8. Isn't it a nice morning!

Here are a few exercises for you. Find out the type of sentence from the exercises given below-

1. Does he have grey hair?
2. The building is on fire!
3. I hope you can go tomorrow.
4. How did you reach here alone?
5. Go straight ahead and turn right.
6. We are studying Morphology.
7. You won the prize!
8. Don't eat too much.
9. The sum of the numbers two and four equals six.
10. Please wear masks.

Recap

- ▶ Sentence types may be classified by communicative function.
- ▶ Declarative sentences normally make statements.
- ▶ Declaratives usually follow subject-verb order.
- ▶ Declaratives may be affirmative or negative.
- ▶ Interrogative sentences ask questions.
- ▶ Yes/no questions can be answered by yes or no.
- ▶ Yes/no questions normally use auxiliary-subject inversion.
- ▶ Do-support is used when no other auxiliary is present.
- ▶ Wh-questions begin with words such as who, what, when, where, why and how.
- ▶ Subject wh-questions normally do not require do-support.
- ▶ Alternative questions present a choice.
- ▶ Tag questions combine a statement with a short question tag.
- ▶ A positive statement usually takes a negative tag.
- ▶ A negative statement usually takes a positive tag.
- ▶ Imperative sentences give commands, instructions, requests or advice.
- ▶ The understood subject of an imperative is usually "you."
- ▶ Imperatives use the base form of the verb.
- ▶ Negative imperatives commonly begin with "do not" or "don't."
- ▶ "Please" can soften an imperative into a polite request.
- ▶ Exclamatory sentences express strong feeling or emphasis.
- ▶ Exclamations often begin with "what" or "how."
- ▶ Punctuation helps signal sentence type in writing.
- ▶ Intonation helps signal sentence type in speech.



- ▶ One grammatical form may perform more than one communicative function.
- ▶ Context determines whether an utterance sounds polite, forceful, surprised or rhetorical.

Objective Questions

1. Which sentence type normally makes a statement?
2. Which sentence type asks a question?
3. What inversion commonly occurs in a yes/no question?
4. Which auxiliary is inserted when no other auxiliary is available?
5. What is the understood subject of most imperative sentences?
6. Which form of the verb begins an imperative?
7. Which sentence type commonly expresses strong emotion?
8. What punctuation mark normally ends a direct question?
9. What type of question presents two or more choices?
10. What short structure follows a statement in “You are ready, aren’t you?”

Answers

1. Declarative
2. Interrogative
3. Auxiliary–subject
4. Do
5. You
6. Base form
7. Exclamatory
8. Question mark
9. Alternative question
10. Question tag

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Classify ten original sentences according to communicative function and justify each choice.
2. Explain the formation of yes/no questions and wh-questions with examples.
3. Distinguish subject questions from object questions.
4. Form suitable question tags for five affirmative and five negative statements.
5. Explain how imperative sentences can express commands, requests, instructions and advice.
6. Compare exclamatory sentences beginning with “what” and “how.”
7. Give two examples where interrogative form performs a function other than asking for information.

Assignments

1. Collect twenty sentences from public notices, advertisements, conversations or media and classify their form and communicative function.
2. Write a 300-word dialogue using at least five declaratives, five interrogatives, four imperatives and three exclamations; label each type.
3. Prepare a practical guide to forming yes/no, wh-, alternative and tag questions, with rules and original examples.
4. Transform ten declarative sentences into appropriate interrogative forms and explain every structural change.
5. Design a role-play activity showing how the same request can be expressed as an imperative, interrogative and declarative.
6. Analyse the sentence types in a speech, advertisement or literary passage and discuss their persuasive or emotional effect.
7. Create an error-correction worksheet on sentence types, punctuation and question formation, including a complete answer key.



Suggested Reading

1. Azar, Betty Schramper. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. 5th ed., Pearson, 2009.
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3. Huddleston, Rodney, and Geoffrey K. Pullum. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge UP, 2002.
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SGOU

BLOCK - 05

Sentence Transformations



Time, Tenses and Aspects

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ distinguish grammatical tense from real-world time and identify present, past and future reference in context
- ▶ analyse the simple, continuous, perfect and perfect continuous aspects and explain the viewpoint each gives to an event
- ▶ construct contextually appropriate affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences using major tense-aspect combinations
- ▶ edit short passages for consistency and accuracy of tense and aspect while preserving the intended sequence of events

Prerequisite

Imagine that you are describing one ordinary day. You say, “I attend class every morning,” “I am reading a chapter now,” “I completed an assignment yesterday,” and “I will meet my counsellor tomorrow.” The events differ not only in time but also in the way the speaker chooses to view them: as habits, ongoing activities, completed events or future plans. English expresses these differences mainly through verb forms and auxiliary verbs.

The distinction becomes clearer when we compare a photograph and a video. A photograph may present an action as a complete whole, while a video can show the action unfolding. Similarly, “She wrote the report” presents a completed past event, whereas “She was writing the report” places us inside an activity in progress. “She has written the report” connects the completed action with the present, and “She has been writing the report” highlights its duration.

Learners already use many tense forms intuitively in conversations, messages, diaries and plans. This unit turns that everyday knowledge into a systematic understanding of time, tense and aspect. Familiarity with basic verbs, auxiliary verbs and sentence formation will help, but the unit begins from practical situations and develops the concepts step by step.

Keywords

Verb, Time, Tense, Present, Past, Continuous, Future, Perfect

Discussion

5.1.1 Time, Tense, and Aspects

Let us discuss in detail about the time, tenses, and aspects of English grammar. They are the three main concepts in English grammar that are interconnected to each other.

Time is understood as the present, past, and future. The present time is the one that is close to us, the future is the time that is far away and the past is the time that has already happened.

If we try to draw a timeline, it would look like this:

Look at the following sentences:

Heena eats fruits

Heena ate fruits

Heena will eat fruits

The first sentence talks about the action that happens in the present. The second sentence is the action that has already happened in the past and the third sentence is the action that will happen in the future. Notice the different forms of the verb 'eat' that is used in the three sentences. The verb helps to situate an action in three different time periods, the present, past, and future.

Connected to the idea of time is the idea of tense. The three major tenses in English are- The Present tense, the Past tense, and the Future tense. The present tense refers to the actions or events that happen in the present, the Past tense refers to the actions or events that already occurred in the past, and the Future tense refers to actions or events that are yet to happen in the future.

Tense is the grammatical way to situate an event or action, with respect to time. An event or action that takes place in the present is de-

The Present tense and the past tense are the only two tense forms the verb has. Future time concept is expressed in various ways with the help of present tense forms and auxiliaries.

However, for convenience we often use the term '**future simple**' to describe the form **will/shall+ bare infinitive**.



noted by the present tense, past is denoted by the past tense, and future is denoted by the future tense.

Consider the following examples:

Present	Past	
Heena dances.	Heena danced.	(Simple)
Heena is dancing.	Heena was dancing.	(Continuous)
Heena has danced.	Heena had danced.	(Perfect)
Heena has been dancing.	Heena had been dancing.	(Perfect Continuous)

You will notice that the present and past tenses (here we have shown only present and past, not future) have four other forms.

Each of these main categories (Present, Past, Future) is divided into four sub-categories called aspects. Aspects refer to the relationship between an event or action and the duration of time. There are four aspects of English grammar. They are-

Simple - that refers to actions or events that happen at a specific time without stating whether or not they are finished,

Continuous - that refers to unfinished actions that continue to happen,

Perfect - that refers to finished actions

Perfect Continuous - that refers to actions that continue to happen but finish at a specific point of time.

Thus, as a combination of these main tenses as well as aspects, there are twelve tenses in English.

Most English verbs have five forms.

- ▶ The base form (for simple present) – I **sing**.
- ▶ The –s form (simple present when the subject is third person singular) – He **sings**.
- ▶ The –ing form/ present participle form (continuous aspect occurs with the auxiliary ‘be’)
- ▶ They are singing (present continuous) They were singing. (past continuous)
- ▶ The past–ed form (simple past) - They sang.
- ▶ The participle –ed form (perfect tenses, occur with auxiliary ‘have’)

They have sung.

They had sung.

For regular verbs, the simple past and past participle forms are the same, i.e, with –ed ending:

– walk, walked, walked

For irregular verbs, they are different as in the above examples- sing, sang, sung.

Let us discuss each of these tenses in detail.

5.1.1.1 The Present Simple

Look at the following sentences:

They cook pasta.

Diya cooks pasta

Here, the sentence talks about the present action of Diya. The verb is used in its base form and so denotes the simple aspect. The verb adds an –s when the subject is third person singular.

The Present simple tense is used to refer to an action or event that happens in the present time and is mostly always true. It talks about an action or event without specifying whether it has completed or is ongoing.

Present simple is used to express:

- (a) Habit (eg. I wake up at 6 in the morning)
- (b) General truths (eg. The sun rises in the east)
- (c) Repeated actions or events (eg. It rains every day during monsoon)
- (d) Unchanging situations (eg. She lives in Japan)
- (e) Instructions or directions (eg. Take first right to reach the station)
- (f) Fixed arrangements (eg. The meeting starts at 10 am)
- (g) Future time, with the use of conjunctions like, before, after, as soon as, until, etc.
(eg. Lunch will be provided after the seminar)



(h) Emotions and wishes (eg. I love to travel)

Let us now look at the basic form and examples of the Present simple tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject+ verb</i>	<i>subject+ do/does+ not+ verb</i>	<i>(question word +) do/does+ subject+ verb?</i>
I write poems	I don't write poems	Do you write poems?
He writes poems	He doesn't write poems	Does he write poems?

5.1.1.2 The Present Continuous

Look at the following sentences:

They are cooking pasta.

Diya is cooking pasta.

Here, it talks about the action that is happening at present. The 'ing' form of the verb is used to denote the continuing aspect.

Present continuous tense refers to an action or event that happens in the present and has a continuing aspect. This is done through the use of be + 'ing' form of the verb that denotes continuation.

Present continuous is used to express:

- (a) An action or event that is going on at the time of speaking (eg. It is snowing now.)
- (b) Temporary situations (eg. He is living in Lucknow for a month.)
- (c) Future (eg. I am leaving for Mumbai tomorrow.)
- (d) Changing situations (eg. The plant is growing day by day.)
- (e) An action that often happens repeatedly, with the use of always, forever, constantly
(eg. She is always studying.)

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of the Present continuous tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject + am/is/are+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>subject+ am/is/are+ not+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) am/is/are+ subject+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>
I am writing poems	I am not writing poems	Are you writing poems?
He is writing poems	He isn't writing poems	Why is he writing poems?

Present Simple and Present Continuous- A comparison

Present simple (I do)	Present Continuous (I am doing)
Used for things in general, facts, truths, or things that happen repeatedly. Examples: Water boils at 100 degrees centigrade. What do you do?(What's your job) I always go to bed at ten. It is good to learn music early in life. She sings every day.	Used for something that is happening at or around the time of speaking. The action is not completed. Examples: The water is boiling. What are you doing? I am going to bed now. She is learning music. She is singing.
Used for permanent situations	Used for temporary situations
My kids live in Mumbai. He works hard every day.	I am living with friends now. He is working hard today. Verbs like 'love', 'like', 'hate', 'want', 'know', 'need', 'seem', 'believe', 'remember' etc are not normally used in Continuous Tenses.

5.1.1.3 The Present Perfect

Look at the following sentences:

They have cooked pasta

Diya has cooked pasta

Here, it talks about the past action, but the action is relevant in the present time. The past participle form of the verb is used and the helping verb 'has'/'have' is added to the verb.

The Present perfect tense refers to an action or event that has already occurred in the past, but the time of the action is not specified. It is used to explain the connection between the present and the past.

The Present perfect is used to express:

- (a) Actions that started in the past and continue in the present (eg. I haven't slept for the last two days.)
- (b) When the given time period is not over (eg. She hasn't gone to the library today.)



- (c) Actions repeated in an unspecified period between the past and the present
(eg. They have visited me many times.)
- (d) Actions completed in the recent past, with the use of the word 'just'
(eg. I have just completed my homework.)
- (e) When the time of the action is not given (eg. I have visited the Taj Mahal.)
- (f) Completed activity, indicating a result in the present. (eg. She has bought a new car.)

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of the Present perfect tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject + has/have + past participle form of the verb</i>	<i>subject + has/have+ not+ past participle form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) has/have+ subject+ past participle form of the verb?</i>
I have written poems	I haven't written poems	Have you written poems?
He has written poems	He hasn't written poems	When has he written poems?

5.1.1.4 The Present Perfect Continuous

Look at the following sentences:

They have been cooking pasta.

Diya has been cooking pasta.

Here, the action has taken place in the past but has a continuing aspect. The 'ing' form of the verb is used to denote the continuation. Helping verbs 'has' and 'been' are added to the verb.

Present perfect continuous tense refers to an action or event that has happened in the past and continues in the present. It talks about an unspecified time between the past and the present.

Present perfect continuous is used to express:

- (a) Action that has started in the past and is continuing in the present
(eg. They have been working on this project since last month.)
- (b) Action that has just finished (eg. It has been a hectic day.)

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of Present perfect continuous tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject + has/have + been + 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>subject + has/have + not + been + 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) has/have + subject + been + 'ing' form of the verb?</i>
I have been writing poems	I haven't been writing poems.	What have you been writing? Has he been writing poems?
He has been writing poems	He hasn't been writing poems.	

The Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous- A Comparison

Present Perfect (I have done)	Present Perfect Continuous (I have been doing)
Here, what is important is that something has been completed. We are interested in the result of the activity, not in the activity itself.	We are interested in the activity. It doesn't matter if it is finished or not.
Example: She has painted the door.(completed the work) I have cleaned the room.	Example: She has been painting the door. (activity is not complete.) I have been cleaning the room.

5.1.1.5 The Past Simple

Look at the following sentences:

They cooked pasta.

Diya cooked pasta

Here, it talks about Diya's act of cooking that took place in the past. The past form of the verb is used.

The Past simple tense refers to an action or event completed in the past. It is the basic form of past tense.

The Past simple is used to express:



(a) A definite point in time, with the use of last week, yesterday, etc.

(eg. She went to Goa last month.)

(b) An indefinite point in time, with the use of ages ago, a while ago, the other day, etc.

(eg. I finished my work a while ago.)

(c) Frequency of the action, with the use of often, always, sometimes, etc.

(eg. They often talked about their school life.)

Let us now look at the basic form and examples of Past simple tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject + past form of the verb</i>	<i>subject + did + not+ verb</i>	<i>(question word+) did + subject+ verb?</i>
I wrote poems	I did not write poems	Did you write poems?
He wrote poems	He did not write poems	When did he write poems?

5.1.1.6. The Past Continuous

Look at the following sentences:

They were cooking pasta.

Diya was cooking pasta.

Here, it talks about the past action with a continuing aspect. The 'was'/'were'+ 'ing' form of the verb is used to denote the continuing aspect.

The Past continuous tense refers to an action or event that happened in the past but has a continuing aspect. It is done with the use of the 'ing' form of the verb.

The Past continuous is used to express:

(a) An unfinished action (eg. She was watching a movie when she got a call from her boss.)

(b) Polite request, with the use of 'wonder' (eg. I was wondering if you could help me do my work.)

(c) Change of mind (eg. He was planning to visit his friends today, but decided to go home instead.)

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of Past continuous tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject + was/were+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>subject + was/were+ not + 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) was/were+ subject + 'ing' form of the verb?</i>
I was writing poems	I wasn't writing poems	Were you writing poems?
He was writing poems	He wasn't writing poems	When was he writing poems?

Past Simple and Past Continuous- A Comparison

Past Simple	Past Continuous
Complete action	In the middle of an action
Example: I walked home yesterday night. (all the way, completely)	Example: I was walking at 9 pm yesterday.(in the middle of walking home)

Often, past simple and past continuous are used together to say that something happened in the middle of something else.

Example:

Anil **burnt** his hand while he **was cooking** dinner.

While I **was walking** home, I **met** Sunil.

When Tessie **arrived**, we **were having** dinner. (We had already started dinner before Tessie arrived)

5.1.1.7 The Past Perfect

Look at the following sentences:

They had cooked pasta.

Diya had cooked pasta.

Here, it talks about the action that happened in the recent past. The past participle form of the verb is used and the helping verb 'had' is added to the verb.

Past perfect tense refers to an action or event that occurred in the past, before another action. It makes it clear that one action happened before another action.



Past perfect is used to express:

- (a) An action that happened before another action (eg. She had cooked dinner before we arrived)
- (b) An action completed in the recent past, with the use of 'just' (eg. I had just left for home)

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of the Past perfect tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject+ had+ past participle form of the verb</i>	<i>subject+ had+ not+ past participle form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) had+ subject+ past participle form of the verb?</i>
I had written poems	I hadn't written poems	When had you written poems?
She had written poems	She hadn't written poems	Had he written poems?
He had written poems		

The Past Perfect and Simple past- A Comparison

When two actions in the past take place immediately one after the other, the simple past is used in both.

Example:

When he **shook** the tree, the mangoes **fell** down.

The past perfect is used to emphasize that the first action was completed before the second started.

Example:

By the time he **woke** up, the rain **had stopped**.

5.1.1.8. The Past Perfect Continuous

Look at the following sentence:

They had been cooking pasta.

Diya had been cooking pasta.

Here, it talks about an action that happens completely in the past, but with a continuing aspect. The 'ing' form of the verb is used and the helping verbs 'had' and 'been' are used with the verb.

There is no change in verb with change in subject from plural to singular here.

Past perfect continuous tense refers to an action or event that began in the past, continued in the past and completed in the past.

Past perfect continuous is used to express:

- (a) An action in the past, with a continuing aspect (eg. He had been planting saplings.)
- (b) An action with reference to time (eg. They had been dancing for two hours.)

Let us now look at the basic form and examples of the Past perfect continuous tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject+ had+ been+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>subject+ had+ not+ been+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) had+ subject+ been+ 'ing' form of the verb?</i>
I had been writing poems.	I had not been writing poems.	Had you been writing poems?
He had been writing poems.	He had not been writing poems.	What had he been writing?

5.1.1.9. The Future Simple

Look at the following sentences:

They will cook pasta.

Diya will cook pasta.

Here, it talks about the action that will happen in the future. The base form of the verb is used and the helping verb 'will' is used with the verb. There is no change in verb with change in subject from plural to singular here.

The Future simple tense refers to an action or event that hasn't happened yet. It talks about facts and certainty with reference to the future.

The Future simple is used to express:

- (a) Prediction of a future event (eg. It will be sunny tomorrow.)



- (b) A decision (eg. I will go for swimming in the evening.)
- (c) Willingness (eg. She will help you with your assignment.)
- (d) Unwillingness, in the negative form (eg. She will not come for the movie.)
- (e) Make an offer, with the use of 'shall' (Shall I close the door for you?)
- (f) Make a suggestion, with the use of 'shall' (eg. Shall we go for a picnic this weekend?)
- (g) Ask for advice or instructions, with the use of 'shall' (eg. Where shall I go to buy a book?)
- (h) Give orders (eg. You will come for the class as I say.)
- (i) Give an invitation (eg. Will you come for the party?)

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of the Future simple tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject+ will+ verb</i>	<i>subject+ will+ not+ verb</i>	<i>(question word+) will+ subject+ verb?</i>
I will write poems	I will not write poems	Will you write poems?
He will write poems	They will not write poems	When will he write poems?

5.1.1.10 The Future Continuous

Look at the following sentence:

They will be cooking pasta.

Diya will be cooking pasta

Here, it talks about the action that will happen in the future, with a continuing aspect. The 'ing' form of the verb is used to denote the continuation and the helping verbs 'will' and 'be' are added to the verb. There is no change in verb with change in subject from plural to singular here.

The Future continuous tense refers to an action or event that will occur in the future and continue for a specific period of time.

The Future continuous is used to express:

- (a) Prediction of future action or event (eg. They will be arriving on Saturday)
- (b) Ask for information. (eg. Will you be in your room tomorrow?)

- (c) An action or event expected to happen. (eg. It will be raining tonight)
- (d) An action or event happening right now and will continue, with the use of 'still'
- (eg. He will still be doing the same work)

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of the Future continuous tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject+ will+ be+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>subject+ will+ not+ be+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) will+ subject+ be+ 'ing' form of the verb?</i>
I will be writing poems	I will not be writing poems	
He will be writing poems	He will not be writing poems	Will you be writing poems? Why will he be writing poems?

5.1.1.11 The Future Perfect

Look at the following sentence:

They will have cooked pasta.

Diya will have cooked pasta.

Here, it talks about the action that will completely happen in future. The past participle form of the verb is used and the helping verbs 'will' and 'have' are used with the verb.

Future perfect tense refers to an action or event that will happen between the present and the future. It talks about actions or events that will start and end in the future.

To take another example, *They will have reached there by afternoon.*

Let us now look at the basic form and examples of the Future perfect tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>Subject+ will+ have+ past participle form of the verb</i>	<i>Subject+ will+ not+ have+ past participle form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) will+ subject+ have+ past participle form of the verb?</i>
I will have written poems	I will not have written poems	Will you have written poems?
He will have written poems	He will not have written poems	When will he have written poems?

5.1.1.12 The Future Perfect Continuous

Look at the following sentence:

They will have been cooking pasta

Diya will have been cooking pasta

Here, it talks about the unfinished act of cooking that will be completed in the future. It has a continuing aspect that is denoted by the 'ing' form of the verb. Also, the helping verbs 'will', 'have' and 'been' are used with the verb.

Future perfect continuous tense refers to an action or event that is currently incomplete but will be completed in the future.

To take another example, I will have been traveling next week.

Let us now look at the basic form with examples of the Future perfect continuous tense:

Positive	Negative	Question
<i>subject+ will+ have+ been+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>subject+ will+ not+ have+ been+ 'ing' form of the verb</i>	<i>(question word+) will+ subject+ have+ been+ 'ing' form of the verb?</i>
I will have been writing poems.	I will not have been writing poems.	Will you have been writing poems?
He will have been writing poems	He will not have been writing poems.	When will he have been writing poems?

Recap

- ▶ Time is a conceptual division into past, present and future.
- ▶ Tense is the grammatical marking of time through verb forms.
- ▶ English has two morphologically marked tenses: present and past.
- ▶ Future time is commonly expressed through auxiliaries and other constructions.
- ▶ Aspect shows how an event is viewed in relation to its duration or completion.
- ▶ The simple aspect presents facts, habits or complete events.

- ▶ The continuous aspect presents an action as ongoing or temporary.
- ▶ The perfect aspect relates an earlier event to a later reference point.
- ▶ The perfect continuous aspect highlights both duration and continuity.
- ▶ The simple present commonly expresses habits, routines and general truths.
- ▶ The present continuous commonly expresses actions happening around the moment of speaking.
- ▶ The present perfect connects a past event with the present.
- ▶ The present perfect continuous emphasises duration up to the present.
- ▶ The simple past expresses a completed action at a definite past time.
- ▶ The past continuous describes an activity in progress at a past moment.
- ▶ The past perfect marks an action completed before another past action.
- ▶ The past perfect continuous emphasises duration before a past reference point.
- ▶ Will and be going to are common ways of expressing future meaning.
- ▶ The future continuous presents an action as ongoing at a future time.
- ▶ The future perfect presents an action as completed before a future point.
- ▶ Time adverbials help clarify the intended tense and aspect.
- ▶ Consistent tense use helps readers follow the sequence of events.

Objective Questions

1. Which grammatical category locates an event in time through the verb?
2. Which aspect presents an action as ongoing?
3. Which tense-aspect form is used in “She has completed the course”?
4. Which form expresses an action completed before another past action?
5. Which auxiliary commonly marks future prediction?
6. Which aspect emphasises completion before a reference point?
7. Which tense is used for universal truths?
8. Identify the aspect in “They were waiting outside.”
9. Which form highlights duration from the past up to the present?
10. Which time expression normally accompanies the simple past: “yesterday” or “since 2020”?



Answers

1. Tense
2. Continuous
3. Present perfect
4. Past perfect
5. Will
6. Perfect
7. Simple present
8. Past continuous
9. Present perfect continuous
10. Yesterday

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain the difference between time, tense and aspect with suitable examples.
2. Compare the meanings of “I read,” “I am reading,” “I have read,” and “I have been reading.”
3. Why can future time not be treated exactly like the morphologically marked present and past tenses in English?
4. Identify and justify the tense-aspect forms in a short newspaper paragraph of your choice.
5. Rewrite five sentences so that each expresses a different relationship between an event and its reference time.
6. Correct the tense inconsistencies in a short narrative and explain every correction.
7. Prepare a timeline showing how the past perfect and simple past work together in a sequence of events.

Assignments

1. Create a two-day diary containing at least twelve sentences and label the tense and aspect used in each sentence.
2. Interview an elderly person about a past experience and write a 250-word narrative using appropriate past tense-aspect forms.
3. Prepare an illustrated chart explaining all major present, past and future tense-aspect combinations with original examples.
4. Analyse the tense and aspect choices in a news report, identifying at least ten verb phrases and explaining their functions.
5. Write a 300-word account titled “My Learning Journey” that deliberately combines simple, continuous, perfect and perfect continuous aspects.
6. Design ten error-correction items on tense and aspect, provide the corrected versions and justify each answer.
7. Convert a set of present-tense instructions into a past-tense report and comment on the changes in verb structure and meaning.

Suggested Reading

1. Azar, Betty Schramper. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. 5th ed., Pearson Education, 2009.
2. Swan, Michael. *Practical English Usage*. 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2005.
3. Leech, Geoffrey, et al. *English Grammar: A University Course*. Routledge, 2007.
4. Murphy, Raymond. *English Grammar in Use*. 4th ed., Cambridge University Press, 2012.
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Subject-Verb Agreement in Sentences

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ identify the grammatical subject and finite verb in simple, compound and structurally complex sentences
- ▶ apply core subject-verb agreement rules involving person, number, coordination, indefinite pronouns and collective nouns
- ▶ resolve agreement difficulties caused by intervening phrases, inverted structures, relative clauses and expressions of quantity
- ▶ diagnose and correct subject-verb agreement errors in academic, professional and everyday writing

Prerequisite

Consider the sentence “The list of selected candidates is on the notice board.” Many learners are tempted to choose “are” because the plural noun “candidates” appears close to the verb. Yet the true subject is “list,” a singular noun. Agreement therefore depends on grammatical structure, not merely on the nearest word.

Now compare “The teacher and the student are discussing the answer” with “Bread and butter is my usual breakfast.” In the first sentence, two separate people form a plural subject. In the second, the coordinated expression names a single customary item and may take a singular verb. Such examples show that agreement combines grammatical number with meaning and usage.

Learners should be familiar with nouns, pronouns and basic verb forms. This unit develops the ability to locate the head of a subject phrase, ignore distracting intervening words and select a finite verb that agrees with the subject in person and number.

Keywords

Subject, Verb, Subject-verb agreement

Discussion

5.2.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

Look at the following pair of sentence:

Ardra eat mangoes.

Ardra eats mangoes.

In the given sentences, Ardra is the subject who performs the act of eating. What is the verb in these sentences? Eating is the action performed by Ardra and so, 'eat' is the verb here. Now, can you identify which of the given sentences is grammatically correct? For the sentence to be meaningful, the verb 'eat' should agree with the subject 'Ardra'.

The term *agreement* or *concord* refers to the grammatical agreement between the subject and the verb in a sentence. The subject and the verb must agree in person, number, tense, or gender. This agreement is essential in order to form a meaningful sentence. Now, let us discuss in detail about each of these levels of agreement.

5.2.1.1 Agreement in Person

Look at the following sentences:

I like to play.

You like to play.

She likes to play.

Notice the change in the form of the verb. In the first sentence, the subject 'I' is first person. In the second sentence, the subject 'you' is second person. In the third sentence, the subject 'she' is third person. The form of the verb changes from 'like' to 'likes' as the person of the subject changes.



There must be an agreement between the subject and the verb as the nature of the subject changes. The form of the verb 'to be' changes according to the subject in a sentence. The different forms of the word 'to be' are 'am', 'is', and 'are' in the present tense and 'was' and 'were' in the past tense. To make it clear, let us look at the table given below:

Person	Present Tense	Past Tense
First Person	I <i>am</i> , We <i>are</i>	I <i>was</i> , We <i>were</i>
Second Person	You <i>are</i>	You <i>were</i>
Third Person	He <i>is</i> , She <i>is</i> , It <i>is</i> , They <i>are</i>	He <i>was</i> , She <i>was</i> , It <i>was</i> , They <i>were</i>

Let us understand this with the help of some more examples:

- i. I am going to the market.
- ii. We are from Kerala.
- iii. You are a student.
- iv. He was drinking water.
- v. She is a good swimmer.
- vi. It is a book.
- vii. They were climbing the hill.

5.2.1.2 Agreement in Tense

Look at the following sentences:

We are going to the beach today.

We were going to the beach yesterday.

Present Tense → I am; He/She/It is; You/They/We are

Past Tense → I/He/She/it was; They/We/You were

Notice how the form of the verb 'to be' changes. The first sentence is in present tense and the second sentence is in past tense. The form of the verb changes from 'are' to 'were' when action moves from the present to past.

There must be an agreement between the subject and the verb in sentences in different tenses. In our discussion about agreement in person, we have seen different forms of the verb 'to be' in present as well as past tense. The form of the verb 'to be' changes according to the tense of the sentence. That is, if the sentence is in present tense, then the form of the verb used are 'am', 'is' and 'are'. If the sentence is in past tense, then the form of the verb used are 'was' or 'were'.

Let us understand this with the help of some more examples:

In the present tense,

- i. I am late for class.
- ii. You are good at studies.
- iii. He is a farmer.
- iv. They are friends.

In the past tense,

- i. I was late for class.
- ii. You were good at studies.
- iii. He was a farmer.
- iv. We were having a party.
- v. They were friends.
- vi. It was raining
- vii. She was in Bangalore last month

5.2.1.3 Agreement in Gender

Look at the following sentences:

Hema packed her things for the trip.

Kevin packed his things for the trip.



Notice the pronoun in both the sentences. In the first sentence, the subject 'Hema' is female and so the pronoun used is 'her'. In the second sentence, the subject 'Kevin' is male and so the pronoun used is 'his'.

There must be an agreement between the subject and the verb when the gender of the subject differs. The use of the pronoun changes according to the gender of the noun. For a masculine noun, the pronoun used is 'he' or any forms of 'he'. For a feminine noun, the pronoun used is 'she' or any forms of 'she' and for neuter nouns, the pronouns used are 'it' or 'its'.

He → His

She → Her

It → Its

Let us understand this with the help of some more examples:

- i. Peter wrote his exam today.
- ii. Anjali is going to meet her friends.
- iii. The cat played with its kittens.

5.2.1.4. Agreement in Number

Look at the following sentences:

A tiger walks in the forest.

Tigers walk in the forest.

Notice the difference in the form of the verb as the subject changes from singular to plural. The verb changes its form from the singular form 'walks' to the plural form 'walk'.

Look at some more examples:

She walks in the forest.

They walk in the forest.

I walk in the forest.

We walk in the forest.

I am walking in the forest.

You are walking in the forest.

He is walking in the forest.

They are walking in the forest.

She was walking in the forest.

We were walking in the forest.

There must be an agreement between the subject and the verb as the number of the subject changes. The form of the verb 'to be' changes when the nature of the subject changes from singular to plural. If the subject is singular, then the forms of the verb used are 'am', 'is', 'are', and 'was'. If the subject is plural, then the forms of the verb used are 'are' and 'were'.

Singular → Am, Is, Are, Was

Plural → Are, Were

Let us understand this with the help of some examples:

In the singular form,

- i. Everyone knows English. (Here, everyone is a singular subject and so, the verb used is also singular in form.)
- ii. I am traveling to Bhubaneswar.
- iii. He is an expert in Physics.
- iv. You are invited for tomorrow's programme.
- v. She was busy with the household chores.

In the plural form,

- i. They know English.
- ii. They are planning a journey to Australia.
- iii. We were practicing for the annual day celebrations.

Here, we can see that 'are' is used in both singular and plural form. It should be noted that in singular form, 'are' is used only with the second person subject (you).

In addition to this, there are a number of situations to be kept in mind while studying the subject-verb agreement. Let us discuss them one by one:

1. Auxiliary Verbs

In a sentence, auxiliary verbs 'do/does' and 'has/have' become the agreeing verb, the verb that agrees with the subject. 'Does/ does not' and 'has' are used with third person singular subjects (he,she,it) and 'do/do not' and 'have' are used with other personal pronouns (I, you, we, they).



He, She, It → Does/Doesn't, Has/hasn't

I, You, We, They → Do/Don't, Have/haven't

Let us understand this with the help of examples:

In statements

a. I don't like pumpkins.

She doesn't like pumpkins.

b. We don't go to church every day.

He doesn't go to church every day.

c. He doesn't drink milk.

They don't drink milk.

d. It doesn't work properly.

They don't work properly.

e. You have a collection of books.

He has a collection of books.

f. She has a pet dog.

They have a pet dog.

In questions

a. Does the story end happily?

Do the stories end happily?

b. Is the girl carrying an umbrella?

Are the girls carrying umbrellas?

c. Has this plate been washed?

Have these plates been washed?

d. When is your grandparent coming?

When are your grandparents coming?

2. Modal Verbs

Modal verbs have certain characteristics that distinguish them from other verbs and auxiliaries.

Modal verbs do not have the third person singular –s form, -ing form, or past participle –en form.

We like	We may
to play	play
He likes	He may

‘Like’ changes to ‘likes’ with change in subject but modal ‘may’ remains the same.

Only the base form of the verb comes after the modal auxiliary

• He can sing.	He can singing.
• They shall come.	They shall comes.
• I will walk.	I will walked.

Along with modal verbs like ‘may’, ‘could’, ‘should’, ‘will’, ‘must’, the singular base form of the verb is used.

May, Could, Should, Will, Must → Singular base form of the Verb

Let us understand this with the help of examples:

- They might go for the movie.
- He could run very fast.
- You should drink plenty of water.
- I will bring the food.
- We must eat healthy food.



3. When words/phrases come between the subject and the verb

The number of the subject (singular or plural) will not change according to the words/phrases in between the subject and the verb.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

One of the flowers is white in colour. (Here, the verb is singular because we are talking about a single flower. The subject is 'one' and not 'flowers'.)

A group of students performs on the stage. (Here, the verb is singular because the subject is 'a group' and not 'students'.)

4. When two subjects are joined by 'and'

When subjects in a sentence are joined by 'and', then the plural form of the verb is used.

And → Plural Verb

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

a. Rasiya and Rachel are going to the library. (Here, Rasiya and Rachel are two singular subjects. But, they are joined by 'and'. So, the verb used is plural.)

b. Arun and Athira are playing chess. (Here, since subjects Arun and Athira are joined by 'and', the verb used is plural.)

c. The teacher and the students are taking a break. (Here, the subjects teacher and students are joined by 'and'. so, the verb used is plural.)

Exception

d. Bread and butter is their staple food. (Here,

even though 'bread and butter' are two singular subjects joined by 'and' it is considered as a single entity. Hence singular verb is used.)

5. When two subjects are joined by 'either/or' or 'neither/nor'

When subjects in a sentence are joined by 'either/or' 'neither/nor', the verb used is according to the subject that is nearer to the verb.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

a. Either Lakshmi or Sahil is leading the team. (Here, the subject that is nearer to the verb 'Sahil' is singular and so, the verb used is singular.)

b. Neither Sheela nor Ganga is interested in dancing. (Here, the subject that is nearer to the verb 'Ganga' is singular and so the verb used is singular.)

c. Neither the dog nor the cats refuse to eat fish. (Here, 'cats' is nearest to the verb and so, 'refuse'.)

d. Neither the cats nor the dog refuses to eat fish. (Here, 'dog' is nearest to the verb and so, 'refuses'.)

6. As well as/ along with/ besides/ with/ together with, etc.

When two subjects in a sentence are connected with 'as well as', 'along with', 'besides', 'with', 'together with', etc., the verb is used according to the first main subject.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

a. Maya, as well as her parents, is going to the beach. (Here, Maya is the main subject and so, the verb used is singular.)

b. The students, along with the teacher, are going on a study tour. (Here, 'students' is the main subject and so, the verb used is plural.)

c. Rohan, with his books, was coming from the library. (Here, 'Rohan' is the main subject and so, the verb used is singular.)

d. She, besides her sisters, is interested in cooking. (Here, 'she' is the main subject and so, the verb used is singular.)

7. Here and There

When a sentence begins with 'Here' or 'There', then the subject generally follows the verb. The verb then agrees with the subject that comes after 'here' and 'there'.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

a. Here are the books you ordered. (Here, the verb 'are' is plural, followed by the subject 'books', which is also plural.)

b. There is a cat in the house. (Here, the verb 'is' is singular, followed by the subject 'cat', which is also singular.)

8. Subject referring to Quantity

In sentences that refer to a sum of money, period of time, distance, etc. (in a unit), the verb is used in the singular form.

Quantity → Singular Verb

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

a. One lakh rupees is a huge amount.

b. Two kilometres is a short distance to walk.

c. 18 years is the minimum age to become a voter.

9. Some of/ A lot of/ All of, etc.

In sentences that include words like 'some of', 'a lot of', 'all of', etc., the verb is used according to the noun after 'of'. If the noun after 'of' is singular, then a singular verb is used and if it is plural, a plural verb is used.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

a. All of the mangoes are sweet. (Here, 'mangoes' is plural and so, the verb used is plural.)

b. A lot of the books are heavy. (Here, 'books' is plural and so, the verb used is also plural.)

c. Some of the work has been done. (when 'some' is used with or in place of an uncountable noun, the verb is always singular. Here 'work' is uncountable.)

10. Collective Nouns

For collective nouns such as 'public', 'team', 'population', 'family', etc., the verb can be used both in singular and plural form.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

a. The public is disappointed with the government.

b. The public are in support of the welfare schemes.

c. My family is very supportive.



11. Singular nouns with plural form

In the case of nouns that are plural in form but singular in meaning, such as ‘mathematics’, ‘news’, ‘politics’, etc., the verb used is singular.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

- a. The news is not very pleasant. (Here, ‘news’ is plural in form but singular in meaning. so, the verb used is singular.)
- b. Politics is her area of interest. (Here, ‘Politics’ is plural in form but singular in meaning. so, the verb used is singular.)

12. A wish or request

In the case of sentences that express a wish or a request, a plural verb is used with a singular subject.

Let us understand this with the help of examples-

- a. I wish it were raining now.
- b. Rahul requested that he raise his glass.

Recap

- ▶ Subject-verb agreement is also called concord.
- ▶ A finite verb agrees with its subject in person and number.
- ▶ A singular third-person subject normally takes an -s form in the simple present.
- ▶ A plural subject normally takes the base form of the verb in the simple present.
- ▶ The verb be has distinct agreement forms such as am, is, are, was and were.
- ▶ An intervening prepositional phrase does not change the number of the subject.
- ▶ The head noun of the subject phrase normally controls agreement.
- ▶ Two subjects joined by and usually take a plural verb.
- ▶ A coordinated expression referring to one idea may take a singular verb.
- ▶ With either...or and neither...nor, the verb often agrees with the nearer subject.
- ▶ Each, every, either and neither usually take singular verbs.
- ▶ Indefinite pronouns such as everyone and somebody usually take singular verbs.
- ▶ Both, many, several and few normally take plural verbs.
- ▶ Collective nouns may be singular when the group acts as one unit.
- ▶ Collective nouns may be plural when members act separately in varieties that permit notional agreement.
- ▶ Amounts of money, time and distance may take singular verbs when treated as one quantity.

- ▶ Titles of books, films and institutions normally take singular verbs.
- ▶ In existential there constructions, agreement is determined by the following notional subject.
- ▶ In questions, the subject may follow an auxiliary verb.
- ▶ Relative pronouns take agreement from their antecedents.
- ▶ Words such as mathematics and news are grammatically singular.
- ▶ Careful identification of the subject prevents attraction errors.

Objective Questions

1. What is another term for subject-verb agreement?
2. Which word controls agreement in “The bouquet of roses smells sweet”?
3. Choose the correct verb: “Each of the players ___ ready.”
4. Choose the correct verb: “Ravi and Meera ___ attending.”
5. Which subject is nearer the verb in “Neither the teachers nor the principal is available”?
6. Is “news” grammatically singular or plural?
7. Which verb agrees with “ten kilometres” when treated as one distance?
8. What type of pronoun is “everyone” for agreement purposes?
9. Which noun controls the verb in a relative clause introduced by “who”?
10. Choose the correct verb: “There ___ two reasons for the delay.”

Answers

1. Concord
2. Bouquet
3. Is
4. Are
5. Principal
6. Singular
7. Is
8. Singular
9. Antecedent
10. Are



Self-Assessment Questions

1. Distinguish grammatical agreement from notional agreement with examples.
2. Explain why intervening nouns can cause agreement errors and demonstrate a method for avoiding them.
3. Formulate rules for subjects joined by and, or, either...or and neither...nor.
4. Analyse agreement with five indefinite pronouns and classify each as singular or plural.
5. Explain the variation possible with collective nouns in different contexts.
6. Correct seven subject-verb agreement errors from authentic public notices or social-media posts.
7. Explain agreement in existential there sentences and in sentences with inverted word order.

Assignments

1. Prepare a diagnostic worksheet containing twenty subject-verb agreement items arranged from basic to advanced level, with an answer key and explanations.
2. Collect fifteen agreement examples from newspapers or websites, classify the rule illustrated in each and comment on any doubtful usage.
3. Write a 300-word report about a university event and highlight every finite verb together with its controlling subject.
4. Create a concept map that connects subject heads, coordination, indefinite pronouns, collective nouns, quantities and inverted structures.
5. Edit a peer's paragraph for agreement, present the original and revised versions, and justify every change.
6. Compose ten sentence pairs in which a change in the subject produces a required change in the verb form.
7. Conduct a small survey of common agreement errors among learners and submit a brief report with examples, causes and corrective strategies.

Suggested Reading

1. Azar, Betty Schrampfer. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. 5th ed., Pearson Education, 2009.
2. Swan, Michael. *Practical English Usage*. 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2005.
3. Celce-Murcia, Marianne, and Diane Larsen-Freeman. *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course*. 3rd ed., Heinle, 2019.
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5. Quirk, Randolph, et al. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Longman, 1985.





Understanding Grammatical Structures

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ distinguish positive, comparative and superlative degrees and transform sentences without altering their core meaning
- ▶ convert active constructions into appropriate passive constructions and explain changes in grammatical focus and information structure
- ▶ transform direct speech into indirect speech by applying suitable changes in tense, pronouns, determiners, adverbials and clause structure
- ▶ integrate comparison, voice and reported-speech transformations accurately in extended written communication

Prerequisite

Language allows us to present the same situation from different angles. “The committee approved the proposal” focuses on the doer, whereas “The proposal was approved by the committee” places the proposal in the foreground. Similarly, “Anu said, ‘I am tired’” can be reported later as “Anu said that she was tired.” The event remains broadly the same, but grammar changes the viewpoint, time reference and flow of information.

Comparison also reorganises meaning. “Maya is taller than Riya” and “Riya is not as tall as Maya” express the same relationship through different structures. Such transformations are not mechanical substitutions alone; they require attention to meaning, tense, transitivity, pronoun reference and context.

This unit builds on learners’ knowledge of adjectives, verbs, tense and sentence patterns. Through degrees of comparison, active and passive voice, and direct and indirect speech, learners practise changing form while preserving intended meaning.

Keywords

Adjective, Degrees of Comparison, Active and Passive voice, Direct and indirect speech

Discussion

5.3.1 Degrees of Comparison

Look at the dialogue given below:

Salman: I am **taller** than Sunil

Sunil: No, you are not **as tall as** me.

Salman: Yes I am. In fact, I am the **tallest** of all boys in this class.

See how the adjective 'tall' is used. You will find three forms in which 'tall' is used.

Look at these adjectives:

Tall taller tallest

Short shorter shortest

Fat fatter fattest

Thin thinner thinnest

Fast faster fastest

Slow slower slowest

Now observe the following statements:

She is **beautiful**.

She is **more beautiful** than her sister.

She is the **most beautiful** of all the girls present.

No apple is as **sweet** as this one.

This apple is **sweeter** than all others.

This apple is the **sweetest** of all.

Look at the **adjectives** in the above sentences- beautiful, more beautiful, most beautiful.

Sweet, sweeter, sweetest.



What difference do you find in the way adjectives are used? In the first ‘more’ and ‘most’ are added to the adjective ‘beautiful’. In the second the suffixes –er and –est help to make comparisons. You will note that the adjectives change their form to show a comparison between positive, comparative and superlative.

In our day-to-day lives, we often compare one thing with another or one person with another. What do you mean by comparison? It is a way in which we relate two or more things in terms of their similarities and differences. We compare the character traits of people, physical properties of objects, quality of things, or features of places. Degrees of comparison in grammar refer to the ways in which adjectives are used to compare one noun to another.

First of all, an adjective is a word that explains the quality of the noun. For example, in the sentence *Sara is a beautiful girl*, ‘beautiful’ is the adjective that explains the quality of Sara. When we compare nouns, adjectives show degrees of comparison in three different forms- Positive, Comparative and Superlative. Let us look at them with the help of examples.

The positive degree of the adjective is the adjective in its simple form. This form is used to denote the mere existence of some quality of what is spoken about. It is used when no comparison is made. In the above examples ‘beautiful’ and ‘sweet’ are adjectives in the positive degree.

The comparative degree shows a higher degree of the quality than the positive. This degree is used when two things are compared. ‘More beautiful’ and ‘sweeter’ in the above examples are in the comparative degree.

The superlative degree shows the highest degree of quality. It is used when more than two things are compared.

Let us examine the degrees of comparison in detail.

5.3.1.1 Positive

Let us look at a sentence for example,

*James is **bright** in studies*

*James is **as bright as** Shyam in studies.*

An adjective shows a positive degree of comparison when there is no comparison between two things. It is used when the two things compared are of the same quality. In other words, it is the adjective in itself.

Here, ‘bright’ is the adjective that shows a positive degree of comparison between James and Shyam. The first sentence is in the positive degree and there is no comparison. The second sentence is also in the positive degree because the simple form of the adjective is used but there is a comparison between James and Shyam. Hence the structure ‘*as --- as*’ is used to show how both equally possess the quality of brightness, not more, not less.

Take another example,

The sea is vast

*The sea is **as vast as** the sky.*

Here as well, in the first sentence, the sea is described as vast, without any comparison. In the second sentence, the sea is equally vast like the sky. Hence, a positive degree of comparison is made between the two.

5.3.1.2 Comparative

*James is **brighter than** Shyam in his studies.*

An adjective shows a comparative degree of comparison when two nouns or pronouns are compared. It is used to compare two things or objects or places or persons.

Let us look at another sentence for example,

*Iron is **heavier than** cotton.*

Here, 'heavier' is the adjective that shows the comparative degree of comparison between iron and cotton. It compares iron with respect to cotton in terms of its weight.

The inflection –er is added to the adjective in the positive degree to form the comparative degree.

Take another example,

*Sheela is **more hardworking** than Paul.*

Here, the adjective 'more hardworking' compares Sheela and Paul. It shows a comparative degree of comparison between the two in terms of their hard work.

In polysyllabic words, comparative degree of adjective is shown by adding 'more' to the adjective.

5.3.1.3 Superlative

*John is the **brightest** of all boys in the class*

*Sheela is the **most hardworking** girl I have ever seen.*

An adjective shows a superlative degree of comparison when more than two nouns or pronouns are compared. It is used to compare more than two things or objects or places or persons.



Let us look at a sentence for example,

Maria is the tallest of all the girls in the class.

Here, 'tallest' is the superlative degree of comparison used to compare Maria with all the other students in the class.

The adjective takes the superlative degree by adding the suffix –est or 'most'.

Now, look at the following sentences,

*No girl in class is **as tall as** Maria. (positive)*

*Maria is **taller than** all the other girls in the class. (comparative)*

*Maria is the **tallest** of all the girls in the class. (superlative)*

Here, the same idea is expressed in different degrees of comparison. Observe the difference in the adjectives used. While the positive degree uses the adjective 'as tall as', the comparative degree uses the adjective 'taller than', and the superlative degree of comparison uses the adjective 'tallest'.

*Maria is **taller than** many girls in the class. (comparative)*

*Some girls in the class are not **as tall as** Maria. (positive)*

*Maria is not **as tall as** some girls in the class. (positive)*

You can transform a sentence in a positive degree to comparative and superlative in different ways as seen above. However, meaning should not be changed.

Now let us see different forms in which the adjectives in these degrees of comparison are formed:

(a) By adding the suffix 'er' and 'est'

For example,

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Kind	Kinder	Kindest
Small	Smaller	Smallest
Rich	Richer	Richest
Great	Greater	Greatest
Strong	Stronger	Strongest
Sharp	Sharper	Sharpest

(b) By adding the suffix 'r' and 'st' to adjectives ending with 'e'

For example,

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Wise	Wiser	Wisest
Large	Larger	Largest
Simple	Simpler	Simplest
Nice	Nicer	Nicest
Fine	Finer	Finest
Feeble	Feebler	Feeblest

(c) In the case of adjectives that end in 'y' and have a consonant before it, 'y' should be changed into 'i' and the suffix 'er' or 'est' should be added.

For example,

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Heavy	Heavier	Heaviest
Happy	Happier	Happiest
Dry	Drier	Driest
Lazy	Lazier	Laziest
Costly	Costlier	Costliest
Angry	Angrier	Angriest

(d) In the case of adjectives that end in a consonant and have a vowel before it, the consonant should be doubled and the suffix 'er' or 'est' should be added.

For example,

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Fit	Fitter	Fittest
Big	Bigger	Biggest
Slim	Slimmer	Slimmest
Dim	Dimmer	Dimmest
Hot	Hotter	Hottest
Wet	Wetter	Wettest



(e) By adding 'more' and 'most' before the adjective

For example,

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Beautiful	More beautiful	Most beautiful
Relevant	More relevant	Most relevant
Famous	More famous	Most famous
Proper	More proper	Most proper
Meaningful	More meaningful	Most meaningful
Aggressive	More aggressive	Most aggressive

5.3.2 Active and Passive Voice

Read the following sentences:

*The player **kicked** the ball.*

*The ball **was kicked** by the player.*

*The boy **threw** the stick.*

*The stick **was thrown** by the boy.*

What are the differences you notice in the pairs of sentences?

- The interchanged positions of subject and object. (in italics in the sentences above)
- The change in the form of the verb. (in bold)

You will also notice that the verbs are transitive verbs.

In the first sentence in both pairs, the focus is on who kicked the ball/ threw the stick, that is on the agent or doer of the action. This sentence is in the active voice. In the second of the two pairs, the agent of the action is shown with the help of the preposition 'by'. This sentence is in the passive voice. We will understand this in detail when we learn about active and passive voices. You have learnt about transitive and intransitive verbs. A sentence with a transitive verb (which takes an object) can be either in the active voice or passive voice. The passive refers to the way a sentence is structured so that there is a shift in focus from the subject of the action to the action itself.

You might have noticed that when we speak, we use active sentences. Passive sentences are not usually used while conversing. Let us try to understand the difference between the two. The voice of a sentence is decided by the relation that the subject has with the verb. A sentence is said to be in the active voice when the subject performs the action that the verb refers to. It is said to be in the passive voice when the subject receives the action instead of performing it. As the word in itself suggests, the sentence will be in the active voice if the subject is active and the sentence will be in the passive voice if the subject is passive. Let us understand this with the help of an example:

John **eats** an apple (Active voice)

An apple **is eaten** by John (Passive voice)

Here, in the first sentence, John performs the act of eating an apple. So, the subject is active and hence, it is a sentence in the active voice. On the other hand, in the second sentence, 'An apple' is the passive subject who receives the action performed by John and hence, the sentence is in the passive voice. When the sentence in the active voice is changed into a sentence in the passive voice, the position of the subject and the object interchange.

Also, notice how there is a shift in emphasis from the doer or agent of action to the action itself when the sentence turns from active to passive voice. When the sentence is in active voice, the emphasis is on 'John', who is the agent of the action. On the other hand, when the sentence is in a passive voice, the emphasis is on the act of eating an apple, rather than the subject John.

Now, observe the structural changes in the sentence when it is transformed into a passive sentence. The verb 'eats' becomes 'eaten' when the sentence changes from active to passive voice. In passive voice, the past participle form of the verb is used.

Look at another pair of sentences-

John **ate** an apple. (Active voice)

An apple **was eaten** by John. (Passive voice)

Here as well, when transformed into the passive voice, the past participle form of the verb is used. What about the auxiliary verb that is used in the passive sentence?

Consider both the pair of sentences. The first pair of sentences is in the present simple tense and the second pair of sentences is in the past simple tense. Now, look at the underlined part of both passive sentences. In the present simple tense, the auxiliary verb used with the verb 'eaten' is '**is**'. While in the past simple tense, the auxiliary verb used is '**was**' as the tense of the sentence changes from present to past, the auxiliary verb changes from 'is' to 'was'. So the passive format changes with tense.

Let us see the form of active and passive voices in different tenses and try to understand it with the help of examples. In the given table notice the change in the auxiliary verb that are given in bold letters.



To sum up, in the transformation of a sentence from active to passive, the following changes take place:

- a. The object of the verb becomes the subject in the passive.
- b. The subject becomes the agent.
- c. The forms of the verb ‘to be’ in the same tense as the verb in the active is introduced followed by past participle form of the verb.
- d. The agent is often deleted. If present, it is preceded by ‘by’.

Now take a look at the sentence below:

*She gave **him** a chocolate.*

Here there are two objects – the direct object ‘chocolate’ and the indirect object ‘him’. Hence the verb is said to be di-transitive. Let us now convert it into the passive.

A chocolate was given to him (by her).

He was given a chocolate (by her).

The meaning does not change.

A sentence containing a di-transitive verb can have two passive forms. The second sentence in the passive is more common.

Table 5.3.1 Conversion of active voice to passive voice with change of tense

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice	Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
Present Simple	Subject+ Verb+ object	Object+ am/ is/are + Past participle form of the verb+ by+ Subject	Deepa writes poems.	Poems are written by Deepa.
Present Continuous	Subject+ am/is/ are+ ‘ing’ form of the verb+ Object	Object+ am/is/ are + being+ Past participle form of the verb+ by+ Subject	Deepa is writing a poem.	A poem is being written by Deepa.

Present Perfect	Subject+ has/ have+ Past participle form of the verb+ Object	Object+ has/ have+ been+ Past participle form of the verb+ by+ Subject	Deepa has written a poem.	A poem has been written by Deepa.
Past Simple	Subject+ Past form of the verb+ Object	Object+ was/ were+ Past participle form of the verb+ by+ Subject	Deepa wrote a poem.	A poem was written by Deepa.
Past Continuous	Subject+ was/ were+ 'ing' form of the verb+ Object	Object+ was/ were+ being+ Past participle form of the verb+ by+ Subject	Deepa was writing a poem.	A poem was being written by Deepa..
Past Perfect	Subject+ had+ Past participle form of the verb+ Object	Object+ had+ been+ Past participle form of the verb+ by+ Subject	Deepa had written a poem.	A poem had been written by Deepa.
Future Simple	Subject+ will+ Verb+ Object	Object+ will+ be+ Past participle form of the verb+ by+ Subject	Deepa will write a poem.	A poem will be written by Deepa.
Future Perfect	Subject+will+ have+V3+ Object	Object+ will+ have+been+ V3+ by+ Subject	By this time tomorrow, Deepa will have written a poem.	A poem will have been written by Deepa by this time tomorrow.

Now, look at the following pair of sentences-

We need drinking water for the conference. (Active voice)

Drinking water is needed for the conference. (Passive voice) ('by us' is omitted)

Compared to the sentences given before, what is the difference that you notice in these sentences? When the active sentence is transformed into a passive one, the subject is missing. The phrase 'by us' is omitted in the sentence. This happens because the focus shifted from the agent of the action to the action itself. In the passive voice, the agent is eliminated when focus rests



on action. In the above given example, the focus is on the need of drinking water and so, the agent is omitted during the transformation.

With modals:

*They **must take** a stand*

*A stand **must be taken**(by them).*

With verb + infinitive:

*He wanted **to paint** the house.*

*He wanted the house **to be painted**.*

With intransitive verbs:

He saw cannot be changed to passive '*he was seen*' because meaning changes. However, '*they saw him*' can be changed to '*he was seen*' (by them) because the sentence has an object as the verb is transitive.

Look at the two passages below.

They did not ask me to speak. However I was sure I would. So I got up to make my speech. The hall was silent. People were watching me. I swallowed my saliva and gathered up my courage as I walked towards the microphone. Tomorrow, I will regret this move of mine.

If you convert this passage into passive voice, (not all sentences can be passivized) it will be like this:

I was not asked to speak. However, I was sure I would. So I got up to make my speech. There was silence in the hall. I was being watched. My saliva was swallowed, my courage gathered as I walked towards the microphone. Tomorrow, this move of mine will be regretted.

The first passage is better, don't you think? The second loses out on the urgency of the moment.

Passive sentences are more appropriate

For reports and official documents – *The meeting was organized in July* (passive). *They organised the meeting* (active). Here who did it (agent) is not important. The recording of the event is important.

When the focus is on a generalized idea- *Water is needed for everything* (passive). *People need water for everything* (active).

To describe historical and social processes – *The national flag was hoisted on August 15th.*

When the doer/ agent is not known - *My purse was stolen.*

5.3.3 Direct and Indirect Speech

Let us look at a conversation between two friends-

Mathew: “Will you come to the beach tomorrow”?

Sanya: “Yes, sure. I will come”.

Now, imagine that you have to talk about this conversation to a third person. Let us see how it can be done-

Mathew asked Sanya if she would go to the beach the next day.

Sanya replied affirmatively that she would go.

Direct speech refers to reporting the direct words spoken by a person as it is. *Indirect speech* refers to reporting the words of a person, but in our own words and not as it is. So, this is also known as *Reported Speech*. The difference between the two can be noticed in the above given example. We use quotation marks for direct speech.

In the example, you can notice that when the sentence in direct speech is converted into indirect speech, ‘tomorrow’ is changed into ‘next day’ and ‘will’ is changed into ‘would’. Also, in the indirect speech you will notice the addition of certain words like, ‘asked’, ‘if’ and ‘affirmatively’. These changes are conditioned by many factors such as modal verbs, tenses, time, place, pronouns, etc. Let us now see how these changes are made while transforming a sentence from direct to indirect speech.

5.3.3.1 Modal Verbs

Look at the following sentences-

Joy said, “I **can** attend the party”.

Joy said that he **could** attend the party.

The first sentence is in direct speech and the second one is in indirect speech. when the transformation happens, the modal verb ‘can’ is changed into ‘could’.

There are many modal verbs that we use in sentences. These verbs change their forms while changing the speech from direct to indirect. The modal verbs and how they are transformed when the sentence changes from direct to indirect speech are given in the following table:



Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
Can	Could
Could	Could
Would	Would
Should	Should
May	Might
Might	Might
Ought to	Ought to
Must	Had to/Would have to

5.3.3.2 Tense

Look at the following sentences-

Peter told Shan, “I **am** going to London”.

Peter told Shan that he **was** going to London.

Notice the difference when the direct sentence is transformed into an indirect sentence. The direct sentence is in the present continuous tense and the indirect sentence is in the past continuous tense.

The form of the sentence changes also according to the tenses. The tense of the direct speech changes while we convert it into indirect speech. Let us see the changes in the tense and its forms in the below given table:

Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
Present Simple (Subject+ Verb+ Object)	Past Simple (Subject+ Past form of the verb+ Object)
Present Continuous (Subject+ am/is/are+ ‘ing’ form of the verb+ Object)	Past Continuous (Subject+ was/were+ ‘ing’ form of the verb+ Object)

Present Perfect (Subject+ has/have+ Past participle form of the verb+ Object)	Past Perfect (Subject+ had+ Past participle form of the verb+ Object)
Past Simple (Subject+ Past form of the verb+ Object)	Past Perfect (Subject+ had+ Past participle form of the verb+ Object)
Past Continuous (Subject+ was/were+ 'ing' form of the verb+ Object)	Past Perfect Continuous (Subject+ had been+ 'ing' form of the verb+ Object)
Future Simple (Subject+ will/shall+ Verb+ Object)	Present Conditional (Subject+ would+ Verb+ Object)
Future Continuous (Subject+ will/shall+ be+ 'ing' form of the verb+ Object)	Conditional Continuous (Subject+ would+ be+ 'ing' form of the verb+ Object)

5.3.3.3 Place and Time

Look at the following sentences-

Catherine said, "I am going to Deepa's home **today**".

Catherine said that she was going to Deepa's home **that day**.

Here, notice the change when the direct sentence is transformed into an indirect sentence. 'Today' becomes 'that day' in the indirect sentence, i.e adverbials change in reported speech.

The place and time of direct speech change when it is converted into indirect speech. It is as given in the following table:

Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
Today	That day
Tomorrow	The next day
Last day	The previous day
Tonight	This night
Here	There
This	That

Now	Then
Hither	Thither
Come	Go
Thus	So
Ago	Before
Hence	Thence
Next	Following



5.3.3.4 Pronouns

Look at the following sentences-

Manu told his mother, “**I** am going to play with my friends?”

Manu told his mother that **he** was going to play with his friends.

Notice the difference in the two sentences. The pronoun ‘I’ is changed into ‘he’ when the sentence is transformed from direct to indirect speech.

There will be a change in the use of pronouns as well while a direct speech is converted into an indirect speech. There are many such pronouns that change during the transformation of a sentence from direct to indirect speech. It is as given in the following table:

Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
I	He/She
You	He/She/They
He	He
She	She
It	It
We	They
They	They
Us	Them
His	His
Her	Her
Its	Its
Our	Their

Along with these, there are certain words added when sentences in indirect speech are created.

For example, if the direct speech is in the form of a question, the word ‘asked’ will be used in the indirect speech in order to indicate the question form. Words ‘if’ or ‘whether’ are also used when a direct speech in question form is converted.

She said, “Will you go”?

She asked me if I would go.

Similarly, if the direct speech has the word ‘yes’, then, in the indirect speech, the words ‘affirmatively’ or ‘positively’ will be used and if the word is ‘no’, then the word ‘negatively’ will be added in the indirect sentence.

She said, “Yes, I will”

She answered in the affirmative.

She said, “No, I can’t”.

She answered in the negative.

All these aspects should be kept in mind while a direct speech is converted into an indirect speech.

While using indirect speech, we change the tense, person and time according to the subject.

Recap

- ▶ Adjectives commonly have positive, comparative and superlative degrees.
- ▶ The positive degree states a quality without explicit comparison.
- ▶ The comparative degree compares two entities.
- ▶ The superlative degree compares one entity with a group of three or more.
- ▶ Short adjectives often form comparison with -er and -est.
- ▶ Long adjectives commonly use more and most.
- ▶ Irregular forms include good, better and best.
- ▶ An as...as structure expresses equality.
- ▶ A not as/so...as structure expresses inequality.
- ▶ Degree transformation should preserve the original meaning.
- ▶ Active voice normally foregrounds the agent or doer.
- ▶ Passive voice foregrounds the receiver or result of the action.
- ▶ Only transitive verbs normally form personal passives.
- ▶ The passive uses an appropriate form of be plus the past participle.
- ▶ The object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence.
- ▶ The active subject may appear in a by-phrase or be omitted.
- ▶ Tense and aspect must be retained during voice transformation.
- ▶ Direct speech reproduces the speaker's exact words within quotation marks.
- ▶ Indirect speech reports the content without quotation marks.
- ▶ Reported statements are commonly introduced by that.
- ▶ Reported questions use statement word order.
- ▶ Commands are often reported with an infinitive construction.
- ▶ Pronouns change according to the reporting context.
- ▶ Tense backshift may occur when the reporting verb is in the past.
- ▶ Time and place adverbials may change, such as now to then and here to there.

Objective Questions

1. Which degree compares exactly two entities?
2. What is the superlative form of “good”?
3. Which construction expresses equality in comparison?
4. Which voice foregrounds the receiver of an action?
5. What verb form follows be in a passive construction?
6. Which type of verb normally permits passive transformation?
7. What punctuation marks enclose exact spoken words?
8. Which conjunction commonly introduces a reported statement?
9. What word order is used in a reported question?
10. What does “now” commonly become in indirect speech after a past reporting verb?

Answers

1. Comparative
2. Best
3. As...as
4. Passive
5. Past participle
6. Transitive
7. Quotation marks
8. That
9. Statement order
10. Then

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Transform five comparative sentences into equivalent positive and superlative forms.
2. Explain how grammatical focus changes when an active sentence is converted into the passive.
3. Identify which of ten given sentences can be passivised and justify the exclusions.

4. Convert a paragraph from active to passive voice while retaining tense and aspect accurately.
5. Explain the major changes required when direct statements, questions and commands are reported indirectly.
6. Compare tense backshift with situations in which backshift is unnecessary.
7. Correct errors in a passage containing faulty comparison, passive forms and reported speech.

Assignments

1. Create a three-column transformation chart containing fifteen sets of positive, comparative and superlative sentences with unchanged core meaning.
2. Analyse a newspaper report and explain why the writer uses active voice in some sentences and passive voice in others.
3. Rewrite a 250-word process description mainly in the passive voice and explain why the passive suits the communicative purpose.
4. Conduct and record a short interview, then convert at least twelve direct utterances into an accurate indirect-speech report.
5. Prepare twenty mixed transformation items covering degrees of comparison, voice and narration, together with a detailed answer key.
6. Write two versions of the same incident: one favouring active voice and another favouring passive voice; compare the effects on emphasis and responsibility.
7. Develop a classroom presentation explaining the rules and exceptions of reported statements, questions, requests and commands with original examples.

Suggested Reading

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BLOCK - 06

Syntax and Select Concepts

Unit 1

Syntax

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ LO1: Explain the nature and scope of syntax and distinguish modern syntactic analysis from traditional grammatical description
- ▶ LO2: Identify kernel and non-kernel sentences and distinguish deep structure from surface structure in suitable examples
- ▶ LO3: Apply basic phrase-structure and transformational reasoning to relate one sentence form to another
- ▶ LO4: Analyse structurally ambiguous sentences by proposing plausible underlying structures and interpreting their meanings

Prerequisite

Imagine hearing the sentence, “Flying planes can be dangerous.” At first it looks perfectly ordinary, yet it can convey two different ideas: the activity of flying planes may be dangerous, or planes that are flying may be dangerous. The words have not changed; what changes is the way we group and interpret them. A similar contrast appears in “The boy opened the door” and “The door was opened by the boy.” These sentences differ in outward form, but they describe the same basic event. Such examples show that understanding a sentence requires more than identifying nouns and verbs. We must examine word order, constituent grouping, grammatical relationships and the underlying organisation that makes meaning possible. Learners entering this unit should therefore recall the basic notions of subject, predicate, phrase, clause, sentence pattern, active and passive voice, and declarative, interrogative and negative forms. Building on that foundation, this unit introduces syntax as the systematic study of sentence structure. It also presents Chomsky’s distinction between kernel and non-kernel sentences and between deep and surface structures, enabling learners to see how sentences are generated, transformed and interpreted.



Keywords

Basic concepts in syntax, Kernel sentences, Deep structure & surface structure

6.1.1 Basic Concepts in Syntax

Language is a complex system of communication, and one of its key components is syntax, which refers to the structure and arrangement of words in sentences. Syntax helps us understand how words combine to form phrases and sentences, ensuring clarity and coherence in communication.

At its core, syntax explores the rules and principles that govern sentence formation in a language. It delves into questions such as:

How are words grouped into meaningful units?

What roles do different parts of speech play in sentence structure?

Why does the order of words matter in conveying meaning?

For example, the sentences "The cat chased the mouse" and "The mouse chased the cat" use the same words but convey different meanings due to the syntax. This demonstrates how syntax influences meaning and helps maintain linguistic order.

In all languages, sentences are structured in very specific ways. What do we mean by saying that sentences are structured? One of the main concerns of a theory of syntax is to give an answer to this question. We can define the concept of structure only after studying syntax. We can say that sentences are a string of individual words and that sentences are struc-

tured in a linear order. This does not explain sentence structure completely. What about the order of words in a sentence? We have learnt that English has particular word orders for different types of sentences. If we follow the word order, will we get a clear, unambiguous meaning? Let us see if this definition holds true for sentences.

The father of the girl and the boy are coming.

Here, we can group words to mean different things. If we

(The father of the girl) and the boy are coming. (Here, it means that two persons are coming- the father and the boy)

The father (of the girl and the boy) is coming. (Here, only one person, the father, is coming)

It is clear that meaning depends on how the words are grouped, i.e., how they are structured. This above is an example of structural ambiguity.

When we say words in a sentence can be grouped together, we have entered the area of phrase structure. To sum up, we can say that the structure of a sentence is

- The linear order of words
- The possible grouping of words

Why is sentence structure important?

You have learnt the different types of sentences- assertive, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory and so on. The pattern or order of

words decides what type of sentence it is and, accordingly the meaning.

The notion of subject and object also defines the structure of sentences.

He loves music. ('He' is the subject)

Music is loved by *him*. (The subject occupies object position). Simultaneously, the object form of the pronoun 'he' is used.

Here, the meaning is unaffected, but the order of words changes to form active and passive voices.

His action is careless. ('action' is a noun)

He acts carelessly. ('act' is a verb)

Here, the same word performs as a verb and noun. The structure changes accordingly.

To sum up, we can put sentence structure into three aspects.

- a. The linear order of words in a sentence
- b. The categorisation of words into different parts of speech
- c. The grouping of words into structural constituents of the sentence.

6.1.2 Chomskyan Revolution

Structuralism was the dominant school of linguistics during the first half of the 20th century. As we have discussed, it upheld that language, and its structure should be studied based on the actual utterances of its native speakers. This empiricist mode (based on actual experience through the five senses) of language study was reinforced by the advent of behaviourism in linguistics.

Exponents of behaviourism like B F Skinner

argued that natural language learning is a process of habit formation. It means that children learn language by imitating their elders and repeating. A child has a blank mind when he is born. There is no special faculty that enables a human child to learn linguistic skills when he is born. Thus, linguistic *competence* is a result of habit formation.

Noam Chomsky's severe criticism of Skinner's *Verbal Behaviour* put an end to the structuralist and behaviourist trends in linguistics. Unlike behaviourism, Chomsky argues that human children have an inbuilt capacity to learn language when they are born. He calls it Universal Grammar. It is a genetically endowed language faculty that gives human babies a linguistic sense common to all languages. According to Chomsky, UG is a set of basic rules and paradigms that are common to all languages (like distinguishing nouns from verbs). It is the basis of all human languages. It helps them to acquire and develop any specific language from their surrounding environment as they grow up. It is the foundational principles that make languages and linguistic skills possible across all of humanity.

Until the advent of Chomsky, modern linguists simply described the observable utterances in a language. None of them explored the relationship between language, mind and brain. Chomsky investigated the involvement of the mind in using language. Now, psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics are built on the theorizations of Chomsky.

From the outset of his research, Chomsky noticed that during children's acquisition of language and linguistic skills, they only get a little input from their elders and the environment. Both in quality and quantity, the input is inadequate. From this imperfect and incomplete input, children develop a highly sophisticated language system. He calls it the Gener-



active Capacity of the human mind. Using this generative capacity *from a finite or limited set of rules in a language, we, humans, are able to produce an infinite or unlimited number of utterances*. Mere habit formation is not enough for this complex process. The inbuilt language faculty of the human mind or UG (Universal Grammar) makes this miracle possible. It allows children to quickly learn and understand the language as they mature.

6.1.2.1 Transformational Generative Grammar

Transformational Generative Grammar can be considered as an improvement upon IC analysis and Phrase Structure Grammar. As we have discussed, IC analysis was a crude form of sentence analysis adopted by structuralists. Improving and standardising IC analysis, PS Grammar and Transformational Generative Grammar were introduced by Chomsky in his *Syntactic Structures* (1957). He put forward a revised version of TGG in *The Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). It is interesting that he improved and rectified his own TGG multiple times, owing to severe criticism. Still, TGG remains the unrivalled method of sentence analysis.

6.1.3 The Basics of TGG (Kernel & Non-Kernel Sentences and Deep Structure & Surface Structure)

Look at the following sentence:

1. The rat was chased by the cat.

It is a sentence in the passive form. In TGG, we call any sentence that we speak, hear, write and see as Surface Structure of that sentence. Any sentence in TGG has two layers: a surface structure and a deep structure. Surface structure is the outward form of a sentence. It is the actual sentence that we hear, we speak,

and we see when it is written.

If we look into the actual meaning of the above sentence, it can be written and represented in a simple and active form as follows:

2. The cat chased the rat.

The second sentence is the Deep Structure of the above example. Deep structure is the underlying structure of a sentence. TGG tells that the meaning of a sentence can be evidently grasped and its ambiguity can be cleared only by converting and restructuring it into its deep structure.

The deep and surface structures were formulated by Chomsky in his TGG version of 1965 (*Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*). Thus, TGG analyses sentences by converting the surface structure of the sentences into a deep structure. TGG was first formulated in his *Syntactic Structures* (1957). Instead of the deep and surface structures, it analysed sentences as Kernel and Non-Kernel sentences. Linguists use the terms kernel sentence and deep structure interchangeably.

Look at the following sentences:

1. She swims.
2. Milton wrote.
3. The students helped the poor
4. We hired a camera.

All these are kernel sentences, and so is the sentence, *the cat chased the rat*. A kernel sentence is a simple sentence with only one verb. It is an assertive and declarative sentence in active form. A kernel sentence contains no modifiers such as adjectives or adverbs. It is always affirmative. It conveys only one idea. Chomsky introduced it in order to define those sentences which have not gone through any transformations.

All sentences that do not follow the specifications of kernel sentences are Non-Kernel Sentences. Interrogative, passive, negative, complex, compound and question-form sentences are examples. Let us look at a few of them:

Does she swim across the river? (interrogative)

Milton is not writing poetry. (negative)

Who helped the poor? (question form)

A camera was hired by us. (passive)

Ram went to the forest, but Laxmana stayed home. (compound sentence)

When I was a child, I loved playing football. (complex sentence)

How Does TGG Analyse a Sentence?

The surface structure or the non-kernel form of any sentence is actually derived from their deep structures or kernel forms by means of some transformations. Let us look at the following sentence:

- Where did Mary go yesterday?

This sentence in the question form is derived from the kernel sentence:

- Mary went somewhere yesterday – by means of certain transformations.

Therefore, TGG shows the interrelatedness between sentences. As we have discussed, it also explains the ambiguities between sentences. We can take a previous example:

1. Rama is eager to please.
2. Rama is easy to please.

At the surface level, both sentences seem to have similar structures. However, they have

different deep structures that determine their meaning.

For the first example, the deep structure is derived from another two sentences:

- a. Rama is eager (for something)
- b. She pleases (someone)

The second one also derives its deep structure from two sentences:

- a. It is easy
- b. Someone pleases Rama

So, in the first sentence, Rama is the subject, and in the second, she is the object. The ambiguity is solved and the meaning is grasped by deriving the deep structures.

‘Flying planes can be dangerous’ was another ambiguous sentence that we have discussed. The ambiguity in the sentence can be resolved by exploring its deep structure. The same sentence is derived from two sets of kernel sentences:

- a. Some people fly planes. This can be dangerous.
- b. Planes fly. They can be dangerous.

We must choose the appropriate kernel sentence according to the context.

Until now, what we have done is simply derive and then describe the deep structure. How the deep structure is derived from the surface structure is extremely vital. In the TGG analysis, we apply phrase structure rules to the surface structure or the actual sentence to derive its deep structure. E.g.

- The book was seen by the boy.

It is a sentence in the passive form. Now, we analyse it using the phrase structure rules in



the form of a tree diagram.

Analysing the sentence, we understand what it means: It is the boy who saw the book. Thus, we got the kernel sentence or the deep structure:

- The boy saw the book.

The next step in TGG is to find out how the deep structure is transformed into the surface structure. The surface structure is generated by using a series of transformations and transformational rules. Transformational rules are the crux of TGG. In making an active sentence into a passive one, TGG uses the 'NP' switch rule, the 'be + en' insertion rule and the 'by' insertion rule.

In TGG, when we make a sentence passive, its noun phrases are switched together. NP1 takes the position of NP2. Then it becomes 'The book saw the boy'. Here, we have to apply the 'be + en' insertion rule to produce 'was seen'. Finally, 'by' is inserted and then it becomes 'The book was seen by the boy'. However, the actual sentence that we see is created with the help of Morpho-phonemic rules. They translate and make up the final sentence in the corresponding phonemic form.

So, we have three types of rules in TGG analysis:

1. Phrase Structure rules: according to Chomsky, these are finite rules based on which any number of sentences and utterances can be made in any language.
2. Transformational rules: these help us to understand how surface structures are derived from their kernel sentences. Some of them are:
 - Do-support rules
 - Interrogative rules
 - Affix switch rules etc.

All these rules are together called 'Move Alpha'.

3. Morpho-phonemic rules: these rules help a language user to understand the transformed surface structure of a sentence in the phonemic form.

We will study transformational and morpho-phonemic rules in higher classes in detail.

Both phrase structure and transformational rules shed light on Chomsky's theorization of Universal Grammar or the innate capacity of humans to learn language. These rules are inherent in the minds of speakers of any language. They offer human minds creativity or the generative capacity. Most of them, except linguists, are not conscious of it. They helped linguists and psychologists to uncover the nature of human thought.

Important Features of TGG

- It is a theory of *competence* and not of *performance*.
- A sentence in TGG analysis is structured into deep and surface structures.
- It is based on the assumption that the human brain has an innate ability to learn language.
- It asserts the generative capacity of the human mind. Generative capacity tells that humans are able to produce an infinite number of sentences from a finite set of rules.
- Sentence is the basic unit in TGG. Thus, syntax is at the centre of its analysis.
- TGG is a logical analysis. Chomsky was influenced by mathematical logic and coherence.

Recap

- ▶ Syntax is the systematic study of sentence structure.
- ▶ The sentence is the central unit of syntactic analysis.
- ▶ English commonly follows Subject-Verb-Object order.
- ▶ Word order contributes directly to grammatical meaning.
- ▶ Constituent grouping can change the interpretation of a sentence.
- ▶ Structural ambiguity arises when one surface form permits more than one grouping.
- ▶ Modern syntax is mainly descriptive rather than prescriptive.
- ▶ Modern linguists analyse actual language data instead of imposing Latin models on English.
- ▶ Structuralists treated language as an organised system of interrelated units.
- ▶ Behaviourism explained language learning mainly as habit formation.
- ▶ Chomsky argued that humans possess an innate capacity for language.
- ▶ Universal Grammar refers to basic principles assumed to underlie human languages.
- ▶ Generative capacity enables speakers to produce unlimited sentences from limited rules.
- ▶ Transformational Generative Grammar is associated with Noam Chomsky.
- ▶ A kernel sentence is simple, active, affirmative and declarative.
- ▶ A kernel sentence normally expresses one central proposition.
- ▶ Interrogative, negative, passive, compound and complex sentences are non-kernel forms.
- ▶ Surface structure is the outwardly realised form of a sentence.
- ▶ Deep structure represents an underlying grammatical and semantic relation.
- ▶ Transformations relate underlying structures to surface forms.
- ▶ Phrase-structure rules generate constituent patterns.
- ▶ Transformational rules account for operations such as passivisation and question formation.
- ▶ Morphophonemic rules connect grammatical structure with final sound form.
- ▶ Deep-structure analysis can clarify sentences that appear ambiguous at the surface level.



Objective Questions

1. Who proposed Transformational Generative Grammar?
2. What branch studies sentence structure?
3. What is the outward form of a sentence called?
4. What is the underlying form of a sentence called?
5. What type of sentence is simple, active, affirmative and declarative?
6. What grammar is abbreviated as TGG?
7. What innate language capacity did Chomsky propose?
8. Which rules generate basic constituent patterns?
9. Which rules derive one sentence form from another?
10. What term describes multiple meanings caused by alternative constituent groupings?

Answers

1. Chomsky
2. Syntax
3. Surface structure
4. Deep structure
5. Kernel
6. Transformational Generative Grammar
7. Universal Grammar
8. Phrase-structure rules
9. Transformational rules
10. Ambiguity

Self-Assessment Questions

1. [LO1] Define syntax and explain why word order alone cannot fully account for sentence structure.
2. [LO1] Distinguish modern syntax from traditional grammar with two clear points.
3. [LO2] List the defining features of a kernel sentence and classify three examples of your own.

4. [LO2] Explain deep structure and surface structure using an active-passive pair.
5. [LO3] Describe the roles of phrase-structure, transformational and morphophonemic rules in TGG.
6. [LO4] Explain the ambiguity in “The father of the girl and the boy is/are coming” by showing two possible groupings.
7. [LO4] Analyse “Flying planes can be dangerous” and state its two plausible underlying meanings.

Assignments

1. [LO1] Prepare a comparative chart showing how traditional grammar, structuralism and generative grammar approach sentence analysis.
2. [LO2] Collect ten sentences from newspapers and classify them as kernel or non-kernel, giving reasons for each decision.
3. [LO2] Rewrite five non-kernel sentences into plausible kernel forms and explain the grammatical changes involved.
4. [LO3] Demonstrate the transformation of three active sentences into passive sentences, identifying NP movement and auxiliary changes.
5. [LO3] Construct a flow diagram showing how a deep structure may be converted into a surface structure under TGG.
6. [LO4] Find five structurally ambiguous headlines or sentences, provide two interpretations for each, and rewrite them to remove ambiguity.
7. [LO4] Write a short analytical note on how syntactic structure affects meaning even when the same words are used.

Suggested Reading

1. Chomsky, Noam. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. MIT Press, 1965.
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Syntactic Models

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ LO1: Explain the purpose and major features of syntactic models used to represent sentence structure
- ▶ LO2: Segment sentences into immediate and ultimate constituents by applying binary IC analysis
- ▶ LO3: Apply phrase-structure rewrite rules and construct labelled phrase markers for simple English sentences
- ▶ LO4: Evaluate the strengths and limitations of IC Analysis and Phrase Structure Grammar using relevant examples

Prerequisite

Consider the sentence, “The cheerful child opened the window.” A reader understands it as two broad parts: “The cheerful child” and “opened the window.” Each part can be divided again until the smallest meaningful grammatical units are reached. Now imagine drawing this relationship as the branches of a tree, with the sentence at the top and words at the bottom. The drawing does not merely decorate the sentence; it displays which words belong together and how smaller units combine to form larger ones. This is the basic intuition behind syntactic models. Learners should already be familiar with sentence, noun phrase, verb phrase, determiner, noun, verb, adjective and prepositional phrase. They should also recall that a sentence is not simply a row of words, but a hierarchy of constituents. This unit turns that intuitive knowledge into systematic procedures. Immediate Constituent Analysis shows how a construction may be divided successively into closely related parts, while Phrase Structure Grammar assigns category labels and uses rewrite rules to generate a sentence. Through bracketing, binary cuts, rewrite sequences and tree diagrams, learners will develop practical tools for examining how sentence structure is organised.

Keywords

Syntactic models, Leonard Bloomfield, IC Analysis, Noam Chomsky, Phrase structure Grammar

6.2.1 Syntactic Models

A syntactic analysis of a language involves detailing the arrangement of its sentences, specifically the relationships among the words within a sentence and between different sentences. This analysis can be approached through various methods, each referred to as a syntactic model. A syntactic model represents a particular approach to describing the syntactic structure of a language. Among the various models, Immediate Constituent Analysis stands out as one of the most significant. In subsequent sections, we will also explore Phrase Structure Grammar model.

6.2.1.1 Immediate Constituent Analysis (IC Analysis)

Immediate Constituent Analysis is one of the strong methods of analysing a sentence linguistically. It was formalised through theoretical frameworks established by Roulan Wells and Zelling Harris, although its initial introduction can be attributed to Leonard Bloomfield (1939). Its primary objective is to identify the fundamental constituents of a sentence and to explore the relationships among them. These constituents consist of morphemes or collections of morphemes that, when organized into successive components, create utterances (sentences). The process of uncovering these constituents is referred to as Immediate Constituent Analysis, commonly abbreviated as IC analysis.

In this analytical model, the process begins by dividing a sentence into two natural segments, with each segment further divided into two immediate constituents. This method of binary segmentation continues until the smallest meaningful units are identified. The final level of these units is referred to as ultimate constituents. Consequently, IC analysis involves the decomposition of a phrase or sentence into successive layers, where each layer comprises two constituents that share the closest relationship.

Bloomfield demonstrated how a sentence like “Poor John ran away” can be divided into two immediate constituents:

Bracketing

[Poor John] [ran away]

[{poor} {John}] [{ran} {away}]

This bracketing represents the IC analysis of this sentence, which may also be represented by the following tree diagram:



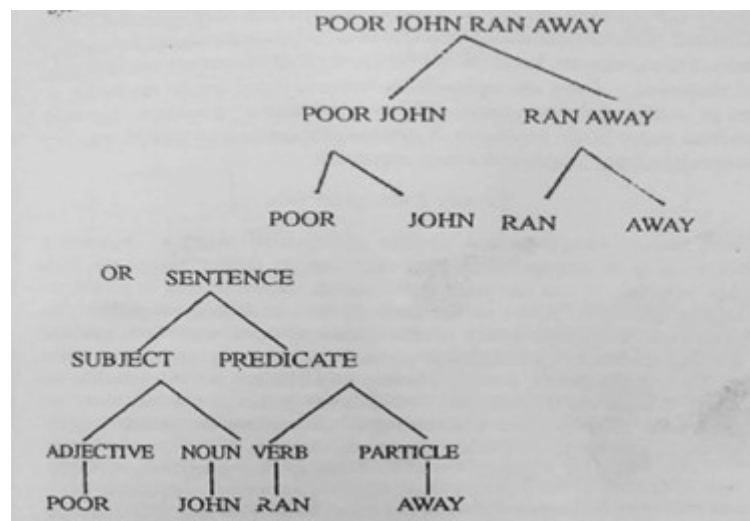


Fig 6.2.1 IC Analysis Tree

We can say that the construction “Poor John ran away” consists of the constituents “Poor John” and “ran away”. The construction “Poor John” consists of the constituent’s “poor” and “John”. The construction “ran away” consists of the constituents “ran” and “away”.

An immediate constituent is either of the two constituents of which any given construction is directly formed. Thus “Poor John” and “ran away” are the ICs of the whole sentence “Poor John ran away”. “Poor” and “John” are the ICs of the construction “Poor John”. “ran” and “away” are the ICs of the construction “ran away”.

IC analysis attempts to break down constructions into successive layers of ICs and of immediate contractions. IC cuts are mainly binary, ie. each construction is divided into two constituents at a time.

This kind of labelled analysis is the basis of Phrase Structure Grammar, which set the background for the formation and the propagation of the Transformational Generative Grammar.

Limitations Of IC Analysis

1. IC Analysis cannot account for constructional homonymy, where constructions look outwardly identical but have different structures and meanings. For example, “Visiting relatives can be tiresome” (Are you visiting them, or are they visiting you?).
2. It struggles with discontinuous constituents, where elements that belong together are separated in a sentence. For instance, in “Are they coming?”, the auxiliary verb “are” is separated from the main verb “coming.”
3. IC Analysis is inadequate for sentences with embedding, where one sentence-like construction is embedded within another. For example, “The bag which I bought yesterday is not very costly” contains “which I bought yesterday” embedded within the main sentence.

4. It cannot effectively address structural similarity, where sentences with different meanings share the same surface structure. For instance, “The chicken is ready to eat” (Is the chicken eating, or is it being eaten?).
5. IC Analysis focuses on the structure of individual sentences and cannot explain relationships between sentences, such as those in compound or complex sentence structures, or the transformations between active-passive or affirmative-negative forms.

6.2.1.2 Phrase Structure Grammar (PS Grammar)

Phrase Structure Grammar is an advanced version of IC grammar. It takes up the division of the sentence into segments and gives them names or labels to identify them as belonging to known grammatical categories like noun, verb, determiner etc. The larger units are treated as phrases and given names like Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase.

Phrase Structure Grammar was introduced by Noam Chomsky in his book *Syntactic Structures* (1957). PS Grammar contains a set of rules, known as rewrite rules. These rules are capable of generating strings of linguistic elements and for providing a constituent analysis of the string. The rewrite rules thus represent how morphemes are organized into words, words into phrases and phrases into sentences. Phrase Structure Grammar has an advantage over the IC model in that the labels are inbuilt in the rewrite rules, and the rules themselves can be arranged in a sequence so that each rule can be used to rewrite the output of the previous one. A rewrite rule is a replacement rule in which the symbol to the left of the arrow is replaced by the expanded form written to the right of the arrow

In *Syntactic Structures* Chomsky gave the following examples:

“The man hit the ball”

Sentence → NP + VP

NP T + N

VP Verb + NP

T the

N Man, ball, etc.

Verb hit

This means, in the case of the first example, ‘rewrite sentence as NP + VP, where NP means ‘noun phrase’ and VP means ‘verb phrase’. In the second example, it means ‘rewrite NP as T and N where T means determiner such as ‘the’ or ‘a’, and N means a noun. And so it goes on down the line. According to the rules of phrase-structure grammar, therefore, the full derivation of “The man hit the ball” is given by Chomsky as follows:



Sentence

NP + VP

T + N + VP

T + N + verb + NP

the + N + verb + NP

the + man + verb + NP

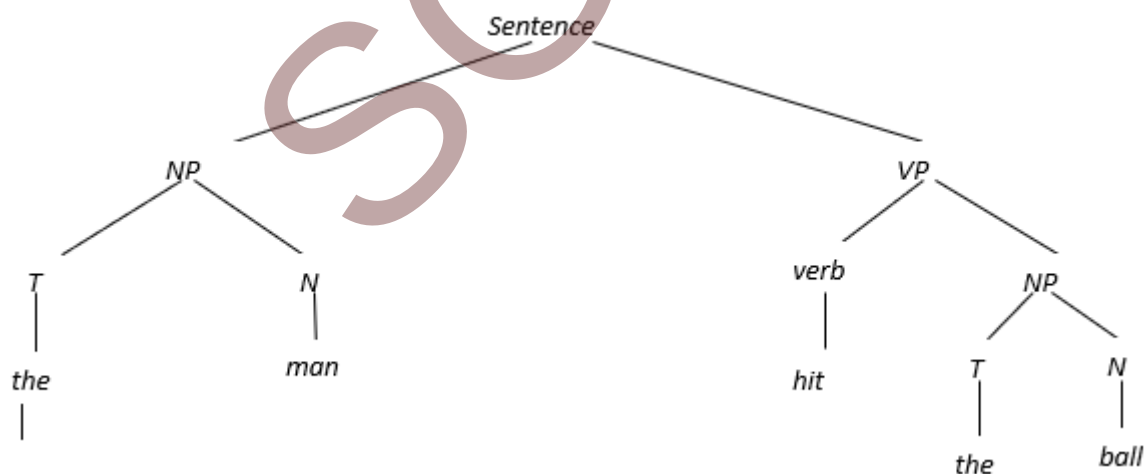
the + man + hit + NP

the + man + hit + T + N

the + man + hit + the + N

the + man + hit + the + ball.

Each of these lines, which is known as a 'string', has been derived by one or the other of the six instruction formulas given above. Only one symbol of a string is rewritten in each step to derive the next; the last line is known as the 'terminal string'. The constituent structure of the sentence can also be shown in what is known as a 'tree diagram' or a 'phrase marker' (P Marker). A tree is a particular type of graphical representation of the structure of a sentence. Every branch of the tree represents a single constituent of the sentence and every constituent or node is labelled with a node label explaining to which syntactic category it belongs. These standard abbreviations have the following meanings: S=sentence; NP=noun phrase; VP=verb phrase; Det=determiner; N'=N bar; V=verb; AP=Adjective phrase; A=Adjective; N=Noun



A string that cannot be further rewritten by applying the T rules or instruction formulas is known as a 'terminal string'. The + man + hit + the + ball is the terminal string in the above example. A tree may have one or more branches or no branches at all. Every point in a tree where there is a branch is called a branching node and there is a label representing the category

at every node. The labelled node that is placed over or dominates a phrase is a non-terminal node because it can be further rewritten. NP, VP, PP, and AP are all non-terminal nodes. Any node that can be further rewritten into another is a non-terminal node. A node that has nothing beneath it except a delta symbol is called a terminal node.

Limitations of Phrase Structure (PS) Grammar

1. PS Grammar focuses on the structure of individual sentences but does not account for relationships between sentences. For example, it cannot show the connections between simple, compound, and complex sentences or between transformations like active-passive and affirmative-negative forms.
2. PS rules struggle to handle discontinuous constituents where elements of a phrase are split. For example, in “Can you sing a song?”, the auxiliary verb “can” is separated from its associated verb “sing,” which PS Grammar cannot represent effectively.
3. PS Grammar cannot account for two key types of ambiguities:

Lexical ambiguity: Occurs when a word has multiple meanings, e.g., “bank” (a financial institution or a riverbank) or “rest” (remaining part or relaxation).

Structural ambiguity: It happens when a sentence structure allows multiple interpretations. Examples include:

“Old men and women” (Are the women old, or just the men?).

“Flying planes can be dangerous” (Is it the act of flying planes or the planes themselves that are dangerous?).

4. It cannot adequately show the close relationship between verbs and particles in phrasal verbs like “call off” or “take off.” These combinations act as a single semantic unit but are treated as separate components in PS rules.
5. PS Grammar has difficulty explaining recursion, the ability to infinitely embed structures within one another. For instance, sentences like “The boy who saw the dog that chased the cat...” demonstrate recursive patterns that PS Grammar cannot fully account for.
6. It cannot explain variations in word order due to style or emphasis, such as:
“Sam seldom visits me” (neutral order).

“Seldom does Sam visit me” (inverted order for emphasis).

Phrase Structure rules differ fundamentally from prescriptive grammar rules, which dictate how language should be used. Instead, PS rules describe the underlying structure of language as it is actually used, reflecting the linguistic facts and principles that govern sentence formation.



Recap

- ▶ A syntactic model is a formal method of representing sentence structure.
- ▶ Syntactic models show relationships among words, phrases and larger constituents.
- ▶ Immediate Constituent Analysis is associated initially with Leonard Bloomfield.
- ▶ IC Analysis was further formalised by later structural linguists.
- ▶ An immediate constituent is one of the parts directly forming a larger construction.
- ▶ IC Analysis proceeds through successive segmentation.
- ▶ IC cuts are generally binary, dividing a construction into two parts at each stage.
- ▶ Ultimate constituents are the smallest units reached in the analysis.
- ▶ Bracketing is one way of displaying constituent divisions.
- ▶ Tree diagrams provide a visual representation of hierarchical structure.
- ▶ IC Analysis reveals which elements form natural grammatical groupings.
- ▶ IC Analysis has difficulty with constructional homonymy.
- ▶ IC Analysis struggles with discontinuous constituents.
- ▶ IC Analysis is limited in handling embedding and inter-sentence relationships.
- ▶ Phrase Structure Grammar is an advanced, labelled development of constituent analysis.
- ▶ Noam Chomsky presented Phrase Structure Grammar in Syntactic Structures.
- ▶ Phrase Structure Grammar uses rewrite rules.
- ▶ A basic rewrite rule may state $S \rightarrow NP + VP$.
- ▶ Rewrite rules expand symbols into grammatical constituents.
- ▶ A derivation is a sequence of rule-governed rewritings.
- ▶ The final string that cannot be rewritten further is a terminal string.
- ▶ A phrase marker is another name for a labelled syntactic tree.
- ▶ Non-terminal nodes can be expanded into further constituents.
- ▶ Terminal nodes represent the final lexical items in a derivation.
- ▶ Phrase Structure Grammar cannot fully explain transformations between related sentences.
- ▶ PS Grammar has limitations in handling ambiguity, recursion, discontinuity and stylistic inversion.

Objective Questions

1. Who first introduced Immediate Constituent Analysis?
2. What abbreviation is used for Immediate Constituent Analysis?
3. What kind of cuts are normally used in IC Analysis?
4. What are the smallest constituents called?
5. Who introduced Phrase Structure Grammar?
6. What rules are central to Phrase Structure Grammar?
7. What does NP stand for?
8. What does VP stand for?
9. What is the final non-rewritable output called?
10. What visual representation is also called a phrase marker?

Answers

1. Bloomfield
2. IC
3. Binary
4. Ultimate constituents
5. Chomsky
6. Rewrite rules
7. Noun Phrase
8. Verb Phrase
9. Terminal string
10. Tree diagram

Self-Assessment Questions

1. LO1] What is a syntactic model, and why is a model useful in analysing sentences?
2. [LO2] Define immediate constituent and ultimate constituent with an original example.
3. [LO2] Apply binary IC analysis to “The young teacher smiled warmly.”
4. [LO3] Explain the rewrite rule $S \rightarrow NP + VP$ and illustrate it with a sentence.



5. [LO3] Distinguish terminal and non-terminal nodes in a phrase marker.
6. [LO4] Discuss any three limitations of Immediate Constituent Analysis.
7. [LO4] Compare IC Analysis and Phrase Structure Grammar in terms of procedure, labels and explanatory power.

Assignments

1. [LO1] Prepare an illustrated glossary of ten essential terms used in syntactic modelling.
2. [LO2] Carry out IC analysis of five simple sentences through both bracketing and tree-like indentation.
3. [LO2] Analyse one structurally ambiguous sentence and explain why IC segmentation alone may not resolve it.
4. [LO3] Write a complete rewrite-rule derivation for “The student read the book.”
5. [LO3] Construct labelled phrase markers for three sentences containing an adjective phrase, a prepositional phrase and an adverb phrase respectively.
6. [LO4] Prepare a comparative table of the strengths and limitations of IC Analysis and Phrase Structure Grammar.
7. [LO4] Write a critical note explaining why transformational analysis became necessary after Phrase Structure Grammar.

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Monolingualism, Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ LO1: Define and distinguish monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism at individual and community levels
- ▶ LO2: Analyse how language choice contributes to identity, linguistic rights, social inclusion and language conflict
- ▶ LO3: Explain code-switching, code-mixing and linguistic repertoire with examples from multilingual communication
- ▶ LO4: Evaluate the cognitive, cultural, educational and professional opportunities and challenges associated with bilingualism and multilingualism

Prerequisite

A learner in Kerala may speak Malayalam at home, use English in higher education, understand Hindi through films, and shift between languages while speaking with friends. At a railway station, the same person may read signs in three languages and choose one language with a tourist and another with a local vendor. None of these choices is accidental. They reflect audience, purpose, identity, place and power. Now compare this learner with someone who uses only one language in almost every domain of life. Both possess language, but their linguistic repertoires and communicative options differ. To enter this unit, learners should recall the ideas of speech community, dialect, register, language variety, social context and sociolinguistics. They should also recognise that language is not only a grammatical system; it is a marker of belonging and a resource that may provide access, prestige or exclusion. This unit examines monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism not as fixed labels alone, but as social practices shaped by family, education, migration, intermarriage, media, employment and public policy. It also introduces code-switching and code-mixing as normal strategies in multilingual communities and encourages learners to assess both the benefits and challenges of living with more than one language.



Keywords

Monolingualism, Bilingualism, Multilingualism, Merits, Demerits

Discussion

One of the ways in which our identity is constructed is through language. Our social identity is linked to the language that we speak. Certain identities like ethnicity and caste are imposed. Language defines our ethnicity. Language is a continuum. Even though we put up borders in the name of language, language goes beyond these borders. The notion of speech communities, with each community representing a language, was prevalent among linguists. Such communities share verbal signs and are fenced off from other speech communities by differences in language use – as Frost put it, “Good fences make good neighbours” (?) However, this notion is problematic because there are dialects existing within these communities. An English-speaking community would have Scottish English, RP, Irish English, etc. When people travel, language goes with them. We are living in a very diverse world where there is cultural mixing. Transnationalism is the prevalent norm not only in the political and economic scenario but also at the personal and linguistic level. Unfortunately, in today’s world, communities are fighting for their ethnic rights. The concept of linguistic rights is now well in place. Linguistic rights refer to a person’s human and civil rights to use their language for communication in the public and private domain. The United Kingdom is an example of a monolingual country. Canada is an example of a bilingual country. French as well as English have equal status there. Sri Lanka is also a bilingual country. We are acquainted with the civil war between the Tamils and Sinhalese there that ravaged the country. The constitution stipulates now that the official language is Sinhalese in

Sinhalese-speaking provinces and Tamil in Tamil-speaking provinces. Recently, Andhra Pradesh let go of a part of its territory where the predominant population speak Telugu, and we now have a separate state, Telangana. Thus, we see how language, a marker of identity, is used to construct separatist identities. India is a multilingual country.

6.3.1 Monolingualism

Do you know that 80% of people in America speak only English? It might seem a little strange that a superpower country like the US is predominantly Anglophone. Up to the early 20th century, Americans commonly spoke a number of languages like Dakota, German, and Norwegian. The Red Indians, the native community of the US, also spoke different tongues.

There is an interesting story behind this. During the high school history classes, we might have learned why America entered the IWW. The sinking of three US merchant ships by German submarines provoked the latter to declare war on the former on April 7, 1917 along with many other reasons. This also waged a war on the language of the enemy, German which was the second most commonly used language in America, to prevent spying. All immigrants were encouraged to change their language to English to show patriotism and assimilation of American values. Consequently, all languages other than English were boycotted.

On May 23, 1918 William Harding banned the public use of all foreign languages in churches, schools, streets, etc. There were even physical assaults over speakers of other languages.

All these led the predominant Anglophone scenario in the US to remain even today.

Monolingualism is the condition of knowing and speaking only one language. Monolingualism is the opposite of bilingualism and multilingualism. Scholars see the mindset of monolingualism, which considers it the norm, to be the greatest obstacle to realising the value and potential of human language, even though there are more multilinguals in the world today.

A child's linguistic environment is the space she is born into. She has no choice here. She learns the mother tongue. She lacks the agency for multilingualism.

Theorists talk about the monolingual bias which is the result of importance given to one language, the mother tongue, the national language. This could have been the result of considering language as occupying different areas of the brain. The brain can't manage many languages, so only one could exist. This is a misconception because languages coexist in the human brain.

The concept of one nation, one language is a result of the spirit of nationalism and the monolingual mindset. Monolingualism has been considered as a deficiency or illiteracy by many.

Even in monolingual speech communities' language manifests itself in different forms. These forms could depend on age, gender, education, socio-economic class, regional location, etc. A monolingual community is the total of all these differences. Here, then, it is necessary to talk about dialects, registers, styles, etc. Different individuals will have different verbal repertoires. Repertoire refers to the stock of language varieties, dialects etc within a speech community. In communicating, they frequently mix codes or switch codes according to the needs of the context.

In India, as elsewhere, we assimilate language mainly via culture. Hinglish, a portmanteau of "Hindi" and "English", is a hybrid of English and South Asian languages. People switch easily from English to Hindi and vice versa. This kind of code-switching happens within a sentence or between sentences. In a multilingual country like India, code-mixing and switching have become a norm rather than a deviation. Language contact breeds such hybrid varieties. With the advent of modern technology and popular media, the very concept of language, culture and communication has undergone a huge change. Hinglish and code-mixing and switching have found their way into advertisements, TV shows, and Bollywood movies, as well as the corridors of corporate and political power in India.

A large population in the world speak multiple languages or at least two. Therefore, monolingualism is a minority condition. A large chunk of monolingual speakers are English language speakers. English is the prominent language of education, global business, and the internet, so Anglophone people are at an advantage and do not need to learn other languages. This has again been revised. English is now considered as part of a multilingual world. Now, we can look into the merits and defects of being monolingual.

Merits:

- When the question of identity comes into being, a monolingual person can easily identify himself with the place where he comes from and the culture to which he belongs. E.g. a diasporic Indo-American writer settled in UK would have serious concerns regarding which culture and identity he belongs to. He doubts (along with other people) whether he is Indian or



American or British. But, in case of the cannibals, each member and the outside world can be sure that he belongs to the Pelegostos tribe and his language is Umshoko.

- Monolinguals have a better vocabulary in the concerned language than bilinguals or multilinguals. This, in turn, gives him efficiency in word retrieval and fluency during conversation.

Demerits:

- The promotion and strict adherence to monolingualism might lead to ethno-centrism whose different versions are racism and discrimination. For e.g., the American ban on foreign languages, especially German and adherence to English during the First World War led to prejudiced discrimination, racism and ethnocentrism. We will discuss this incident later.
- In this era of globalization, one has to deal with people from different countries and speaking diverse languages. Sticking only to one language creates troubles in business, official and governmental affairs.

6.3.2 Bilingualism

India has a long tradition of bilingualism. Even when considering ourselves as monolingual, we have been using different dialects and registers within that language. Bilingualism usually refers to a native-like proficiency in two languages and the practice of two languages simultaneously. One of the important areas in a discussion of bilingualism is the process of learning a second language. You will learn this in a succeeding unit.



Look at the signboard above. It goes beyond monolingualism and acknowledges the need for communicating to a larger population. The global presence of English is evident here. Tourism has been at the forefront in this attempt.

Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages. Both a person and a speech community can be considered to be bilingual. If a person has that ability, he is bilingual. If a speech community tends to use two languages routinely, it is also bilingual. A bilingual child is seen to easily switch from one language to the other according to context. They learn to mix languages as a strategy of inclusion. A child born of Hindi-speaking and Telugu parents would shift easily from one language to the other to include both extended families.

We have a typical example of a bilingual population in Kerala. Malayalam and English are spoken in tandem in Kerala. At the same time a young child coming from a home where only Malayalam is spoken is at a disadvantage when joining school for the first time where English is the medium of education. However, the child picks up fast and becomes a bilingual. Another child educated in a school where the medium of instruction is Malayalam is heavily challenged when joining college. The monolingual Malayalam speaking teenager struggles to learn concepts because the medium of education is English, and learning a new language at a later stage in development is difficult.

Canadian society is bilingual. They use both English and French languages for interaction and as official languages. In Belgium, there are people who live in a Flemish-speaking area and work in a French-speaking area. They have to speak Flemish in their houses and French at work place. It is a bilingual situation.

Bilingualism enriches the linguistic repertoire of people. The bilingual person is more adept at communication, more open –minded and receptive to diverse cultural practices. Tolerance and open-mindedness are constructive fallouts of this. Bilingualism facilitates learning processes.

Bilingualism brings together two systems which co-exist. This has some consequences.

- ▶ Structural changes take place in vocabulary sound and syntax.
- ▶ One language is privileged over the other
- ▶ Users resort to code-switching and code mixing.

6.3.3 Multilingualism



It is the ability to speak more than two languages. Like bilingualism, both a person and a speech community can be termed multilingual. Considering language speaking in an Indian situation would make us understand what

multilingualism actually is. Think of a Tamil or a Malayali or a Telugu or anyone who has a south Indian mother tongue, appointed in a multinational company in Delhi and thus settled there. He has to speak English as the official language of the business or the company. At home, he will only speak his mother tongue. He also has to learn and make use of Hindi or Urdu for his daily affairs, such as buying groceries. Therefore, he is a multilingual person.

- ▶ Multilingualism recognises the importance of the coexistence of multiple languages.
- ▶ It considers the linguistic competency of multilinguals as significant.
- ▶ It acknowledges the diversity that accompanies multilingual communities. Such communities are rich in cultural capital.
- ▶ Look at language as continuous, contextual and dynamic. Contextual, for example, is that if you don't use a language for long because of a change in your situation, it loses its dominance in your communication. Language use keeps changing. People living abroad for a long time tend to lose their competency in their mother tongue.
- ▶ Recognises multilingual abilities as non-linear and complex and dependent on individual histories and geographies.

Multilingualism is context-driven. A child born into a family where the parents have different mother tongues tend to become bilingual. These are called context-dependent factors. Now, what are the contexts of multilingualism?



- ▶ Intermarriage
- ▶ Migration for political and economic reasons.
- ▶ Political situations. E.g. Refugees are forced to flee their own land and live in other countries.
- ▶ Education. The different language courses offered in institutions.
- ▶ Living in multilingual communities.

We understand here that learning a language is not all about grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation; it is all about living and experiencing the language- mingling and interacting with people of different cultures. Language has become de-territorialised. A child, when asked to draw a picture that would show her experience of her language, draws a picture of an Arab with a camel to represent English, which she is fluent in. When asked by the teacher what connection the desert has to her experience of learning English, the answer comes, “I studied in an English school in Dubai.” This is how context-driven language is!

People who speak two or more languages are also called polyglots.

It is important to note that we usually interchange the terms bilingualism and multilingualism. We generally use both of them for the ability to speak and understand more than one language. Around 70 per cent of the human population is considered to be bilinguals or multilinguals. Therefore, it is a common phenomenon. It is possible for a person to deal with two, three, four, or even more languages fluently.

How do people become bilingual? It is either by acquiring multiple languages simultaneously during childhood or by learning languages other than the mother tongue after the

acquisition of the latter in childhood. In the latter case, it might be because of migration and immigration. It becomes harder to learn a new language the older one gets. Most linguists believe that a child can easily learn language until he reaches puberty. After that, the structure of his brain changes and it becomes difficult to learn any new language. In the subsequent unit, we will deal with the acquisition of a second language and its various aspects in detail.

Advantages of being bi/multilingual:

- ▶ It would improve a child's cognitive development. Cognitive development means the development of a child's skills, knowledge and thinking, which makes him understand and explore the world around him.
- ▶ It encourages cross-cultural awareness and understanding. During the colonial period, learning and discovery of Sanskrit gave philologists a greater understanding of the European language family and the ancient literature and culture of Indians.
- ▶ Knowing multiple languages is desirable in a globalized market and professional field.

Defects:

- ▶ The Question of identity becomes highly difficult to answer for bi/multilingual.
- ▶ The existence of bilingual or multilingual societies leads to language conflicts. In deciding social, political and educational policies and issues, there would be differences in opinion: what language should be used to give education? Which language

should be opted for when drafting laws and legal proceedings? Each section of the population would argue for their own mother tongue which would lead to language conflict.

- ▶ Multilingualism can sometimes be problematic. Vocabulary is one of the problems. Sometimes, a word becomes very elusive.

It is on the tip of the tongue but evades. This is called tip-of-the-tongue syndrome. The reason for this is cross-linguistic transfer and the problem of knowing too many words. This affects communication and fluency. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Z5Cvef_IkQ

Recap

- ▶ Monolingualism is the regular use or command of one language.
- ▶ Bilingualism involves the use or command of two languages.
- ▶ Multilingualism involves the use or command of more than two languages.
- ▶ These terms may describe individuals as well as speech communities.
- ▶ Language is an important marker of personal and social identity.
- ▶ Linguistic rights include the right to use one's language in public and private domains.
- ▶ A speech community may contain several dialects, styles and registers.
- ▶ A linguistic repertoire is the range of varieties available to a speaker or community.
- ▶ Monolingualism does not mean complete absence of internal language variation.
- ▶ Monolingual bias treats one-language ability as the normal or superior condition.
- ▶ The ideology of one nation-one language is linked to nationalism.
- ▶ Strict monolingual policies can contribute to discrimination and ethnocentrism.
- ▶ Bilingual communities use two languages regularly across social domains.
- ▶ Multilingual communities use several languages for different purposes.
- ▶ Code-switching is movement from one language or variety to another according to context.
- ▶ Code-mixing combines elements from different languages within communication.
- ▶ Hinglish illustrates contact and mixing between Hindi/Indian languages and English.
- ▶ Inter-marriage can create bilingual or multilingual family environments.



- ▶ Migration often increases the need to acquire and use additional languages.
- ▶ Education is a major context for second- and additional-language learning.
- ▶ Multilingualism can support cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness.
- ▶ Knowledge of several languages can strengthen intercultural understanding.
- ▶ Multilingual competence is valuable in education, tourism, governance and employment.
- ▶ Unequal status among languages may create linguistic insecurity or conflict.
- ▶ Speakers may experience word-retrieval difficulty or cross-linguistic interference.
- ▶ A polyglot is a person who can use several languages.
- ▶ Language dominance may change when a speaker's social context changes.
- ▶ Multilingual ability is dynamic, contextual and shaped by personal history.

Objective Questions

1. What is the use of only one language called?
2. What is the ability to use two languages called?
3. What is the ability to use several languages called?
4. What is a person who speaks several languages called?
5. What term means changing from one language to another?
6. What term means blending elements from different languages?
7. What is the stock of varieties available to a speaker called?
8. What rights protect public and private language use?
9. Which country is widely known for official English-French bilingualism?
10. Which country is identified in the unit as multilingual?

Answers

1. Monolingualism
2. Bilingualism
3. Multilingualism
4. Polyglot
5. Code-switching
6. Code-mixing
7. Repertoire
8. Linguistic rights
9. Canada
10. India

Self-Assessment Questions

1. [LO1] Distinguish monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism with one example of each.
2. [LO1] Explain how the same terms can be applied to both individuals and communities.
3. [LO2] Discuss the relationship between language and social identity.
4. [LO2] What are linguistic rights, and why are they important in diverse societies?
5. [LO3] Differentiate code-switching and code-mixing with examples from everyday communication.
6. [LO4] Explain any four advantages of bilingualism or multilingualism.
7. [LO4] Discuss any four educational or social challenges that multilingual speakers may encounter.



Assignments

1. [LO1] Conduct a small language-profile survey of ten people and classify their linguistic repertoires as monolingual, bilingual or multilingual.
2. [LO2] Prepare a case study showing how language policy may promote inclusion or produce conflict in a multilingual society.
3. [LO2] Create a poster explaining linguistic rights and respectful practices for multilingual classrooms.
4. [LO3] Record or reconstruct a short multilingual conversation and identify instances of code-switching and code-mixing.
5. [LO3] Examine advertisements, films or social-media posts and prepare a report on the communicative purposes of mixed-language expressions.
6. [LO4] Develop a balanced two-column evaluation of the benefits and challenges of multilingualism in higher education and employment.
7. [LO4] Write a reflective essay on your own linguistic repertoire and how language choices change across home, education, friendship and public settings.

Suggested Reading

1. Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2003.
2. Grosjean, François. *Bilingual: Life and Reality*. Harvard University Press, 2010.
3. Edwards, John. *Language and Identity*. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2009.
4. Fishman, Joshua A. *The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society*. Mouton de Gruyter, 2002.
5. Cenoz, Jasone, and Durk Gorter. *Multilingualism and Minority Languages: Language Rights and Policies*. Routledge, 2015.



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QP CODE:

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FYUG BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION – FIFTH SEMESTER
MAJOR CORE COURSE - SGB24EG305MC

English Language and Linguistics

2024 – 25 Admission Onwards (SET - 1)

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any eight of the following questions in one word or sentence (8 x 1 = 8)

1. Which theory relates the origin of language to rhythmic sounds made during collective labour?
2. What term does Saussure use for an individual's actual use of language?
3. What is the soft palate called in phonetics?
4. What is the smallest contrastive sound unit in a language?
5. What is the smallest meaningful unit in the structure of a language?
6. What is a morpheme that cannot occur independently called?
7. What is the central word of a phrase called?
8. Which sentence type primarily expresses strong feeling or emphasis?
9. Which aspect presents an event as completed before a reference point?
10. What is the final lexical item in a phrase-structure derivation called?

SECTION B

Answer any six of the following questions in one or two sentences (6 x 2 = 12)

11. Distinguish between synchronic and diachronic approaches to language study.
12. Distinguish between an open syllable and a closed syllable.
13. Differentiate inflection from derivation.
14. What function does an object complement perform in the pattern SVOC?
15. State the agreement rule followed with subjects joined by either...or or neither...nor.



16. How are questions normally represented when changed from direct to indirect speech?
17. What are the defining features of a kernel sentence?
18. Distinguish between code-switching and code-mixing

SECTION C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6 x 5 = 30)

19. Explain how the design features of human language distinguish it from animal communication.
20. Describe the major organs of speech and the role of the pulmonic egressive air-stream mechanism.
21. Explain phoneme, phone and allophone, showing how minimal pairs help establish phonemic contrast.
22. Discuss the principal word-formation processes in English with suitable examples.
23. Analyse the structure and functions of noun, adjective, adverb, verb and prepositional phrases.
24. Explain how declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory sentences differ in form and function.
25. Explain the principles involved in transforming active sentences into passive sentences while retaining tense and aspect.
26. Explain the relationship between deep structure, surface structure and transformational rules.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2 x 10 = 20)

27. Discuss the major varieties of language, with reference to idiolect, dialect, isogloss, register, pidgin, creole and diglossia.
28. Discuss form-class words and function words, explaining their grammatical roles with appropriate examples.
29. Discuss the system of subject-verb agreement in English, including difficult cases involving coordinated subjects, collective nouns, indefinite pronouns and intervening phrases.
30. Compare Immediate Constituent Analysis and Phrase Structure Grammar, bringing out their procedures, strengths and limitations.



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English Language and Linguistics

2024 – 25 Admission Onwards (SET- B)

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any eight of the following questions in one word or sentence (8 x 1 = 8)

1. Which branch of linguistics studies the relationship between language and culture?
2. Which approach to grammar recommends approved or formally preferred usage?
3. Which air-stream mechanism produces most English speech sounds?
4. What type of vowel involves a glide from one vowel position to another?
5. What is a contextual variant of a morpheme called?
6. What word-formation process changes a word's class without adding an affix?
7. What is the usual basic word order of an English declarative sentence?
8. What is the normally understood subject of an imperative sentence?
9. What is the comparative form of the adjective 'good'?
10. What is the smallest unit reached through successive IC segmentation called?

SECTION B

Answer any six of the following questions in one or two sentences (6 x 2 = 12)

11. State any two important differences between speech and writing.
12. Distinguish between primary stress and secondary stress.
13. Differentiate free morphemes from bound morphemes.
14. Distinguish between finite and non-finite verb phrases.
15. Mention two ways in which future time can be expressed in English.



16. How are commands and requests generally converted into indirect speech?
17. What does Chomsky mean by Universal Grammar?
18. Who is a polyglot, and how is the term related to multilingualism?

SECTION C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6 x 5 = 30)

19. Explain Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance, noting the factors that may affect performance.
20. Classify English consonants according to voicing, place and manner of articulation, with suitable examples.
21. Explain the purposes of the International Phonetic Alphabet and its relevance to Received Pronunciation and General Indian English.
22. Explain morpheme, morph and allomorph, illustrating the relationship among them.
23. Discuss the major English sentence patterns and illustrate the functions of subject, verb, object, complement and adverbial.
24. Explain how heads, premodifiers and postmodifiers determine the internal structure of phrases.
25. Explain the rules governing degree transformation while preserving the meaning of the original sentence.
26. Describe how phrase-structure rewrite rules generate a derivation, a terminal string and a phrase marker.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2 x 10 = 20)

27. Discuss the scope of psycholinguistics, ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics and neurolinguistics, showing how these branches complement one another.
28. Analyse the morphological structure of English words through compounding, affixation, inflection and derivation, using suitable examples.
29. Discuss tense and aspect in English, explaining the major simple, continuous, perfect and perfect-continuous forms with examples.
30. Discuss monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism, with reference to identity, linguistic repertoire, social benefits and practical challenges.

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