

Language and Mind
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Module - 04
Lecture - 18
Structure of Sentence

We are looking at language and mind. We are looking at the relationship between the two and the role of one in understanding the other. And truly so, because we are trying to understand human mind with the use of language as a tool, and we are also trying to look at how we work with language and with the role of human mind in understanding it. We started with the understanding of different components of language and at that time we mentioned that we will be looking at primarily three: sounds, words, and sentences.

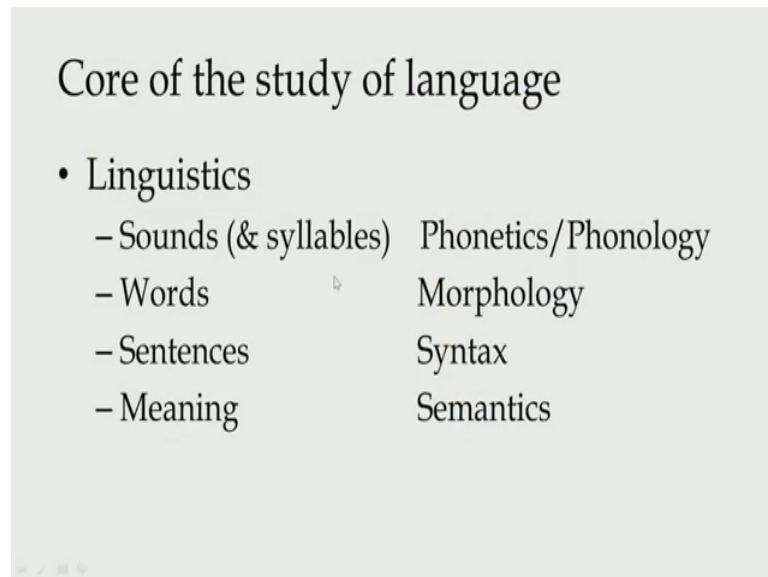
By now we have looked at sounds, we have looked at words; and now we are going to look at sentences. While looking at sounds and words we looked at different places of articulations of sounds and how they are produced in terms of their manners of articulations. The understanding about places and manners of articulations and the whole physiological mechanism involved in it helps us understand the significance of sound in language in general. And then in turn, it helps us understand the constraints in combining sounds to make a word.

The combination of sounds to make a word follows serious constraints; they have got underlying patterns, they have rules underlying them and when we look at them, we understand why we say that, words do not come out of random collection of sounds. It becomes very significant, it becomes very important for us to understand the underlying patterns of word formations for understanding the underlying patterns that our generative capacity, the generative capacity of human mind acquires, figures out, uncovers, very early in the process of acquisition.

Similarly, we now want to look at evidence from the structure of sentence. To understand how we get, how we learn sentences are units in a grammar, sentences are units of language, it is just a larger unit, to look at a sentence, we need to briefly understand why we have been looking at sounds, words and sentences.

The study of sounds, study of words and the study of sentences and the study of meaning are the four core domains of the study of language. They help us understand the building blocks, fundamentals of language and we will be using three of them for us to understand the relationship between the two; that is, language in mind.

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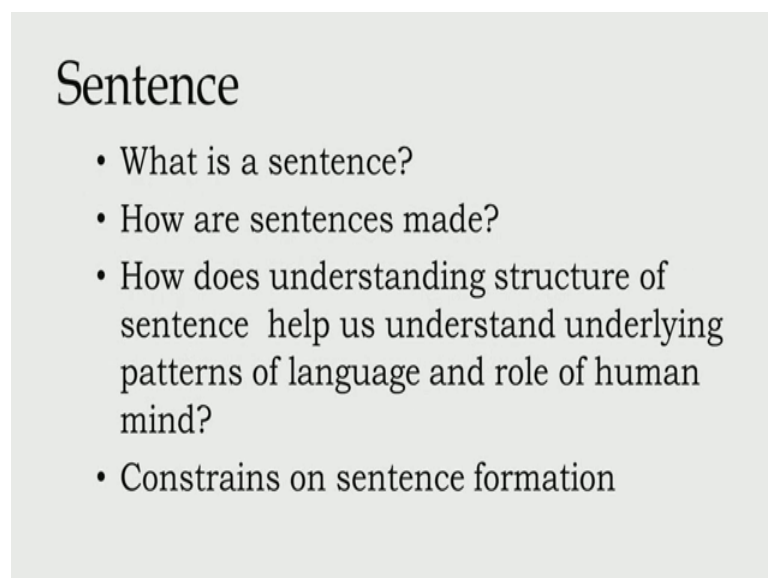


Core of the study of language

- Linguistics
 - Sounds (& syllables) Phonetics/Phonology
 - Words Morphology
 - Sentences Syntax
 - Meaning Semantics

Now we are looking at sentences. The larger domain that studies sentences is called syntax, within the bigger domain of the study which is called linguistics.

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Sentence

- What is a sentence?
- How are sentences made?
- How does understanding structure of sentence help us understand underlying patterns of language and role of human mind?
- Constrains on sentence formation

We will be looking at the meaning of a sentence; we will be looking at how a sentence is made of. And of course, we are looking at these two questions, we are trying to understand these two questions to understand how the structure of sentence help us understand underlying patterns of language and the role of human mind in understanding language. We will also look at constraints on sentence formations and we begin with the definition of a sentence. We begin with smaller components of a sentence.

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Parts of a sentence

- Subject and Predicate
- Grammatical Relations
- Nouns and Verbs

When we look at a sentence, take any example of a sentence, from any language of the world, we are going to find certain parts that are essential to the formation of the sentence, for building of a sentence. And I am going to be listing couple of such things that we will be discussing while discussing a sentence. We want to begin with two parts: the notion of subject and the notion of predicate. These are the two parts of a sentence. We can have a sentence only when these two parts come together. These are important parts. They could be understood in a philosophical way as well.

But, we are trying to look at these terms from the perspective of grammatical relations and we will be looking at the components of a sentence, parts of a sentence, in terms of their categories such as nominals, verbals, and so on. We will also look at the parts of the sentence which are lexical and the parts of sentence that are inflectional in nature. And why we talk about these binary partitions in terms of lexical and inflection, we will be

looking at them as well to develop a fair understanding of what it means, when we say a sentence and how we understand the underlying patterns of a sentence.

So, we will not spend too much time defining subjects, but we will briefly want to understand what it is and then the predicate.

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– John	loves	Mary.	
Sub	Verb	Object	
N	V	N	
– John	wrote	a letter	to Mary.
Sub	Verb	D-obj	I-obj
N	V	N	N

With the help of example of two sentences in English, I am going to explain the notion to you and then it will be easier for us to talk further about sentences. You can take any example from any language like I mentioned before. However, please see what it means, what the two notions mean, when we are looking at a sentence. In a very simple sentence of English, like John loves Mary and John wrote a letter to Mary, the two parts are John and loves Mary. John is identified as a subject and the remaining part of the sentence in the other color is predicate.

Now, look at the categorical distinction of these parts: subjects, and then there are two more parts within the predicate; we come to that in a moment. But, subject in this case is a nominal category, is a noun, and the remaining parts are verbs and then yet another noun. So, we have a verb, and then the other noun that is part of the predicate is the object. We are looking at these two because...and we say object is part of predicate, not only because we want to say that; because verbs decide whether a predicate will have an object or not and verbs make such a decision on the basis of its nature. Not all the verbs are going to need an object.

However, some verbs, lot of verbs would need an object and some verbs would need more than one. So, we can say verbs make a decision about the presence or absence of an object; therefore object remains as part of the predicate. So, should be clear with this example, as example of these two sentences John loves Mary - loves Mary is the predicate, John is the subject. In the predicate, we have verb and the object; loves is the verb and Mary is the object.

In the second sentence, John wrote a letter to Mary, again John is the subject; wrote a letter to Mary - the whole chunk is predicate. In this, we have two parts: wrote a letter and to Mary; wrote is a particular type of a verb and a letter is an object of this verb. So, we are going to be looking at these parts and their relationship in order to understand parts of a sentence. So far we have only looked at subject and predicate as two parts of a sentence. And we want to understand the notion of a sentence in terms of these two parts.

And also, while understanding the notion of these two things, we want to make it clear and we want to understand this with clarity that object is part of the predicate, object is dependent on the verb; that is the presence or absence of object is dependent on the verb. However, subject remains an external element and this will help us understand that every sentence of every language will need a subject. The notion of subject is required in the formation of a sentence in any given language. We do not have a sentence without subject; at the same time, we do not have a sentence without a predicate. Such is the significance of the two parts.

Now, please remember that when we talk about the presence of a subject, we are talking about the notional presence not the little presence; and let us not jump ahead. There are lots of sentences where we feel we do not have a subject. But, the notion of the subject, the concept of the... the idea of the subject, is present in all the sentences.

Therefore, they are not required to be literally present in all the sentences, but they are going to be notionally present; they are going to be conceptually present in all the sentences. Therefore it is an important and the required part of a sentence. Only when the two come together they make a sentence and the two come together not just next to one another. There is a thick and significant relationship between the two. Only when they establish a relationship between the two parts...the two parts establish relationship

among one another, then they become a sentence and this relationship between the two parts of a sentence is called agreement.

So, we would want your specific attention to terms like subjects, predicates, objects, verbs, parts of predicates like verbs and direct objects, verbs and indirect objects and understanding the notion of the significance of subject and the mandatory presence of the subject for every sentence. And finally, we would want you to remember the notion of agreement. We are going to be looking at these things in little bit of the details.

So, we were talking about verbs and we were talking about types of verbs and nature of verbs. So, there are going to be three types of verbs: some verbs are going to be intransitive in their nature, some verbs are going to be transitive in their nature and some verbs are going to be ditransitive in their nature.

Now, why we call them intransitive, transitive or ditransitive is pretty simple. Remember the idea of objects inside the predicate? If the verb needs an object, then the verb is a transitive one. If the verb does not need an object, then the verb is an intransitive one. So we can say, essentially there are two types of verbs: one transitive and the other intransitive; and then as a transitive verb, there are still two types: one is transitive and the other could be ditransitive.

And the distinction between transitive and ditransitive is a yet again pretty simple - that the transitive verbs will need one object and ditransitive verbs are going to need two objects. And therefore, when we have just one object, we can simply call it an object, but when verbs are going to need two of them, then we are going to be needing terms for them and when we have two objects, we call one as the direct object and the other is indirect object. So again, we are adding several terms to the inventory for our understanding for building of our understanding about a sentence.

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Predicate

- Verbs
 - Types of Verbs
 - Intransitive
 - Transitive
 - Di-transitive
- Objects
 - Direct Object
 - Indirect Objects

So, what are those terms? We need to understand types of verbs in terms of intransitive and transitive, and then we need to understand intransitive verbs, in terms of transitive. We need to understand transitive verbs in terms of transitive and ditransitive with reference to the presence of objects that transitive verbs are going to need one object and ditransitive verbs are going to need two objects. Thus we understand a sentence. We are only looking at components of a sentence; we are only looking at parts of a sentence.

We mentioned a sentence or we have been saying things like - verbs are going to need one object, or verbs do not need one object. That is right. This is an important part for us to focus on. Verbs decide whether they need one or not and when you see examples of verbs, then you will understand whether they really need them or not. So the two verbs that you have seen in the previous two sentences like - love and wrote, loves and wrote, both of them are examples of transitive verbs, because both of them need objects.

In one case the object is Mary, the other case the object is a letter. So, we have three parts: subject, verb and object, where verb and object are part of predicate and subject remains external to predicate and subject remains a separate element. So the notion of, the idea of subject and object, subject and predicate are part of grammatical relations; that is, the relationship of categories like nouns and verbs in terms of their grammar have specific terms like subjects, objects and verbs. We will be looking at more in terms of sentences next. Thank you.